



... uniting families ...

Late June 2008

Program Development Continues To Unfold

In the last edition of our newsletter, we introduced you to Carolyn Ikenberry, our Program Director, who joined Our Children's Place (OCP) team late last October. She's pictured below on the left with JoAnne Morris, our Bookkeeper.



Much has happened in the area of program development since Carolyn's arrival. Here is her update:

The program for children and their mothers at OCP is in an exciting stage of development. Melissa and I have spent much of the past several months touring facilities with similar programs, reading curricula, talking with experts in the fields of early childhood development, substance abuse treatment, trauma, criminal justice, gender issues, parent/child training, and related issues, and in general gleaning "best practice" ideas for our program.

Now with ongoing input from the Program Committee and other reviewers from

professional fields, we are pulling all of this research into a broad program for both women and children.

We have two program designs in draft form: a women's program and a children's program. While there is considerable overlap between the two, we are drawing up two separate designs because of the different needs and goals of the women and children. For both the women and children, we are looking at all components of life at OCP: facility design inside and out, child care, quality time between mothers and children, substance abuse and mental health treatment, vocational and academic training, parent/child bonding, parenting training, recreation, and spiritual life.

For the children, we are focusing on how their life at OCP can be as normal as possible to facilitate a smooth transition to and from OCP, as well as providing the ability to meet whatever special needs the child might have. It will be a highly enriched experience for the child, with careful thought to making each child's time with OCP as respectful and supportive of his/her culture as possible.

For the mothers, the goal is that each one will leave OCP free of substance addiction and have the tools needed to be an effective parent and live a crime-free, self-supporting life in the community. The program for women will be intensive, with a focus on providing the best practice in substance abuse and trauma work as well as comprehensive parent training and vocational/academic programming. Much has

been learned through research and practice about what works well with mothers in the justice system, and we are using this research to design a model program at OCP.

While having a strong design is one critical part of building a solid program that meets our goals, we recognize that staff is equally important. We want to attract staff that is highly qualified in all the various program areas and who also possess the personal characteristics to work well in this setting and who reflect the cultural make up of the population. We are learning how other successful programs have been able to attract and keep staff members who meet these stringent criteria.

We've made some great progress in laying the foundation for our program and I'm pleased with what we've accomplished so far. We still have many areas to think through and develop, and I'm finding that we also have strong potential partners who want to help us. This is exciting work and I am honored to be a part of making this dream come true.

Save the Date!



We hope you will join us at our annual celebration.

Sunday, November 2, 2008
2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Siena Hotel, Chapel Hill, NC

Invitations will be sent in the early fall. If you are interested in being a sponsor and/or helping with the event planning, please call us

at (919) 843-2670 or send an e-mail to us at ourchildrensplace@gmail.com.

Saying "Good-bye" . . .

Jean Anoff recently resigned from the OCP Board of Directors. She has been a consistent voice for women and children in North Carolina - not only with her work on the OCP Board, but also her years of work with our sister agency, Summit House. She has traveled across this state (she calls Charlotte home) countless times, bringing her knowledge of non-profit finances as well as Board functioning to our fledgling organization. Jean (and her car!) are long overdue for a respite. We are grateful for all her work and are delighted to have her ongoing support from the western part of the state. Thank you, Jean!

. . . and "Hello!"

Over the past couple of months we've welcomed two new Board members.

Valerie Ann Johnson, Mott Professor and Director of Africana Women's Studies, Bennett College for Women, Greensboro, NC

Mark Breakfield, Accountant, Blackman & Sloop, CPAs, PC, Chapel Hill, NC.

New Donation Options

OCP supporters have three new ways to donate to OCP.

- Make a **PayPal** credit card donation via our website, www.ourchildrensplace.com. Click on "Donations."
- Use **GoodSearch.com** as your internet search engine.
- Use **Goodshop.com** for your online shopping.

From Kathleen's Pen

Dear OCP Supporters,

OCP continues to flourish. Melissa Radcliff, our Executive Director, recently listed all of the accomplishments of the past year and the list was amazing. Although it was created as an internal document, it could serve as our annual report for donors (e-mail Melissa if you'd like to see it).

Staff, Board members, and supporters are committed to OCP for varied reasons. Some of us have (or have had) loved ones who have been incarcerated; others of us see a future for children of incarcerated parents that is different than the current path; others of us want to invest in helping women with a history of criminal behavior change directions and lead a meaningful life for themselves, their children, and our society.

I came to the OCP table for all of these reasons. And perhaps one other less conventional reason. Have you seen the movie *The Bucket List*? One of the things I wanted to do before I "kicked the bucket" was to be a witness to, and a participant in, an unbelievable – perhaps even miraculous - change in the way we do business as a society. I was one of those pathologically optimistic high school students who, over the intervening 20 years or so, had a life that was subsumed by the important (and joyful) business of getting an education, raising a family, and establishing a career. Which was really good, but not quite good enough. And, at the age of 47, I now have the enormous good fortune to watch this unfolding miracle. Your miracle. Our miracle. Our Children's Place.

Six years ago OCP was only an abstract dream shared by a few. Today, although not yet a finished bricks-and-mortar reality, we are well on the way towards this goal. The six-year interval between then and now has been a lot of hard work, a lot of worrying, a few

(surprisingly few!) disagreements, and an unbelievable number of hours of volunteer labor. We have so many to thank for this: friends, supporters, Board members, and staff.

I don't know if it is true of every miracle, but with this one (at least for me), there is a miracle within the miracle. What is becoming increasingly apparent is that this project is not for any one group of people. Rather, it is a project that captivates the hearts and minds of people across divisions. It is a place for Republicans and Democrats, public officials and private corporations, liberals and conservatives (religiously and politically); it is a table of cultural and ethnic diversity. We have strong supporters from the mountains of North Carolina to the sea and many communities in between. We have people who give \$10 and people who donate thousands. And, although OCP will only serve incarcerated women in North Carolina, we have strong support from individuals and faith communities across the United States: California, Florida, Michigan, New Jersey, Texas, and Virginia to name a few. And the list is growing. Not to mention the increasingly broad support and commitment of numerous organizations across the country working on behalf of women and children. Too many to begin to list. Who would have thought?

Finally, I'd like to pass on some more great news. As of this July, Kim Hoke will become Chair of the OCP Board. We are rapidly moving into the challenging phase of policy creation for OCP. Kim has decades of experience working in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro School System. Her roles there as an administrator and leader are just what we need at this time. We are very fortunate to have her agree to take this position. Please thank her if you get a chance!

Kathleen Shapley-Quinn
Chair, OCP Board of Directors

Thank You!

Thanks to a number of generous supporters, we were able to furnish our Carrboro office almost entirely with donated furniture, making it a good space to work and meet. Our current wish list includes the following items:

- digital camera
- meeting table
- large plastic bins to hold hats
- laser printer.

Oops!

In our "Sites to See" piece in the winter newsletter, we left off two names on our thank you list:

California Institution for Women

Staff members hosted our staff for a site visit.

Female Offender Programs and Services

Staff members there handled all of the details that made our trip a reality.

Both are part of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Thank you for answering our questions, offering your perspective, and sharing what you have learned. We apologize for the omission.

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If you wish to be removed from our mailing list or if your contact information has changed, please call our office at (919) 843-2670.

OCP is a residential initiative allowing young children (babies and preschoolers) to live with their mothers while the women serve out their sentences for non-violent offenses. OCP is designed to break the intergenerational cycle of crime, poverty, substance abuse, and family violence. It will empower the child with the mother's help to enhance cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development. OCP plans to open its doors in 2009.

(6/26/08)