Roots & Gratitude

Dear friends,

In 1966 a small group of passionate individuals joined together to make a difference in their struggling South End neighborhood. Recognizing the hunger in their neighbors’ eyes, they offered simple meals, a warm place to sleep, and companionship.

In that same year they cobbled together spare change and generous donations in order to purchase the building that has been home to our Soup Kitchen ever since. The spirit of generosity of that original group endures today in the other programs that have since emerged: 100 units of affordable housing, an urban farming and education program and a social enterprise Bakery Café (now sited in Roxbury) which brings with community-based arts and cultural programming.

Purchasing that first property was critical to the survival and expansion of Haley House programming over the years.

We have a similar opportunity now. We have signed an agreement to purchase the property that houses our Bakery Café at 12 Dade Street. Doing so secures our Dudley home at a time when Roxbury rents are on the rise, and displacement imminent. This purchase will offer a permanent home for the vital community space that has become a cornerstone of our city.

Thank you for the many contributions you have made to Haley House over the years. In addition to the funds you have donated, your many hours spent washing dishes, mopping floors, weeding gardens, speaking with guests, and reaching out to a stranger are at the heart of Haley House’s original tradition of generosity of spirit.

Haley House has shown the power of an engaged community to effect change in the world through individual acts of kindness. Thank you for joining us on this journey.

Happy Holidays,

(Continued on page 3)
How Going to Jail (and God) Saved My Life
The Story of Jason Romain

As he walked out of the doors of the Federal Prison, Jason Romain didn’t know the details of what his future held, but he did know this: he was ready to live a different sort of life than he had ever known, a life that would be centered not on crime, not on drugs, not on money, friends, and God proud. He was going to make the most of his second chance and Haley House was going to help him to do just that.

Life had never been easy for Jason, who lost both of his parents much too early and got caught up in the traps of the streets as a teenager, despite the best efforts of his grandparents who had committed to raising him. But Jason is not one to blame others for the challenges he faced—he was interested in being grateful that his heart, liver and spirit are in good working condition and that he finally has the freedom to be a part of this kid’s lives and make a difference in the world.

In the months before his release, a caseworker connected Jason to the Transitional Employment Program (TEP) at Haley House, knowing of his interest in food and his earnest commitment to changing his life. As a trainee in TEP, he spent evenings in the Cafe kitchen, preparing thousands of the famous Haley House cookies. While scooping cookie batter, participants engage in the cornerstone of the program: guided reflections and deep discussions meant to build strength, confidence, and supportive community amongst the trainees in their most vulnerable days.

As part of the program, trainees also volunteer in the Haley House Soup Kitchen, a venue for Jason’s creativity and passion for cooking blossomed. Upon completion of TEP, Jason was accepted to be part of the Live-In Community during this transitional time in his life. While volunteering on Soup Kitchen shifts and participating in community life, Jason continued a course he had begun at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts. It wasn’t uncommon to find Jason up at 4 am to prepare elaborate meals for the Soup Kitchen before he headed to school and family commitments.

Ask anyone who lived with him during that time and they’ll gladly talk for a good long while about their friend Jason (and he’s just as quick to credit his community members for inspiring him). In the words of his friend Peter Matthews: “Jason is an incredibly loving and loyal friend. As far as I have ever been able to estimate, his spirit of generosity knows no bounds. There are few people I know who would be more willing to give the shirt off their back to someone in need, friend or stranger. I am blessed to have such a good friend.”

While living at Haley House and going to school, Jason took a part-time job doing dishes at America’s Test Kitchen. After about six months, Jason was offered a promotion to full-time kitchen assistant. As much as he enjoyed his time in the Soup Kitchen and the community, he knew that his commitments to work, family, and school (where he’s set to graduate in September 2016 with an A-average) required that he find permanent housing. A room in one of Haley House’s affordable housing buildings became available and after filling out stacks of paperwork, he was able to move into his own space a few months ago, something that has made a world of difference for him.

Jason’s commitment to the mission of Haley House was evident from the start and he’s still very much a part of the community, helping out whenever he can. “Haley House is a sanctuary where people from all walks of life can come and find a warm place, a great meal, and feel like family.” Jason has helped to make this vision a reality. These days, he feels nothing but gratitude and awe for the blessings he’s received: “I couldn’t ask for a better life.” And anyone who met him couldn’t ask for a better friend.

Daily Updates
The Ferdinands: Flight in the heart of Roxbury, the newly renovated Ferdinands building is set to open its doors this spring. Haley House has been offered one of the prime retail spots in order to pilot our economic inclusion project, featuring healthful pizzas and a vision for greater justice for food service workers.

Haley House Catering: We want to offer special thanks to all those who choose to call on Haley House for your catering needs. As more people have discovered their love of the Haley House “kitchen culture,” they have also discovered the value of local, healthy, affordable catering opportunities, and the revenue generated through this program helps HHBC to continue to be a place of possibility for our community. THANK YOU.

The House Slam: Adding to the already fantastic roster of arts and cultural programming at HHBC, The House Slam offers a space for Slam Poets and fans to appreciate the spoken word (2nd, 4th Fridays).

Common Ground at 95 Thornton
Exciting Growth for Urban Agriculture at Haley House

After years of dedication on the part of our Roxbury neighbors at Hawthorne Youth and Community Center (HYCC) and Highland Park Neighborhood Coalition, a long neglected city-owned lot at 95 Thornton Street has been recliamed as committed green space. As the urban landscape of Roxbury continues to shift, preserving the rare gem of undeveloped land has become a rallying point for Highland Park residents. Our partnership with HYCC groups fits auspiciously with our recent shift towards more accessible, local farming (following the sale of Noonday Farm to a land-trust in May 2013).

The lot at 95 Thornton Street has a unique history. According to longtime Highland Park resident Jon Ellerton, the lot was part of an estate owned by the prominent Josiah Wheelwright family (19th century). City atlas data indicate that the land was used as a pasture. Charming animal play-structures (made out of concrete and metal) remain on the lot, indicating that the land was likely managed by the Parks Department in the 1950s. The land was later abandoned, and spent years overgrown with trash and weeds, despite being valued by residents as a quiet and peaceful enclave.

After two years of community lobbying, the City of Boston licensed the lot at 95 Thornton (along with a second vacant lot at 184 Highland Avenue) to HYCC this spring. In April, Highland Park neighbors and volunteers from Haley House built ten raised garden beds along the fence lining Thornton Street. Residents diligently tended gardens this summer and fall, yielding a rich harvest including tomatoes, kale, squash, collard greens, and corn. During July and August, Haley House partnered with HYCC to present an ambitious summer program for middle and high school-aged youth called “Grow It - Cook It - Share It.” During the program, 95 Thornton became an “urban agriculture learning laboratory” for youth leaders as they learned to care for the land, build raised beds, till, and container gardens. The youth faithfully completed their daily work in the gardens alongside Haley House gardening coordinators, monitoring the seedlings they planted with great interest. “I look forward to picking tomatoes on the vine!” shared one excited teen. Garden lessons were intertwined with cooking and nutrition lessons from chef Didi Emmons and nutritionist Lisa Siniscalchi.

Plans are underway to begin planting the back plot of land as a working urban farm early this spring. A generous grant from the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources will allow for the installation of an irrigation system, to the great benefit of our urban gardeners. Produce from this plot will be shared in our Soup Kitchen, Community Tables Program 3-day bag, River Cafe and Take Back the Kitchen cooking classes. We invite you to join us this spring and summer as we work together to make this community project in support of local farming and preservation of green space a success!
Save the Dates

Art Opening (Susan Thompson)
Thursday Dec. 4 (5:30-7 pm, HHBC)

Annual Charlie King Folk Concert
Friday, Dec. 5 (7 pm, HHBC)

Garden Work Day
Saturday Dec. 6 (10am-12pm, McKinley Garden-South End)

A Sweeter Life Dessert Fundraiser
Sunday Jan. 18 (3-5 pm, HHBC)

Souper Bowl 2015
Sunday Feb. 8 (2-6 pm, HHBC)

Silent Auction and Wine Tasting
Saturday June 6 (4-6 pm Dartmouth St.)

Send us your photos!

In anticipation of the celebration of our 50th anniversary in 2016, we are compiling a Haley House archive. Send us photos and other artifacts! Questions? Contact milbozza@haleyhouse.org

Sponsor a chair for our soup kitchen! http://www.gofundme.com/haleyhousechairs

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