



Cornerstone Community Outreach

4615 North Clifton Avenue
Chicago, IL 60640

Mary Davenport, CCO Case work Supervisor, writes beautifully about the restoration efforts of two very special volunteer groups, CBRE and Rebuilding Together. She expresses the impact their efforts had on our shelter residents and herself. Take a moment to read this interesting peek into CCO life...

Today 200+ volunteers came and brought much needed visual hope to my shelter. Fresh paint gives people a new reason not to mark on the walls. 2 new hang out spaces give our kids a place, other than the one room they share with their family, to just be. New flowers tell our neighborhood that we care enough to make the outside welcoming to the eye. A redone play area gives our kids fun in the summer. 200+ people came and worked hard to show our residents that they are valuable. Each volunteer was excited to help. Each and everyone one of them gave me new excitement and reminding me that others care too. The volunteers don't have any personal stake in the day to day lives of our shelter residents. They will probably never see any of them again. They didn't get to witness the very first kid come home from school and light up with excitement at the new space filled with books and brightly colored walls made especially for him. I will see the kids use those spaces. I will hear the residents say how much better it looks. I will bare witness to the benefits of the hard work done by others. This is where my restoration came from today.

While all of this was happening, I got a phone call from a former resident. Her husband has become addicted to heroin. She finally had to leave him and take their young child to a safe place. She's almost broke and family can only help so much. She called to see if we had shelter space for her family and to be encouraged. As we spoke, I said what I always say, "Put your child first and it will be alright". They are such simple words to me. I say them so often I feel like I'm on auto pilot. She broke down on the phone. She felt so guilty that she had walked away from her husband to save her son. The words reminded her of what she already knew, the most right thing is to always put her child first.

As my day came to a close I was leaving my office. I saw a brand new resident and introduce myself. We started to chat and he laid it all out. He's scared. He doesn't know how he even ended up here with his only child. I could see the fear in his eyes and I could hear it in his voice. He kept saying, "I don't mean to be disrespectful or seem too good to be here." He told me he didn't want his son to stay at the shelter. His child's mother is new to sobriety and he is considering letting his son return to living with her full time. He wants to keep his son with him. He wanted me to tell him what the right thing to do is. I heard the words coming out of my mouth again. "Put your child first and it will be alright". He lost it. I could see the worry leave him. Visually he seemed lighter. Those words didn't change his situation. They simply reminded him of what he already knew, the most right thing is to always put his child first. This is where my restoration came from today.

- Mary Davenport, Sylvia Center Program Director

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