

Dear Project New Hope Friends and Supporters,

Paul F., one of our beloved long-term residents, passed away April 11, 2009 at age 66, surrounded by people who had been his caregivers for him for more than ten years and secure in the knowledge that he mattered to those around him.

While this introduction could be reason for sadness, it is not intended to be. Rather, it is an opportunity to honor Paul's memory by reflecting on why the staff of Project New Hope, including the administrative team, feels so passionate about the work we do: helping low-income persons with HIV/AIDS who also suffer from homelessness, substance abuse, mental illness and many forms societal rejection and disdain, live with hope, dignity and opportunities for self-sufficiency.

Project New Hope staff met Paul sixteen years ago, when he was in his early 50's. At that time, he was very sick, suffering from a both AIDS and the ravages of substance abuse. Paul came to PNH directly from a hospital where he had been treated for an infection that could have taken his life. With no money, no home and no significant support system, he could easily have been one of the homelessness statistics that have tragic endings.

Instead, he entered Our House, our residential facility that's designed to treat persons with AIDS as a whole individual by addressing not only HIV/AIDS symptoms, but the substance abuse and mental health issue that many of our clients live with. Paul stayed at Our House three years. During this time he got clean and sober, became a sponsor to other addicts, and, most importantly, never touched alcohol or drugs again. He eventually moved to the Frank Cala House in West Hills where he felt at home and

treated each staff person and fellow resident as part of his extended family. Whenever anyone came to visit, Paul would be the person who opened the door and greeted them.

Paul was fearless when it came to sharing his life story- and the lessons he learned-- with college students, volunteers or reporters. He was proud of his sobriety and we were fortunate to celebrate many AA birthdays with him.

Eventually, Paul's illness took its toll and became very sick and bedridden. During this time, he was devotedly cared for by the staff who had known him for many years, and toward the very end, by the hospice team from VITAS. Before he passed away, we all had a chance to say good bye and reflect on the many touching moments we were able to share, most notably all the birthdays and holidays that felt like a family affair.

Knowing we make a difference in the lives of people like Paul makes each work day special for Project New Hope staff. And while we are always deeply saddened by the loss of a resident, we are consoled in the knowledge that we were able to make the last 16 years of Paul's life truly full of new hope.

Sincerely,

Brigitte Tweddell
Executive Director





CLIENT PROFILE

Mark Robledo

For Project New Hope (PNH) Resident Mark Robledo, PNH really does live up to its name. "This place is a lifesaver. Without it," he says, "I'd lose hope, walk in the streets." Mark, 49, knows of what he speaks. A Long Beach native, he came to PNH in November, 2004, after spending years in a cycle of incarceration, release, homelessness and re-incarceration.

During a routine health assessment while being processed for his last incarceration, he tested positive for HIV. The result did not surprise him, as he had been sharing needles on the streets. (While he refused all HIV medication in prison, he is now being treated for the disease.) Upon his release from prison, he lived in temporary housing for a few months, and then spent two years at a transitional housing facility, where he participated in a substance abuse treatment program. While living in the transitional housing facility, he spoke with Anthony, a PNH housing staffer who placed him on the waiting list for a PNH permanent housing unit. When, after 16 months, a PNH unit was available for him, he "felt like he won the lottery". Today, he is happy to be able to live without roommates and to have access to a kitchen so that he can cook fresh, healthy foods for himself. (He admits that his cooking skills are still rather rudimentary.) He adds that it is comforting to know that the on-site Resident Services Coordinators care about his wellbeing and can help him access any supportive services he may need.

With his living and health situations stabilized, Mark, who is the father of an adult daughter and a grandfather of three, is putting his life back together. He is in his second semester at Los Angeles City College, studying to be a certified drug and alcohol counselor. For the last three years he has also volunteered to share his experiences with elementary and middle school students. In these speaking engagements, arranged through Los Angeles Unified School District's Health Education Program HIV/AIDS Prevention Unit (funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and the Peer Education Program of LA (PEP/LA), he emphasizes to students the importance of caring for themselves enough to stay away from drugs and other high-risk behaviors. "I tell them to have hopes and dreams," he says.

As for his own hopes and dreams? Mark would like to stay at PNH for as long as he can. And if he ever does win the lottery, he'd like to build youth centers to help troubled youth. It would be his way of giving hope to others.



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Homes, Opportunities, Placement and Education

STAFF HIGHLIGHT

Nora Nagy

Nora Nagy, one of Project New Hope's longest-serving Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), found her calling quite by accident. Her journey began in 1993, when Nagy, then a machine operator on the production floor of a cosmetics factory, visited a friend of a friend who was in the end stages of HIV/AIDS. Inspired by the visit and her untapped ability to comfort and hold the hand of the dying, she ended her 9-year stint as a machine operator and, along with her identical twin sister, Norma, enrolled in a three month CNA training program. After completing the program, the sisters found Homestead Hospice and Shelter (as Project New Hope's group homes division was previously called) in the Yellow Pages. They met with Brigitte Tweddell, Project New Hope's current Executive Director who, at the time, headed Pioneer Home. Brigitte hired them both, Nora for Cala House and Norma for Pioneer House.

As a CNA, Nora assists residents with "whatever they need". This includes assisting residents with medications prescribed by their physician, helping residents dress and bathe, light housekeeping, and preparing meals that are designed by a Nutritionist and approved by community care licensing..

Nora, the mother of two adult children, enjoys the challenges and rewards of hospice care. "I like to help human beings with problems. Each client is special," she says. She jokingly claims she could "write a book" about her experiences as a CNA in hospice care after 14 years. In addition to the satisfaction of helping residents, she also enjoys the support Project New Hope co-workers give one another and appreciates the in-service trainings the agency provides.

Over the years, Nora has seen changes in her work at Project New Hope, from improved HIV/AIDS medications, and remodeling and updating of Cala House. One thing that has stayed consistent is what residents teach her every day: compassion and the ability to suffer gracefully. Residents' deaths, though not unexpected, are difficult to bear. To help her overcome these challenges, Nora relies on her faith and the comfort of talking and grieving with her twin sister, staff and residents. She also continues to educate herself about the emotional stages of grief. "I believe I am truly suited for this work and that keeps me going through the difficult times," she says.

To recharge her spirit, the soft-spoken Nora likes to exercise, go to church, and rent movies, particularly spooky movies and love stories.



HOPE



Dear Friends of Project New Hope

Hard to believe that summer is here! Time has flown by as we stay busy providing safe and affordable housing to 350 clients with HIV/AIDS in our group homes and permanent affordable housing apartments.

Based on the overwhelmingly positive reaction from the last summer non-event, we cordially invite you to this year's Summer of Love 60's themed Love Non-Event. A groovy party without the party! You get to spend a relaxing summer with friends and family, while showing Project New Hope some love. We get to spend more time doing what we do best: helping low-income persons with HIV/AIDS and multiple other physical and mental health challenges stabilize

Project New Hope promotes a full continuum of supportive housing and employment options to low income individuals and families with HIV/AIDS. We are dedicated to providing permanent affordable housing and computer training to individuals with HIV/AIDS in Los Angeles. Our services assist people with HIV/AIDS who also face the challenges of homelessness, and mental illness. PNH remains the largest operator of housing for people living with AIDS in Los Angeles County and the only AIDS service organization that provides a full continuum of care and employment training in the State of California.

their lives by providing them with safe, affordable housing and linkages to a variety of supportive services. It's a win-win situation!

Now, prepare to enjoy the summer knowing that your caring and generosity are helping some of the most vulnerable persons in our community maintain safe, affordable housing, giving them a solid foundation to improve their health and wellbeing.

As always, we invite you to visit our residential buildings and group homes so that you can see first-hand how your generous donations help our clients. To arrange for a private tour, please contact us at (213) 250-9481 ext. 11.

The clients and staff of Project New Hope join me in thanking you for your generous support and wishing you a fun-filled and safe summer!

Peace,

Brigitte Tweddell
Executive Director

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