



ALMOST HOME, INC.

THE ADVOCATE

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SERVING THE GREATER ST. LOUIS COMMUNITY SINCE 1993

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ALMOST HOME MEMBER – IN HER OWN WORDS

Many young mothers pass through the Almost Home program on their way to becoming self-sufficient adults. They learn a number of life skills and, if they stay long enough, they may finish high school, too. While we can teach them much of what they need to know, the drive to succeed comes entirely from them.

One of these remarkable young women is Jatuan P. This year has been very eventful for her: on June 2, she graduated from Roosevelt High School; she started working at Barnes-Jewish Hospital; and she was accepted into Forest Park Community College, where she plans to get her nursing degree. She also moved from the Almost Home transitional housing program to our subsidized apartments across the street – her first apartment!

In her own words, she talks about her experiences:

“My name is Jatuan P. I was 19 years old when I came to Almost Home. I have two children – Jovan who was 5 and Antaja who was 2 when they came to Almost Home, November 5, 2004.

“We were staying with my daycare provider before coming to Almost Home. When my daycare provider heard about Almost Home on the radio, she decided to call to see what this program was about. We decided that I would be better off at Almost Home, so that I could learn to be independent. The next day after hearing about them on the radio, I had an interview with them. A day later, I moved in. I enjoyed it because I was welcomed on the first day.

“As most people may think, a Home would be the last place a girl of my age and my kids should want to be but my experience at Almost Home was great. I know there are a lot of reasons teenage girls may think homes are not so fun to be in, but they haven’t been to Almost Home – a place of encouragement. It’s not easy being a young mother, but Almost Home made it a lot easier by helping me with daycare, transportation, good support, cooking experience, and encouraging us that there will be a better life after your struggles.

“If it wasn’t for Almost Home, I wouldn’t have learned to save and budget my money. I mean, eventually I would have, but they gave me a little nudge with getting started sooner. And if you don’t have friends, this is also a good place to start making them. Your experience can be good at Almost Home if you follow the rules and do what you have to do to move on. That is what I did and now look at me! I have my high school diploma, I have a job and I have successfully moved into their apartments. You can’t beat that, so it doesn’t hurt to try something different.

“Now I have moved into their (apartments) and that means a great deal to me, because now I am really learning how to be independent. I know now that they were trying to get me ready for life outside of Almost Home. That means a lot to me because they were family when I needed them to be. I thank you, Almost Home, for the good experience, for all you have done for me and my kids, and for the good person you’ve helped me to become.

“Love always, Jatuan, Joe and Tata”

ALMOST HOME, INC.

*Transitional Housing
for Homeless Teenage Mothers
and their Children*

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WELCOME TO NEW BOARD MEMBER DOROTHY ALLEN

We welcome the newest Board Member, Dorothy Allen, to the Almost Home family. She is a Financial Communications Specialist at A. G. Edwards, where she has served since 1999. She was featured in the St. Louis Business Journal in November 2003 for professional accomplishments. She got her M.S. degree in advertising from the University of Illinois, and her B.S. in Public Relations from Illinois State University. She volunteers her free time with the Professional Organization of Women, Inc. and a number of other children's organizations, but says that she has "a passion for Almost Home (and wants) to make a difference and impact change." We look forward to her continued involvement with Almost Home!



A recent addition to the Almost Home family.

A PRAYER FOR ALMOST HOME

*Good and Gracious God, make this house a home.
May love dwell deep within its walls.
May peace and harmony reign here.*

*May Almost Home be a gentle yet strong protection
for our teenage mothers, their children,
and all who dwell and work here.*

*May all who enter its doors find comfort,
solace and friendship.
May your holy light shine through the windows of this home to guide
and brighten each day.*

May You bless and keep safe this home, O God, we pray!

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

Volunteers play a big part at Almost Home, as they assist the staff in carrying on our mission. There are a variety of ways in which volunteers assist. Some of these are as Board members, various fundraising committees, fundraising events and special projects, site beautification, providing supplies, teachers and child care.

Barbara Paulus began volunteering in March 2000, and has been a faithful volunteer with child care and assisting at fundraising events. As of June 2005, she had volunteered 160 hours. When Barbara was asked what drew her to Almost Home and what sustains her, she responded:

“I first discovered Almost Home through Catholic Charities. My two daughters were raised and I was looking for a way to start giving more of myself to the community. I contacted Catholic Charities to determine what might be the best fit for me and, after filling out a questionnaire regarding my interests (children) and talents, I was directed to Almost Home.

“From the first night of babysitting for the children while their moms were in class, I knew it was a great fit. I truly love children. They give me a way to see the world in ways that I have forgotten from my own childhood, as well as when I was raising my daughters. When I am with children, I feel that I am truly looking into the eyes of God. The children at Almost Home don’t care what color my skin is or how old I am or what I believe in. They just want someone to hold them or read to them or play with them.

“Being with them is the only thing I do in my life where I truly forget all my worries and the everyday annoyances and just have fun!”

If you may be interested in becoming an Almost Home volunteer, please contact Sr. Sara Schnurbusch at (314) 771-4663, ext. 7. We are always looking for caring people to become involved with our mission and ministry.



Barbara Paulus, Almost Home volunteer

“INTRODUCING...”

SPOTLIGHT ON ALMOST HOME STAFF MEMBERS

Almost Home is blessed with a fine, dedicated staff. Our program staff is especially outstanding, offering counseling and mentoring to the teenage mothers and their children who live here. Within the program staff, our House Parents are particularly important, providing around-the-clock care at the transitional housing facility.

One of our House Parents is Bernice Tartt. She started with Almost Home in November 2003, and was recently promoted to Lead House Parent of the day shift. She is here at 7 a.m. to make sure everyone gets to school, work or daycare. She goes grocery shopping with the Members, encourages them to continue with their education after high school, and tries to boost their self-esteem and help them with their personal problems. “I let them know I’m proud of them!” she says.

Why did Bernice choose to work with Almost Home? She says, “I wanted to work with teenage girls, because I had some of my own. I want to try to make a difference in their lives. Working with these girls is a great and challenging experience that I enjoy, and I love the little babies!” According to Olabisi Solar, the Program Manager, “Bernice is a good leader and Mother-figure. She’s emotionally involved and attached to the Members here, and tries to help them as best as possible. She’s a team player – when things need to be done, she pitches in.”

When she is not volunteering her off-duty time to Almost Home, she spends time with her family. She enjoys taking her grandchildren go-carting or to the zoo. As the mother of five and the grandmother of seven, she has a great deal of practical parenting experience that she shares with the Members. Staff members like Bernice make Almost Home into a caring home for our teenage mothers and children.



Bernice Tartt, Lead House Parent at Almost Home

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

The past year has been a challenging one for Almost Home. We have had a fire in the kitchen and a flood in the bathrooms, both of which resulted in some building damage. But fortunately, our friends and supporters have ensured that we have not met with famine.

Almost Home had some excellent events in the late Spring/early Summer, which help to promote recognition of our mission in the community-at-large. Recently, we were approved by the Missouri Department of Family Services to begin receiving their clients. This will also help to make community social workers more aware of Almost Home as a resource.

We work hard every day to help the young mothers and their children who live here, but we need your support. Almost Home is one of only two transitional housing facilities in the greater St. Louis area that will accept homeless teenage mothers; we are the only one that will accept them if they are under the age of 15. In 2004, 54 mothers and 114 of their children were helped by Almost Home, but that is a small percentage of the number of children who are in need. I ask that you read the articles in this newsletter with an eye on how you might choose to become involved – with donations of money, in-kind gifts, enlisting your company, becoming a Board Member or volunteering your time.

Bless you and your family.

Sheroo Mukhtiar, MSW
Executive Director



Photos, this page:

(above) Students and parents bring items collected by St. Luke the Evangelist school.

(right) Program Manager Olabisi Solar and Executive Director Sheroo Mukhtiar.



Photos, facing page:

(clockwise, from upper left)

Steve Straub, co-chairs Monica Ross Straub and Sally Key, and Executive Director Sheroo Mukhtiar at the Mother Daughter Tea.

SSM Healthcare foursome at the 12th Annual Golf Tournament.

Former Board Member Nell Cox (center) and friends at the Mother Daughter Tea.

SSM St. Mary's foursome at the 12th Annual Golf Tournament.

(center)

Sr. Frieda Rode and Sr. Sara Schnurbusch (Mission and Volunteer Coordinator), both of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary.

SPECIAL EVENTS AT ALMOST HOME

2005 has been a very busy year for Almost Home in the community. On April 24, a lovely Mother-Daughter Tea was held at the home of Steve and Monica Straub. Co-chairs Monica Straub and Sally Key did a wonderful job in bringing new people to learn about Almost Home and made the event a success. Mrs. Mary Jane Straub shared her wonderful collection of hats, and everyone enjoyed themselves greatly.

Our 12th Annual Golf Tournament was held on May 24 at the Westborough Country Club. Chaired by Joe Hatleli, the event committee was terrific in bringing out golfers and providing lots of items for the Silent Auction after dinner. They even arranged for perfect golfing weather!

On October 22, our 2nd Trivia Night will be held at the Kirkwood Community Center. Once again, this will be a combination Trivia Night/Costume Party, since it comes so close to Halloween. Thanks to Chairs Dave Freese and Steve Eckert for serving again this year and coming up with amazing trivia questions.

Check in for more upcoming events at our website, www.almosthomestl.org.



WISH LIST

Small plastic barrettes
Baby shampoo
Baby bath soap
Baby lotion
Infant and Toddler Clothing
Infant and Toddler Pajamas
Crib sheets
Baby bath tubs
Toddler bath tubs
Diapers, Pull-Ups and Wipes
Cloth diapers ("burp rags")
Potty chairs

Women's pajamas (S-XXLarge)
Slippers for moms and children
Fitted twin bed sheets
Pillow cases
Bath towels
Wash cloths

Shampoo for African Americans
Vaseline
Bar soap (Dove or Ivory)
Neosporin
Women's deodorant
Tissues (Kleenex and bathroom)

Laundry detergent
Batteries (AA and AAA)
Single-use disposable cameras
Birthday wrapping paper
Back Packs
School Supplies
Alarm clocks

Gift certificates/cards:
Payless Shoes
Schnucks
Target
Walgreens
Walmart/Sam's Club
The Magic House
Chuck E. Cheese
Zoo Parking
Ted Drewes
McDonald's
Science Center special events

IN-KIND GIVING

Almost Home is able to fulfill our mission of serving homeless teenage mothers and their children, because so many individuals and community members support our work. This support comes from financial donations, volunteering, attending events and giving in-kind gifts.

These in-kind gifts can help our Members directly, such as the Wish List to the left. They can also help by raising money at our events, through Silent Auctions, food and beverage donations, or decorations.

Please consider giving to Almost Home throughout the year. We value all the gifts we receive of financial support, items and volunteer time.

VOLUNTEER TEACHERS

This year, Nursing students from St. Louis University have volunteered their time at Almost Home to teach health classes to our Members.

The following letter was received by our Volunteer Coordinator:

Sister Sara,

Thank you so much for helping us set up times to talk with the girls. We really appreciated all your help with our Senior Project. I can't speak for the rest of the group, but I enjoyed being able to talk with the girls about issues that were important to them. I hope they got as much out of our talks as we did. Thank you again for all your help.

Sincerely, Katie Madura

Our thanks go to Katie and her fellow students, who used their personal knowledge and expertise to help improve the lives of our teenage mothers and their children.

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR DONORS!

Listed here are those who gave between January 1 and October 10, 2005.

INDIVIDUALS

Dr. Giuseppe Aliperti
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SBC EmPAC
SSM DePaul
SSM Healthcare - St. Louis
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St. Mary's Good Samaritan
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Glaxo Smith Kline Foundation
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St. Louis Philanthropic Assoc.
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Franciscan Sisters Of Mary St. Charles
Mary, Mother of the Church Parish
Monastery of the Visitation
New City Fellowship Church
Sacred Heart Ladies Guild
St. Clare of Assisi Parish
SSM Healthcare- St. Louis
SSM St. Mary's Health Center
St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church
St. Mary's Good Samaritan

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

City Of St. Louis - FESG
Good Samaritan Regional Health Center
Peabody PAC
Realtors Housing Assistance Fund

THANKS TO ALL OF OUR IN-KIND DONORS, WHO ARE TOO NUMEROUS TO LIST – YOU MAKE OUR MINISTRY WORK!

We apologize for all errors and omissions. Please contact the Development Department with corrections, (314) 771-4663 ext. 6.



ALMOST HOME, INC.
THE ADVOCATE

Almost Home
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St. Louis, MO 63104

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ALMOST HOME'S MISSION

Through the ministry of transitional housing, education and support systems, Almost Home provides a safe and compassionate environment where young mothers who are living on the margins of society today are empowered to develop their emotional, social, economic, academic and family skills to become self-sufficient, responsible adults and caregiving parents to their children, positively affecting future generations.

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF MARY
MISSION STATEMENT

As Franciscan Sisters of Mary, we live the Gospel as sisters to all. We give our life by being present, hospitable and compassionate, choosing to stand with our sisters and brothers who are poor and on the margins of society.

Almost Home is sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Mary, who founded the organization in 1993.

"Almost Home: Making a Difference, One Family at a Time"