



Spring 2008

# SIGNS of HOPE

Volume 11 Issue 2

## HOPEful Families Partnering for Children's Success

Another long-held dream has become a reality at HOPE—focusing parental education and support programming on the parents of children in *HOPE for Kids*. In fact, the guiding principle of *HOPEful Families* has become that once a child is enrolled in any part of the children's program, that child's family is considered "a HOPE family." In addition, women in HOPE's job-training program who are parents or guardians are welcomed into the parenting activities.

Single mothers and dads, along with custodial grandparents, gather on Wednesday evenings for information and problem-solving sessions. Others come to offer mutual support one morning each week. They all express enthusiastic appreciation for joining HOPE's family-service director, Robin Morrison Harper, in exploring the most challenging and important issues they face daily in parenting.

Robin Harper, a parent of teens herself, embodies the program's theme, *Partnering for Our Children's Success*. A Master's level clinician with many years experience in group work, Robin practices at HOPE as a parent educator and supporter, rather than a clinician. Individual meetings with parents are available for those wishing to brainstorm a particular issue or for those seeking referrals for other services.

The program has offered other features, as well, in its first full year of operation. Christmas giving, with the help of generous community benefac-



Longtime HOPE volunteer Jeannette Deveau works with Summer Fagerstrom, Grade 4, on spelling and vocabulary in HOPE's afterschool sessions. Parents of all HOPE children are invited to participate in *HOPEful Families*.

tors, provided gifts for 165 children in 61 families. HOPE collaborates with other Gardner agencies and programs offering such help to insure fairness and opportunity for all in need. A group of six parents organized a Children's Clothing Exchange in the fall and another is in the works for spring. A "Family Celebration" is also planned for spring.

As attendance in the group sessions blossoms, parents are reporting important steps in their own parenting practices and in their children's responses. HOPE staff is also experiencing these changes. HOPE has integrated its three programs—*HOPE for Kids*, *HOPEful Families* and *HOPE for Women* in order to increase the programs' impact. Its side effect is a growing community of those who experience one another's support

and feel a deeper hopefulness for their own lives and those of their children.

*HOPEful Families* is being made possible through support from the Greater Worcester Community Foundation, an anonymous foundation, and private donors. ■

### HOPE Wish List...

- Card tables and bulletin boards in good condition
- 100% fruit juices for children's programs
- New carpeting for front room
- "Scholarships" for afterschool – \$150
- "Scholarships" for summer – \$75
- "Scholarships" for *Pals* – \$100
- "Scholarships" for women – \$350
- Colored copy paper
- Paper goods (no Styrofoam please): 6" plates, 9-oz. cups, napkins, towels, toilet paper
- Cordless drill

*The House of Peace & Education, Inc. (HOPE) is a nonprofit interfaith organization committed to counteracting violence and promoting peace. In a safe, welcoming and nurturing environment, HOPE offers academic support, leadership development, empowering relationships, and spiritual values to people in need, especially to women and children at risk.*

## College Intern Brings Energy, Gains Experience

I am Allie Gordon, and I am a freshman at Bennington College. Each January my college asks its students to complete a seven-week off-campus internship. This January I chose to intern at HOPE. I am an aspiring English teacher, and this experience has served me well. Each day at HOPE is different for me, each day I am



Bennington College freshman and HOPE intern Alexandra "Allie" Gordon and Mount Wachusett Community College Community Scholar, Julia Stillman, join HOPE teen Samantha Bernier in creating art from recycled materials.

'wearing another hat.' There are days in which I am photocopying, days spent preparing projects for the afterschool program, days where I am mailing letters, and even days spent cooking. There is, however, a part of the day that I do look most forward to, the time of day when all the HOPE kids and teens arrive.

I came here with the assignment to get these students excited about recycling. Julia, the Community Scholar from Mount Wachusett Community College, and I spent many days designing and preparing a recycling project for the teen group. I had been able to experience the amount of time and planning all teachers experience when putting together a project for their students. When the day came to present, we were ready. I felt pride in our presentation. This was a feeling I enjoyed.

I am very thankful for the opportunity HOPE has given me. Working with these students, I have learned a lot. I have learned when to help and when to step back. I have learned patience. I have seen enthusiasm. And I have seen progress. ■

## Interns and Service Learners a Valued Gift

College undergraduate interns and service learners, most from Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC), are among the more than 150 volunteers each year whose donated service allows HOPE to run smoothly. The MWCC commitment to civic engagement has ensured that service learners have been part of HOPE for Kids programming since the college first offered the opportunity shortly after HOPE's founding. This year MWCC has designated HOPE

## Community Trustee: Lt. John Bernard, Gardner Police Dept.



"HOPE's mission to counteract violence means a lot to me. As a member of the police force I see the need among youth and in homes, and as a person

I want to see the people involved get some help. I am happy that HOPE is able to work with both kids and women to provide that help. This is why I am a Community Trustee and supporter of the House of Peace & Education, Inc."

to receive one of its 12 Community Scholars for 500 hours of community service in each of two years. Julia Stillman has served as Assistant to the Teen HOPE Coordinator and as a member of the HOPE support staff since the fall.

The Community Scholar program, newly established at the college, provides students with college tuition, fees and books, as well as pay for their community service. For the college it is an investment in the civic good of the region, as well as the development of future human-service staff for this region and beyond in the future. During the early weeks of this Winter/Spring term, Julia has been joined by a Bennington College first-year student, Alexandra "Allie" Gordon. Allie's reflection on her winter internship experience is printed at left.

For HOPE and the other partner agencies, receiving extra staff to help run our organizations is a valued gift. It is also a treasured opportunity to play a substantial role in the education of a young professional. ■

## HOPE Program Breaks Limits for One Boy

Tom\* first walked through HOPE's door in the autumn of 2007 with his head hung low, shy and embarrassed. He slid under the kitchen table to avoid working on homework. The same Tom, in the spring of 2008, bursts through HOPE's door for the **afterschool sessions**, smiling, with shoulders back, chatting away, and ready to do homework and explore something new. Here is Tom's story...

Tom's family provides a loving, but sheltered environment. He lives with his mother and grandmother, who have limited resources and who are unable to provide much academic support and cultural experience. When Tom arrived, he only wanted to read *"The Cat in the Hat."* His volunteer tutor, a nurse, helped him to move beyond his comfort zone by involving him in a broader range of books. The Academic Director worked with him on learning to use a CD player, reading the dials and using them. Tom kept learning even beyond his hour of tutoring. When he was invited to watch a HOPE volunteer use a screw gun to put in a paper towel holder, he was able to see the difference between a nail and a screw, something not afforded him in his life experience.

The consistent environment that HOPE provides through a number of caring mentors has expanded Tom's horizons. He is developing confidence, trust, curiosity, and a love of learning. Tom has been transformed into a curious student, ready to tackle his academic challenges, and learn more about the world in which he lives.

\* The name has been changed to protect the privacy of the child.

*"I wish every woman could have this experience."*

— Recent graduate who has completed her internship, writing about her experience with HOPE



Maxyne Schneider, SSJ

## Letter from the Executive Director

HOPE is at an important threshold, I believe. As our reputation for effective service has grown, many have asked us to consider replicating one program or another elsewhere. In response to earlier requests, our board and staff created a strategic plan in 2001 to carefully and gradually expand programming in our current facility. In the following four years program enrollments grew by 53.8%. A careful matching of new revenue was an essential element for each step. Only in 2007 did HOPE bring any programs off-site as we began offering our **Pals** early childhood on-site mentoring in a facility of the Gardner Public Schools.

The transition of an organization from the leadership of a founding executive director to new leadership is one to be approached with care. The June 2008 transition has had over 15 months of planning from the HOPE Board working through its specially designated Transition Committee with the assistance of an able professional consultant. The dream of the four HOPE founders is being realized, that HOPE would grow strong in the community of North Central Massachusetts, strong enough so that its mission would continue beyond them, counteracting violence through education, leadership training, empowering relationships and spiritual values.

HOPE is strong and ready for its next steps. With a competent and enthusiastically committed board and a staff of exceptional ability the compassionate and personal service to and with the people of this community will continue. Collaborations with area nonprofits are presenting new opportunities for HOPE to help effect significant change in our region. We have many committed funders, as well, including the United Way, foundations, businesses, civic organizations and individuals, who have made HOPE's work possible. We need to expand support, however, as we enter into our next phase of community service. Our annual spring appeal will be launched shortly. *HOPE is ready for making additional impact on our area, one child, one woman, one family at a time.* Won't you share the good news with friends and family? Your help, as always, will be warmly appreciated. ■

## It's Easy as 1-2-3 to Support HOPE

**GoodSearch.com** is a search engine that donates 50% of its revenue to charities designated by the user. Each time you use this page for an Internet search a penny will be donated to HOPE. It's easy; you use GoodSearch.com exactly as you would any other search engine (such as Google). Follow these simple steps to set GoodSearch.com as the home page on your computer:

1. Go to [www.GoodSearch.com](http://www.GoodSearch.com)
2. Click on the line "Make GoodSearch your Homepage" and follow the instructions.
3. In the box "Who do you GoodSearch for?," enter "House of Peace and Education."

Also, if you plan on making any on-line purchases, please note the "Shopping" tab on the GoodSearch homepage for **GoodShop**. Many reputable stores, from whom you would buy anyway, are listed and will also donate a percentage of the sale to HOPE.

All of those searches multiplied by many users will bring valuable funds to HOPE!

*Thank you 2007–2008 Foundation and Corporate Donors!* Programs at the House of Peace & Education, Inc. have been made possible through generous gifts from the following foundations and corporate donors of major gifts:

George I. Alden Trust, an anonymous foundation, Bank of America Foundation, Jane Bath Revocable Trust, Charles and Kerry Crew Charitable Foundation, City of Gardner Community Development Block Grant, Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts, Deluxe Corporation Foundation, GFA Federal Credit Union, Gardner Cultural Council, Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Conrad Hilton Fund for Sisters, Hoche-Scofield Foundation, Knowlton Foundation for the Elderly, Leclerc Charity Fund, Mount Wachusett Community College/Summer Up, Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation, Sisters of St. Joseph (Springfield), United Way of North Central Massachusetts, and Worcester Diocese Catholic Campaign for Human Development. HOPE also received support from the Worcester County Food Bank and numerous service organizations, churches, banks, schools, businesses and individuals.

*Heartfelt thanks from all at HOPE!*



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### In This Issue...

<b>HOPEful Families Partnering..</b> 1	<b>Executive Director's Letter .....</b> 3
<b>College Interns .....</b> 2	<b>Helping HOPE with GoodSearch..</b> 3
<b>Community Trustee .....</b> 2	<b>Santa's Workshop Brings Joy .....</b> 4
<b>One Boy's Success Story .....</b> 3	<b>Updated Classroom .....</b> 4

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How do you like the new look of *"Signs of HOPE"*? The new style and format for our newsletter have been made possible through generous support from Greater Gardner professionals.

## HOPE Santa's Workshop Brings Holiday Joy to Many

Sixty-one families, including 165 children, received toys and other gifts through the HOPE Santa's Workshop, making for a happier 2007 holiday season.

Longtime **HOPE** volunteers Liz Ellis, left, and Liz Reiser put on the final touches in preparation for sharing the goodness of the Greater Gardner community with HOPE families.



## Updated Job-Training Classroom



Board Chair and **HOPE** President, Ronald Cormier, along with our **HOPE for Women** Computer Instructor, Margaret Donahue-Lynch, cuts the ribbon at the entrance to **HOPE's** job-training classroom. A Block Grant from the City of Gardner enabled **HOPE** to purchase five computers with Microsoft "Vista" and "Office 2007" software, a laptop, a projector, and a "SmartBoard" for the program. This equipment will be used for the **women's job-training** program as well as teens in the **afterschool sessions**.