

**April
2008**

Lydia Place News



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Volunteering

By Manis Pierre

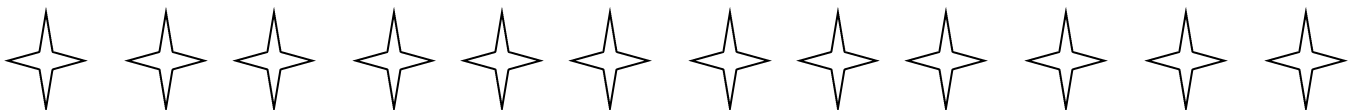
My name is Manis Pierre, I've been volunteering at Lydia Place for about a year now. And to be honest, I'd be lying if I said that there hasn't been rough spells while volunteering. I would also be lying if I said that every time I show up to volunteer it's with a spring in my step and a smile on my face. However this I can say truthfully, Lydia Place is more than a spring in a step with a smile, it's a heartbeat and a call. It's a call to give and to love despite our everyday burdens, and it's a heartbeat that pumps us full of compassion.

I was told to tell of my experiences at Lydia Place. However I don't know how to write down the lessons I've learned by watching a child who is eager to forgive, or a child who is quick to teach me patience. I don't know if I could adequately explain how, after a day of seemingly everything in my life going wrong, one child looking up at me and saying "hi" can make everything about life, so much better in our world.

To the person reading this, if you wanted to understand the experience of Lydia Place, invite a child to go outside to play, watch their eyes thank you, and love you as you both love the world.

Lydia Place Mission Statement

Lydia Place provides a multi-faceted program that supports women and their children in transition from homelessness to independence.



My Perspective of Lydia Place

By Amanda Compher



In October of 2007 I was searching the internet for local volunteer opportunities when I randomly came across a description of Lydia Place. This transitional home for mothers and their children immediately intrigued me. Right away, I called the number listed which turned out to be the home phone number of Noriko Lao, Lydia Place’s dedicated volunteer coordinator. Her voice conveyed a genuine kindness and I could tell that she was excited at the prospect of a new volunteer. Within the hour I found myself pulling into the Lydia Place parking lot to meet Noriko and undergo the orientation that would begin my time as a volunteer.

Since that first day I have returned to Lydia Place each week with a growing realization of the positive impact this house has on peoples’ lives. Within my first two visits I became acquainted with all six of the mothers currently residing in the house ,as well as the majority of their children. Each resident has a different situation; a different story. Some of the mothers are very open and have spoken with me about their past, their hopes and their goals. Other women have preferred to keep their past private, and I know little about their lives preceding Lydia Place. Despite what I have learned about any individual’s background, I have grown to respect them all for the positive and proactive steps they are currently taking for themselves and for their children. The Lydia Place staff provides training programs to the residents which help with parenting skills, as well as life skills in general. These programs, in conjunction with a conducive and nurturing environment, motivate several positive changes in parent-child interactions. As a volunteer, it has been a wonderful experience to observe such improvements on a week -to-week basis.

From the time I began at Lydia Place, I have seen mothers and their children come and go from the house. Two women departed after they successfully graduated from their training programs and found a house or apartment for their family to live in. It was so inspiring to see these women gain complete independence! I could not have been happier when one of these ladies burst into the volunteer office to exclaim to me that her lease application had been approved for an apartment she loved. She was absolutely beaming. This joyous experience, along with countless others has made my time as a volunteer entirely rewarding. Lydia Place touches the lives of all those who are associated with it. I thank this place and all the people here for the amazing experience I have had.

* * * * *

Note: Amanda volunteered as Client Support Staff, but is taking a break before starting graduate school. If you or someone know is interested in volunteering at Lydia Place, please contact Noriko Lao, Volunteer Coordinator at 734-4410 or norikolao@cs.com.

The Lydia Place Spring Fundraising Dinner and Annual Meeting will held on May 31, 2008 at the Bellingham Golf and Country Club. This Year’s Sponsors are:

BP Cherry Point

Whatcom Educational Credit Union

Rice Insurance

Wilder Construction

Community Food Co-op

Bellingham Cold Storage

A copy of the Lydia Place 2007 Annual Report will be available on our web site, www.lydiaplace.org, after June 1, 2008.

If you would like a copy mailed to you please call the Lydia Place office at (360) 671-7663.

Here are a few quotes from the children about the work they're doing in group because no one says it better than a child.

"I worry about the monster under my bed" - age 3

"My safe place is breakfast—I like breakfast!" - age 5

"I want to put my friends, mom and my sister's teacher as my family" - age 5

"My safe place is the garden" - age 5

Thank you for helping the Lydia Place children.

Lydia Place Partnerships

- 2001 The Bellingham Housing Authority contracts with Lydia Place to provide case management to at-risk families living in three transitional housing units located at Heather Commons and Prince Court.
- 2002 The Interfaith Coalition and Our Saviour's Lutheran Church contracts with Lydia Place to provide case management for a single family staying at the Our Saviour's Emergency House for 30 days.
- 2005 The Mary Redman Foundation, Whatcom County Master Gardeners and WSU Whatcom County Extension Education provide Lydia Place with a garden for residents, staff and volunteers to enjoy. Food grown in the garden will be incorporated into the Lydia Place Life Skills program.
- 2006 The Bellingham Housing Authority contracts with Lydia Place to provide Support Services to formerly homeless families in ten units at Laurel Village located in downtown Bellingham.
- 2007 The Bellingham Housing Authority contracts with Lydia Place to provide Support Services to formerly homeless families in 15 units at Meadow Wood Town Homes located in north Bellingham.

Future Planned Partnerships with Bellingham Housing Authority, based on the "Housing First" model: We will provide Supportive Services to three units at the Laube Hotel in 2008. We will provide Supportive Services to ten units at the Walton project in 2009.

The total number of families being served today in the Lydia Place In-house Program , Follow-up, Emergency Shelter & Supportive Services is 35

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www.lydiaplace.org



By Jennifer Hebert, Lydia Place Board President

It's Spring time at Lydia Place not just in season, but in many ways our agency is bursting with new growth, new energy and budding projects. Wise Buys, the volunteer-run thrift shop whose revenue supports Lydia Place's programs, is in the process of a move! This transition is an exciting opportunity to shape the future of that part of Lydia Place's funding and community. Plans are being made for the new location, signage, floor plans, product line, and more. The dedicated volunteers who run Wise Buys have over the years, made it not only a reliable source of funding for our programs, but also a store with a loyal clientele who will follow the store when the move is made.

Another project in our midst is the partnership we recently entered into with the Whatcom County Homeless Service Center. This partnership will result in two new staff positions at Lydia Place. Yes, we're growing! With the addition of staff, we will be able to carry out even more work for the benefit of homeless families in Whatcom County. Finally, in a more literal sense, spring is blooming in the **garden** at Lydia Place where resident moms and children plant food and flowers, share in community, and will later enjoy the fruits of their labor.

As always, the volunteer hours, commitment of our staff and clients, as well as the generous financial support of our volunteers, donors and partner agencies, are the water and fertilizer that keep Lydia Place vibrant and effective in our mission to help local families in their transition from homelessness to independence.

Thank you for your support and Happy Spring!
