

December 2015



*HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO HOPE HOUSE FRIENDS!*

Dear Hope House Family,

Hope House has had a grand fall semester at Myrtle Beach High. Maybe you've been keeping up with us on our web site and/or Facebook page. A new campaign to further spread the word about who we are and what we do started with school opening. A snappy poster designed specifically with the students in mind went up at various places in the school as well as a few church halls and community recreation centers. From the Horry County Schools District Office, Mary Hilburn, Ad. Asst. to the Chief Instructional Support Services Office and Melissa Westbury, Learning Specialist, joined Mr. Washburn, Ms. Goings and Hope House President, Gretchen Abney, to form a committee, which, with input from the Hope House Board of Directors, created a message and pertinent info for the poster. Then through the very artistically talented Ron Zwing, we have a super piece, which was reproduced expertly by Sign World. THANK YOU to all these experienced folks who DONATED their time and product. The response from it tells us that the poster is reaching more students and encouraging them to let Hope House give them a leg up. **"Homeless is not hopeless!"**

In October, Hope House co-sponsored College Application Month at M.B.H.S. This is a wonderful, new event held at participating high schools across the state. The Myrtle Beach Seahawks Class of 2016 kicked off "WELCOME TO YOUR FUTURE," their themed evening, under the leadership of Principal John Washburn, Guidance Director Cookie Goings, and staff. Representatives from schools which included Coker College, Francis Marion University, College of Charleston, the University of South Carolina as well as Coastal Carolina, Horry Georgetown Tech and more were on hand to assist students in making their college applications online with those accompanying fees waived. It's an exciting thing to walk among classrooms where dozens and dozens of computers are set up and to see all these students taking one of the biggest steps of their lives. For those who are Hope House kids, it is especially promising. BOOYAH!

What a blessing to live in this generous community. Thanksgiving is really an awesome holiday for Hope House. We are so grateful to the Chicora Rotary Club who donated 38 pairs of brand new shoes for our kids! This is such a treat for them. Every year the Chicora Rotary makes a service donation to us like this. Last year they provided tons of sweat clothes. In addition to the club's paying for these items, the members shop for them which is a gift of itself. We also received a \$3,000.00 donation from the Myrtle Beach Kiwanis Club. What a gift! Our President insisted on appearing in person at their November meeting to tell them how this impressive donation will help homeless students to graduate from high school and change their futures. Also, Hope House was privileged again this year to work with the Joshua Academy in providing names for "Feed the Families." This is a Thanksgiving Feast with all the trimmings served from 12 noon to 3 o'clock at Myrtle Beach High, Socastee High and St. James High (this year on November 21st). Assuring our teens and their families have a holiday meal is a very important part of giving our students a happier youth. Before school closes for the long weekend, we make sure everyone who comes to our pantry door goes home with groceries. Gift cards are given so that students may purchase dairy items as well.

During their November Fellowship Day Service (memorial-Mary C. Canty), Church Women United of The Grand Strand donated over \$400.00 of gift cards to hope House

**BIG NEWS!** The summer long fund raiser held at the Anchor Cafe in the Grand Dunes Marina, Hope House Community Partner, was a huge success. Two-thousand-four-hundred-sixty-eight dollars (\$2,468.00) was pulled down from the ceiling at the end of the 2015 season! Toby Frisch, Assistant Food & Beverage Manager, amazed cafe visitors all summer long by taking contributions (dollar bills wrapped with a quarter and a thumbtack) and, then, flinging them up to the rafters. Toby said that people were so willing to donate because they knew the money goes to such a good cause. This is the second year that the restaurant's owners, LStar

Management, have sponsored this fundraiser for Hope House of Myrtle Beach. And, as they so graciously did last year, LStar has matched the dollars collected at the cafe for a grand donation of four-thousand-nine-hundred-thirty six dollars (\$4,936.00)!! How amazing is that? Managed by McConnell Golf, this season-long event at the Anchor is part of its Footprints on the Green program developed by the company to give back to the community. What wonderful things this contribution will do for our determined students. We are most fortunate to be teamed with Anchor Cafe/LStar Management and look forward to the publicity party we will hold at Anchor when they reopen next spring.

Students qualify as "homeless" at our high school by self-reporting their circumstances on an application defined by the McKinney-Vento Act. This year 39 students at Myrtle Beach High qualify as McKinney-Vento students; seven of them are Unaccompanied Youth. All teenagers are particularly sensitive to standing out from the crowd in any way. Those who are without shelter for whatever reason or struggling under dire conditions keep a very low profile. We seek them out. Usually, these are students who have been taking care of themselves for many years. The last thing they want is to be discovered by Social Services. So, we treat them as independents and earn their trust through respect and confidentiality. Along with being ever on the lookout for new ways to reach our homeless students at MBH, we are also always looking to expand our fund raising abilities. We know that **grants** are an important part of funding Hope House and apply whenever we can for those we hear about which fit our mission. However, we have a real need for someone who is experienced at grant writing and can give the time it takes to search for them as well as complete the often very lengthy, applications. Hope House also needs someone with other fund raising experience. Local charitable organizations often name us as beneficiary of their **events**. Hope House Directors speak to all clubs, groups and societies on a regular basis to raise public awareness. Someone who could act as a liaison for us with them in these efforts would be a big help in way of cultivating this avenue of fund raising. With someone to manage a volunteer team, we might also have an event of our own. You are our Hope House Family. If any of you have these skills and the time to give, please, step up and give us the benefit of your abilities. The Hope House Board of Directors meets four times a year in February (annual meeting), May, August and November.

Now that the Christmas holidays are approaching, Hope House is arranging to take students shopping for necessities and "wish items." We will be distributing gifts from donors such as the jackets and shoes that we have already received from civic organization sponsors. We are grateful to **all** of our supporters. Special thanks to Myrtle Beach First Presbyterian Church for their Christmas shopping sponsorships, and we also thank Costco for their sponsorships of our students and for their contributions. Unity Christ Church is doing an Angel Tree to collect hoodies and such for our kids - these kind folks have been supporting HHMB from the beginning and we love them all. The Seahawk Luncheon Group of MBHS grads will again be holding a canned food drive this Christmas to send home groceries with our kids for their Christmas vacations. If you know of any businesses or organizations who wish to donate to our homeless students, this time of year calls for non-perishable foods and warm accessories like socks, gloves, knit hats and gloves. A special thank you also to the many families who no longer exchange gifts, but rather donate the cost of gifts to Hope House!!!!

Thank you to all of our Hope House family for providing a wonderful 2015 for our students!

With Our Very Best Wishes,

Hope House of Myrtle Beach

Gretchen Abney, President; Cookie Goings, Vice-President; Kelly Payne, Secretary;  
J. Burt Huggins, Treasurer  
Diane P'Pool; Sue Cranford; Todd Harms, Roz Gentry  
Advisory: George W. "Bo" Bryan; Myra Starnes