“Once Community of Hope’s temporary housing program was explained to me, it gave me hope and I knew I wouldn’t be alone. It was a relief to me.”

Myiesha Little, a DC resident, and stay-at-home mother of three, felt the strain of providing for her family as a sole provider after her partner experienced multiple severe health issues. As with so many District families, these health issues created a troubling rippling situation of financial and housing instability.

Before being confronted with health issues, Myiesha’s partner worked full-time and served as the sole financial provider while she managed the household. However, in January 2019, her partner suffered a stroke while she was pregnant with their third child. The stroke impacted his ability to work and forced the family to quickly exhaust their savings account. The family moved in with Myiesha’s mom until they were once again faced with moving within 30 days because they weren’t legally on the lease.

Stress levels continued to rise as the couple navigated challenge after challenge. Eventually, Myiesha’s partner suffered yet another stroke – this time causing him to become visually-impaired and paralyzed on one side of his body. All of the unforeseen circumstances led Myiesha to the Virginia Williams Family Resource Center where she was connected to Community of Hope’s temporary housing program at The Triumph.

“The Triumph exceeded my expectations. The first thing you hear when you hear “shelter” is [it’s the] worst of the worst. I didn’t Hope for a Little Family

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From the Desk of Kelly Sweeney McShane

Dear Friends,

In the last month, our lives have all changed drastically due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During this crisis, Community of Hope’s mission is even more important, as we continue to meet the urgent needs of families. We are providing essential health care with the goal to reduce the pressures on hospitals and keep people both healthy and at home. We are providing safe, dignified shelter for families experiencing homelessness and support for families in their own homes to stay stably housed. As you will read in this newsletter, babies are still being born, so we are working to ensure that mothers and babies have the healthcare they need. And we are still helping families move out of homelessness into their own homes.

I am so proud of our amazing staff at Community of Hope, both those who are working on the frontline with patients, as well as those who are working from home to support families. I am also so grateful to the many, many people who have stepped in to help – whether it be by making masks or sending funds to help us weather the storm. I hope you are encouraged as you read this edition filled with stories of happenings at Community of Hope. I certainly am! There is no more important time to be a Community of Hope for our patients and our families. With your continued support, we will remain a strong and nimble organization ready for today’s challenges and for any that will emerge in the next 40 years or beyond.

With confidence in the days ahead,
In This Together Amid COVID-19

Not All Heroes Wear Capes

Not all heroes wear capes and we couldn’t agree more! Our healthcare professionals and other essential staff who have remained on the frontline throughout this pandemic have shown us their compassion, loyalty, and overall dedication to the clients and patients that we serve. Thank you!

Protecting Our Community Thanks To You

Community of Hope would like to send a big thank you to our supporters from Temple Sinai, Centene Corporation, Chinese Community Church, Gender Architects, Serve DC – The Mayor’s Office on Volunteerism & Partnerships, Something Vintage, and so many others for donating and sewing masks for our healthcare and essential team members, and our housing clients! Extra thanks for our friends at Temple Sinai who not only sent masks but also sent games, activity books, and art supplies for the children in shelter. Thank you for your generous support!

Receiving Extra Through Crisis

We are so grateful for these Hope Giver donors who have given extra and early gifts to support our COVID-19 emergency response: A. James and Alice B. Clark Foundation; The Alexander and Margaret Stewart Trust; Anonymous; Bainum Family Foundation; CityBridge Foundation; England Family Foundation; Health Resources Services Administration; Jane Bncroft Robinson Foundation; and The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness. For a full list of additional supporters, please go to www.communityofhopedc.org/covidresponse

Continued from Front: Hope for a Little Family

know who was there or what to expect but I was willing to stay no matter what for the sake of my family.” Myiesha received case management support immediately upon entering The Triumph. Together, they set goals and a plan of action for Myiesha and her family to secure stable housing. “My case manager was a loving and caring person. She understood what I was going through and knew everyone had downsfalls. She made me feel like there was hope.”

Myiesha’s case manager connected her with valuable resources that provided financial support and assistance with childcare. Her case manager also helped Myiesha obtain important legal documents for herself and family members who were crucial to the housing process. What used to be a major roadblock, was now a roadway for Myiesha to start searching for stable housing for her family. “The housing program gave me time to focus not only on my family but myself. It gave me time to catch a break, analyze things, set goals, and clear my head.” Myiesha and her family exited The Triumph after just 58 days into their own apartment.

“If it wasn’t for Community of Hope, we would be walking up and down the street somewhere. They gave me hope, encouragement, and a sense of being. I know I can make it, and I can do it no matter how bad it is. It’s possible.”

COVID-19 Update: Amid COVID-19, we reached out to Myiesha to ensure that her family felt supported knowing what free DC services and resources were available for families in the District. “Low-income families are a hurt the most by COVID-19. I understand the city being shut down, but they aren’t considering low-income families and the impact it has,” she said. Myiesha, like many others are experiencing frustration and hardship - which further shows that Community of Hope is needed more than ever.

A Community of Support for Expecting Parents

When Erin Davis found out she was expecting her second child, a birth center delivery was non-negotiable. “When I gave birth to my first son at a hospital, it was a horrible experience. I had no support from the doctor. He did not care at all. I was just a number [to him].” The lack of support Erin received during her first birthing experience was memorable, in what she says was the “worst” way. So, when Erin learned about Community of Hope’s Family Health and Birth Center (FHBC), she was optimistic through positive online reviews that this health center would be the perfect place for her to give birth to her second child. Our nationally accredited Family Health and Birth Center – the only free-standing birth center in the District of Columbia, provides a range of health care services for the entire family, with a special focus on serving pregnant mothers and their babies. “Throughout my pregnancy, I had various midwives, but they always had the same heart and vision for what I wanted to do and what would be best for my family.” Erin was unable to participate in our Centering/Pregnancy groups (interactive and fun learning groups for families due the same month). However, Erin’s midwife made it a priority that she received one-on-one supportive learning that would prepare her for her baby’s birth. During Erin’s pregnancy, her midwives ensured she maintained a healthy diet and practiced different prenatal exercises that would benefit her and the baby. The exercises were strongly suggested because Erin’s baby was in a posterior position – baby’s head was down facing Erin’s abdomen. The midwives knew that with strategic exercises, they could encourage the baby to turn to help avoid any complications during delivery. “When I found out the baby was in that position, it really scared me. [I asked myself] Am I going to have to have him at the hospital? But the midwives showed me different exercises I could do at home and exercises my husband could help me with. And he turned!” Erin gave birth to a healthy baby boy named Elijah, who weighed 8 lbs., 0.5 oz and measured 20 inches long in a birthing room at FHBC, with the support from her husband, midwife, and birthing assistant. “If it wasn’t for my midwives, I probably would have had him in a hospital. But these women really believed in me.”

COVID-19 Update: Babies don’t do lockdowns. Our midwives are still delivering babies through the pandemic.

Hope Happenings

Launching the Family Success Centers

Community of Hope’s Conway Health and Resource Center has been chosen to be the Bellevue Family Success Center. We are one of 10 sites selected by the Child and Family Services Administration (CFSA) in targeted neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River, where approximately three-quarters of the children and families served by CFSA live. The Centers have been selected as Family Success Center, with the awardee being Martha’s Table and we’ll partner on that. The grants associated with this work are part of a new city-wide plan called Families First DC. With this new place-based approach, we hope to empower communities, integrate services, and provide upstream support.

A Corporate Partner We Are Thankful For

We are excited to have WSP as a volunteer corporate partner! WSP team members have been actively involved in several of our housing volunteer opportunities, including mentoring a young person who has experienced homelessness, leading activities and serving dinner at The Triumph in Ward 8, and hosting a Veterans’ themed party at Hope Apartments. Volunteers deepen the impact Community of Hope has on the lives of our clients. Thank you, WSP, for your work in the community!

Erin Davis gives birth to Elijah, who weighed 8 lbs., 0.5 oz and measured 20 inches long in a birthing room at FHBC, with the support from her husband, midwife, and birthing assistant. “If it wasn’t for my midwives, I probably would have had him in a hospital. But these women really believed in me.”

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