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DogWatch of Northern Virginia
(703) 859-4722 www.dogwatchnova.com

Pets of the Week



Whiskey

Whiskey is a senior male domestic short hair. Thanks to a generous donor, Whiskey's adoption fees have been paid. ID #A068849



Zeus

Zeus is a senior male rottweiler who is available for adoption from foster. Contact adoptions staff at adoptions@alexandrianimals.org or call to schedule a visit. ID #A068539

The Hollin Hall Animal Hospital is proud to sponsor the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria's Pets of the Week. For information on adopting this week's pets go to www.alexandrianimals.org. (703) 746-4774



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COMMUNITY LIFE



Photos/Mary Paden
Michel Keegan, left, tells of his rise out of homelessness during the recession with the help of New Hope. Above, singer Desire Christian opens the breakfast with a song.

Once Homeless, Now They Help Others

By MARY PADEN
Contributing Writer

Two people who were helped out of homelessness by New Hope Housing, a Mount Vernon nonprofit that helped to rehouse over 400 people in Northern Virginia last year, carried the show at a fundraising breakfast for several hundred last week at the Springfield Hilton. The event raised over \$70,000 in gifts and pledges.

Both of the formerly homeless people were featured in a short video of people who had benefited from New Hope services. One, Desire Christian, opened the event with a moving song ("Move Forward" by Troy Sneed) and the other, Michael Keegan, now a New Hope board member, was the main speaker telling his story of his descent to homelessness and rise out of it with the help of New Hope.

Pam Michell, executive director of New Hope, gave a brief history of efforts to eliminate homelessness in the Rte. 1 Corridor and her dreams for the future. She recalled a day 40 years ago when Eleanor Kennedy and others who were looking for a shelter along Rte. 1 were directed to the abandoned 1918 water treatment plant for Fort Belvoir.

"Standing up to her ankles in water in the old building, Kennedy said, 'I am a dreamer, but I cannot dream this place into a homeless shelter,'" Michell said.

Remodeled, the building is now a homeless shelter and one of two hypothermia shelters in winter (along with Rising Hope Church, also administered by New Hope). New Hope purchased other homes and apartments in the area and remodeled a large older home into 20 efficiency apartments.

New Hope Housing currently shelters and houses more than 350 people on any given night and typically more in hypothermia season. It operates 25 programs ranging from street outreach to shelter to permanent housing with many support services in Fairfax County, Alexandria, Falls Church, and Arlington County.



Sherry Edelkamp and volunteer Andrew Young Edelkamp volunteers to run the hypothermia center at Rising Hope Church throughout the winter.

Michell said her dream is to have a reliable computer network, a new or remodeled homeless shelter (a possibility if a bond issues passes in November) more Mondloch Places in Fairfax, Arlington and Alexandria, more lives transformed, and ultimately an end to homelessness.

Michael Keegan told his story of going from a professional with a six figure salary to homelessness during the recent recession of 2008. "I should have asked for help as things kept getting worse," Keegan said, "But I didn't until I hit the bottom of being out on the street." Keegan recalled moving out of the Kennedy Shelter in a snowstorm in January 2014 to his new apartment a few miles away. He remembered stopping for a few groceries and being excited to make his own food choices, "even though they were 'poor nutritional choices.'"

He now has a "job I love" a girlfriend, and a regenerated relationship with his 15-year-old daughter who spent five weeks with him last summer.

Keegan, who choked up several times in telling his story, said that as a board member "I am trying to repay what was given to me as a receiver of services to help provide guidance and direction to New Hope."

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