



# Transitions

Winter 2000

## Daisy White: A mission of love

*Each year during the holiday season, supporters of Covenant House give more than they realize when they participate in our Adopt-A-Family program. The giving is anonymous, but the feeling that comes with it is personal and reciprocated. The families come in all sizes; some are urban, some are rural. They are black and white, young and old. This is a story about one of them.*

When she was a girl, Daisy White wanted to be a missionary, to take the word of God to remote parts of the world. That dream had to be put aside when Daisy married and began to raise a family, but it has never been completely forgotten. Daisy speaks of it wistfully, as she remembers the girl she once was, the girl with romantic notions of faraway places and exotic people.

In many ways Daisy's life has been a mission. It hasn't happened the way she thought it would – and it hasn't taken her very far from her West Virginia roots.

For the past 33 years the center of that mission has been Daisy's son, Danny, the fourth of her five children. From the beginning, Daisy realized that Danny was not like the others.

"He had seizures real bad," Daisy said. "And the first doctor we took him to said he had petit mal epilepsy and that he would outgrow

it." When Danny was six months old, his parents took him to a specialist at the Walter Reed Army

Hospital."

The doctor at Walter Reed told the Whites their son had something called tuberous sclerosis. He said Danny would be profoundly mentally retarded and probably would not live to be six years old. He recommended that the boy be placed in an institution.

"The doctor said if we didn't institutionalize him, we should put him in school by the time he was three," said Daisy.

Danny has always lived at home, surrounded by the love and care of his family.

"I never dreamed of what it would be to have a child like that," said Daisy, "but we've loved him like the rest of them. We're not ashamed of him."

Danny requires constant care, as does Daisy's husband, who



**Danny and Daisy White**

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Published quarterly by Covenant House, 1109 Quarrier Street, Charleston, WV 25301. Beth Spence, editor.

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## From the desk of the co-directors

# Shapers of the Future

*"We are not prisoners to a past. We can be shapers of a better and more hopeful future."*

It is not uncommon for our personal experiences to shape who we are and what we do. In the face of pain and suffering—endurance, character, and hope have often flourished; changes have taken place, and movements and communities have been built.

Sharon and her husband celebrated their silver anniversary a few years ago with her children and friends. Their lives together were the envy of many. That is, until he walked away one day, bored with his life, and divorced her.

Shattered by the loss, but particularly, by not understanding a man whom she had known from elementary school and loved all her life, Sharon had to begin her life again outside of the home. Having a degree helped, but being a stay-at-home Mom meant she had been outside of the workforce for most of her married years.

"I felt as if I had been cut very deeply, but there were no visible scars or blood—no one could see all the pain, and some wondered why I just couldn't get over it more quickly. Abandoned, I felt as if I had no value and was simply a cast off. After the shock, tears, time and finality of it all passed, what life has given me is a few very good friends, wonderful children and a new professional life which have provided many blessings—I am richer now than I could have ever imagined, but it wasn't easy."

What Sharon didn't say was that her professional life has been a commitment to those who have often been disregarded by society. She has become quite an advocate for those who are considered "cast offs" and get lost in the system.

John and Rachel have all the financial resources in the world at their fingertips but they have been powerless to save their daughter from alcohol and drug addiction.

Rehabilitation has been a temporary win on several occasions, but more often than not there have been countless setbacks, and the young woman is still lost on the streets. According to her parents, "It is one step forward, two steps back, but we never lose hope...there's always hope."

They have been supporters of Covenant House for over a decade and express the hope that an organization like Covenant House exists for their daughter who lives out of state.

While neighbors and business associates would see them as blessed with material things, most do not see the personal pain and suffering. It is likely John and Rachel would trade their perceived "blessings" for their daughter's recovery and peace of mind. Their personal pain and suffering have given them great sensitivity to those who live on the street. There is neither condemnation nor judgment. Without fanfare, their financial resources and time have been committed to places like Covenant House.

Personal pain and loss have routinely shaped or changed public policy when the human face is placed on the statistic. When we hear Ryan White, Stuart McKinney, Susan Komen or Christopher Reeves, many know there have been funding and research changes for AIDS, homelessness, breast cancer and spinal cord injuries.

When personal or collective stories have been shared, frequently they make a difference. The horror of too many deaths at the hands of

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# Covenant House to celebrate 20 years

Comedian and social commentator Jimmy Tingle will headline Covenant House's 20th year celebration on Sunday night, April 29, at Christ Church United Methodist.

Jimmy, who formerly appeared on CBS's *Sixty Minutes II*, takes a humorous look at politics and current affairs. He currently is involved in a one-man show in Boston. Jimmy also is a first cousin of Covenant House co-director Barbara Ferraro.

The 20th year celebration will include a dinner and the showing of a video by Tom Burger, communications director for the West Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church.



**Jimmy Tingle**

Through the years, Tom has helped tell the story of Covenant House in words and images. When Covenant House was just beginning its mission, he put together an original slide show to tell the early story. Since that time, he has produced four videos. One told stories related at the first homeless conference held in Charleston and another was created for Covenant House's tenth anniversary.

Michael Switzer of Design-Works is designing a booklet of stories and pictures which tell the history of Covenant House through the voices of people who have been involved with the organization.



**Virginia Cooper, Ann Patterson and Sue Chase, shown with Covenant House co-directors Barbara Ferraro and Pat Hussey, were honored at a luncheon for Food Pantry volunteers. At right is Joan Steven, the new buyer for the Food Pantry.**



## *‘Those who care for the needy honor God’*

A luncheon honoring Food Pantry volunteers took place on October 23 at First Presbyterian Church.

All guests dined on a simple meal of tuna casserole and beans – the kind of meal persons getting food from the pantry could make.

Gratitude was expressed for all those who have given of their time and energy to the food pantry during the past 19 years.

Three women were singled out for special

thanks. Sue Chase, Virginia Cooper and Ann Patterson were recognized for their decades of commitment to providing food for those who have none.

The names of these three women will appear in the Memory Garden of the new Covenant House which will be built in 2001.

“Those who care for the needy, honor God” aptly describes the service of Sue, Ann and Virginia. Covenant House is extremely grateful for their years of dedicated and competent service.



## *Many thanks to our own Joe Wilson*

Joe Wilson doesn't like to be in the limelight. As a matter of fact, he shies away from having his picture taken and doesn't seek public praise. However, Joe has been and continues to be a wonderful neighbor for Covenant House.

During the past ten years, while he has lived next door, Joe has swept the walkway every morning. He has washed down the stairs when needed and shoveled snow during the winter.

He cares for the entire front area, emptying trash and tending to the plants and rose bushes. For the past two years, he has planted a few tomato plants.

Many of us have enjoyed his roses (which he seems to have on hand when someone is having a hard day) and tasted his fried green tomatoes.

We want to thank him for everything he does. Joe's hard work makes each day a little easier for the rest of us and his gentle manner makes us grateful that he is part of our lives.

## From the Desk. . .

spouses or partners have affected funding and legislation regarding domestic violence. And hopefully, the movement created by the Million Moms' March favoring gun control will eventually limit the insanity of unrestricted gun ownership.

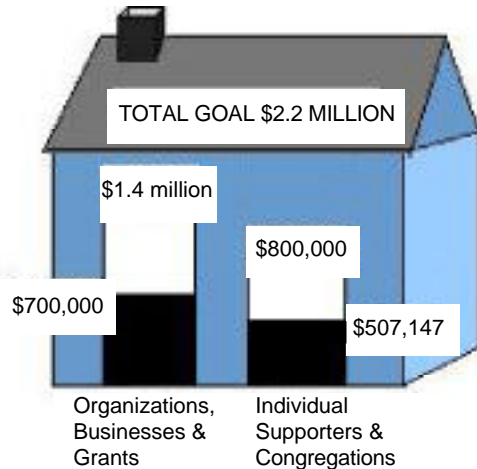
Similarly, in the midst of hostile environments and communal suffering, as people have been crushed, often communities have been built. Slavery, apartheid, genocide and group oppression have united those most affected by the suffering, torture and death. Moral outrage and action by sympathetic and tolerant groups join the voices of those who suffer and cry for justice. Men, women and children's communal pain and memories can not be diminished, minimized or erased, even though such dismissal has been attempted. Oppression seems to go on forever; however, in the end, it can not endure, because it is wrong.

Every aspect of our lives, is, in a sense, a vote for the kind of world we want to live in. Thank you for all you've done in 2000. In 2001, may we be strengthened by what we encounter and respond to life with fairness and compassion to all its challenges.

**Barbara and Pat**

## The Capital Campaign

graphic by Kitty Haviland



## *Help us reach our goal*

We appreciate the generous response to our Capital Campaign by so many people. With your help, we hope to break ground in February or March 2001. If you have not returned your campaign cards, please consider giving a gift.

# Daisy White's life is a mission of love

recently was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. Caring for the two men keeps Daisy pretty much tied to her Charleston home except for periodic trips to the doctor and monthly outings to the grocery store.

"Most of my time is spent giving baths, medicine and food," she said matter-of-factly. "My husband wouldn't bathe if I didn't do it for him. I've already said goodbye to the man I married, but he has begged me not to put him in a home. I never get out of the house. I don't even go to church."

The Whites came back to West Virginia when Danny was three, moving to Princeton, near where Daisy had been raised.

"My husband had colon cancer and I wanted to be close to my family," she said. "But they didn't have schools there for Danny so we moved to Charleston."

In Charleston Danny began day care at the Baptist Temple, while Daisy's husband recovered completely from the colon cancer.

"I know God spared him because I had five children, and the oldest was just 12," Daisy said. "I feel that everything in your life, good or bad, happens because God's showing you some things you need to do to get back in line."

When Danny was four, he was diagnosed with autism, something that Daisy didn't know too much about at the time. She has educated herself about the condition just as she educated herself about tuberous sclerosis.

Of the autism she says, "He's overcome a lot of the symptoms, like his compulsion for washing his hands all the time," she said, "but when he goes to bed, all the TVs have to be on the same channel. If you go in his room and move something, he gets upset. He knows the call letters for every radio station in the United States,

and he plays the guitar beautifully."

Danny went to Shawkey School until he was 18. He wasn't allowed in Shawnee Hills' adult care program because of his history of seizures. "He's never had a day when he didn't have seizures," said Daisy.

Danny has had numerous medical emergencies through the years, but somehow he always has pulled through with Daisy at his side. "They told us he wouldn't live to be six, but here he is 33 years old," she marveled.

'I would like to meet the people personally who give to us. We have a magnificent Christmas every year because of them.'

Most recently Daisy learned that her son has sleep apnea. He has been fitted for a mask that will provide the correct amount of oxygen as he sleeps. Danny also has diabetes. As a result, the leg he broke in July has not yet healed.

Financially, things have never been easy for the family. Daisy's \$380 monthly check won't even pay for all her medicine. Her husband's retirement check covers his medicine and the house payment, and Danny's SSI goes for his care. There is little left over, and Daisy's house shows it.

"We were supposed to get help from the Christmas in April program last year, but I was at the doctor with Danny when they came here and my husband told them he didn't want anything done. He ran them off," Daisy said. "He didn't know what he was doing."

She said she cried for three days when she learned the workers had come but not been able to complete the work.

The family's steep and rutted

driveway could use a layer of gravel. The house needs a coat of paint. The Whites also need two new windows to replace two broken ones and they need new gutters.

Daisy first came to Covenant House ten years ago to try to get help with a water bill.

"They sent me to First Presbyterian to get groceries and they helped us that Christmas," she said. "I don't know what I would have done without Covenant House."

"They've helped us every Christmas since. And I don't know what we'd do without the help. I wouldn't have winter clothes or a winter coat. They've kept Danny in jeans."

There have been extras, as well. "Last year Danny needed a new teddy bear," said Daisy.

"He always sleeps with a teddy bear, and his had torn up. The first thing I saw when he opened his packages was a big teddy bear. And I got an ironing board and a laundry basket. Once a week I set up my ironing board. I just love it."

"I would like to meet the people personally who give to us. We have a magnificent Christmas every year because of them."

The soft-spoken Daisy speaks with pride of her other children and grandchildren, whose pictures line the walls of her home.

She tells where each child is – the son in the Army, the daughters in Georgia and Maryland, the other daughter who lives down the street and helps out almost daily.

But it is Danny – "the most special one of all" – who made it possible for his mother to fulfill her lifelong dream of being "a missionary wherever I was."

Although difficult, her life's work has been fulfilling. "If I die tomorrow, I've had a wonderful life," she said.

# Are our kids merely echoes in the hallway?

Young people took center stage at Challenge West Virginia's annual "Our Communities, Our Schools" conference on Saturday, October 7, at Cedar Lakes.

A panel of West Virginia students told about high school life as they are experiencing it. For some, long school bus rides are a major part of

the school day.

## Rural Echoes

A young man from Webster County

talked about his daily two-hour commute each way.

His only extra-curricular activity is cross-country. In order to participate, he rides home on an activity bus, which drops him off four miles from his residence at about 7:30 in the evening.

Near the road, the young man keeps a four-wheeler, which he rides in the dark the final miles to his house. His communication with his father, who works an evening shift, consists of notes the two send back and forth to each other.

A young woman from Preston County scoffed at the "expanded class offerings" she can choose from as a result of attending a large county high school an hour and a half from her home.

"They have some-



The cast of Echoes in the Hallway

thing called "Travel West Virginia," she said. "I don't take it, but I can't imagine anybody getting anything out of it."

A student from Harts, where the community is fighting to keep its small high school, talked about the joy of getting to attend a school where he is known and where he knows everyone.

"And I get to play basketball," he said. "At another school, I wouldn't get to play because I'm not very good."

Following the student panel, a group of young actors and singers from Turner Ashby High School in Rockingham County, Virginia, performed a play in which they delivered some of the same powerful messages.

"Echoes in the Hallway" expressed the concern of a generation that

the education system is not connected to the reality of their lives.

In school, the students learned random bits of information and prepared for standardized tests, which in no way connected to the turmoil in their private lives.

The performance was particularly poignant because it was dedicated to the memory of the play's author, teacher Joe Hiney, who was killed in June at the age of 32 when his bicycle was struck by a car.

When keynote speaker Marty Strange of the Rural School and Community Trust took the podium, he said that in 28 years of public speaking, he had never had a harder act to follow than the two groups of young people.

He said a great deal

of research has been done which supports what the kids are saying – but that they say it much more eloquently than the statistics.

Small schools make them feel important, make them feel that they are part of something meaningful, make them understand that they are not just "echoes in the hallway."

Challenge West Virginia is again submitting for the Legislature's consideration a bill that would limit school bus times to those times recommended by the state.

We hope that you will support this bill so that every child across this state can have a high school experience that makes him or her feel connected, needed and important.

– Beth Spence

## *Did you know. . .*

- In the Covenant House AIDS program this year, coordinators Julie Britton and Susan Ledsome worked with 152 different individuals, helping 147 persons with rents, utilities and medications.

Of those who received assistance, 40 were women; 23 were mothers with dependent children; two were grandmothers with dependent children; and two were children who were HIV positive. Five of the 152 died.

- Challenge West Virginia has received a \$40,000 grant for a project involving school facilities and community involvement in planning for facilities.

- Jennifer Jones Fazzolari has been hired as the development specialist for the West Virginia Housing and Advocacy Coalition for People with AIDS.

- The Covenant House-sponsored play "Gone Tomorrow" will be performed in five schools after the first of the year, according to director Dan Kehde.



**Claude Churchwell stocks the highly rated Covenant House Food Pantry**

- The Covenant House Food Pantry at First Presbyterian Church received the highest ratings from the Huntington Area Food Bank. The pantry received high marks for cleanliness, proper storage and proper rotation of food.

- We owe a thank you to Lucille Gore for her years of service on the Covenant House Board of Directors. She has moved to Texas. Best wishes, Lucille.

- We want to thank those people who designate Covenant House as the recipient for their donations to the United Way Campaign.

If you made a contribution to the United Way in the name of Covenant House, and if we received your contribution, you will receive an acknowledgement from us. If you have not received a card of thanks from Covenant House, we did not receive your gift.

## *Special Gifts*

Frances and Richard Martin  
in memory of Bobby Magnuson  
Norma L. Dalporto in memory of Susan  
CICSC in honor of  
Becky Ofiesh's service to Covenant House  
Mary Margaret and Ellen Quinn-Devine  
in memory of Leona Mary Richards O'Neill  
C. R. and Virginia Osborne  
in memory of Michael R. Miller  
Nancy Balow in honor of the marriage  
of Jane Hange and Larry Pennik  
Mary and Arthur Maloy Jr. in honor of the  
wedding anniversary of Beth and John Hughes  
Thomas C. Damewood  
in memory of Dessie Damewood  
Walt, June and Michael Hussey  
wishing Christopher Brehm a speedy recovery  
Ursula and Stephen Ferraro, a gift to the Capital  
Campaign in lieu of wedding favors  
Helen Thalheimer in honor  
of Helaine Rotgin's birthday  
William J. Mills in honor of the anniversary  
of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. William J. Mills

## **Our Policy**

We do not, have never and never will sell or rent the Covenant House mailing list to anyone!

## *In memoriam*

Richard Parry, a friend of Covenant House, was the victim of a hit and run accident.

Our thoughts are with his family and friends.



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## Covenant House Programs

### Drop-In Center

Provides a safe space with showers, laundry facilities, access to a free telephone, mailing address and crisis intervention.

**David Bennett, Philip Hainen** 344-8433

### Emergency Assistance

Helps those in extremely difficult circumstances with rents, utilities, travel and medicine.

**David Bennett, Philip Hainen** 344-8433

### Food Pantry

Food distribution center located at First Presbyterian Church. Volunteer coordinator: Virginia Cooper

**Manager: Claude Churchwell**  
**David Bennett, Philip Hainen** 344-8433

### Clothing Closet

Clothing distribution center operated out of St. Marks United Methodist Church. 9:30-11:30 a.m.

**Coordinator: Judy Snyder** 343-3744

### Challenge WV

A statewide organization committed to maintaining and improving small community schools and reforming state education policy so that every child has the opportunity to receive the best possible education.

**Beth Spence** 756-9191  
**Linda Martin** 744-5916

### AIDS Residential and Resource Program

Maintains residences for people with AIDS who are homeless and provides support services and emergency services. Supports and offers performances of "Gone Tomorrow," an educational play aimed at a teenage audience.

**Julie Britton, Susan Ledsome** 344-0530

### Counseling Program

Offers family, individual or pastoral counseling by a certified licensed counselor. Fees are on a sliding scale.

**Barbara Ferraro** 344-8053