



Katie Allston, LCSW-C  
Executive Director

Terry Weigel  
Director of Advancement

advancement@marianhouse.org



### CHANGE SERVICE ADDRESS

## OUR WISH LIST

*We strongly encourage monetary donations that provide us the flexibility to address our needs as they arise. This has never been more imperative than presently in the midst of COVID-19. However, we always have a wish list that includes items below. You can ship it to us or call ahead to (410)467-4121 to arrange hands free delivery. We encourage you to put a note with your package including your name and contact information so we can adequately acknowledge your gift. For additional questions feel free to reach out to the Advancement Office by contacting [advancement@marianhouse.org](mailto:advancement@marianhouse.org).*

- Gift Cards (Walmart, Target, Giant)
- Educational activities for youth of all ages
- Uber/Lyft gift cards
- Hand sanitizer with a pump (30 oz.)
- Crossword, Word Search & Sudoku booklets
- Travel Mugs
- Colored pens/pencils
- Journals
- Plug in air fresheners
- Umbrellas
- Ear buds
- Reusable Water Bottles

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

*Lisa Nash*



Lisa Nash is a business consultant with the State of Maryland Department of Labor, working with employers who wish to share job opportunities through the Maryland Workforce Exchange website and hosting job fairs with her colleagues from the Mayor's Office of Employment Development.

Lisa met Lara McNeil, Marian House Employment Coordinator, several years ago at one such job fair. She had heard of Marian House because her children attended the Holy Spirit School (in the building that is now Serenity Place).

She's now been a volunteer with Marian House for the past four years, regularly participating in mock interviews. The opportunity allows her to draw on her present job related skills, but also on her former life as a teacher and writer with the Baltimore Gazette newspaper.

Marian House mock interviews are a milestone for program participants, acting as the culminating event of the 8 week Job Readiness Program. After learning workplace skills and updating their resumes, program participants put their knowledge to practice by interviewing with local employers and receiving thoughtful feedback throughout the process.

Lisa initially became involved in order to share her experience and encouragement with the ladies, but often feels that she receives much more from her time at Marian House. She continues to be, "inspired by the perseverance of Marian House women as they strive to overcome obstacles in their lives. You wouldn't know how tough their lives have been to see how they present themselves. They are always dressed sharply, possess such poise and have great resumes to share."

Lisa loves that she's seen her fellow volunteers mistake some of the Marian House women for other visiting employers on mock interview day. She sees the positive presentation of the women as a tribute to their fortitude, but also to the strength of the program. She feels drawn to the Marian House mission, which is "all about providing love, care and second chances. The spirit of the supportive community in the house is evident each time I visit."

She's quick to offer Marian House as a resource to women she meets looking to make a positive change in their lives. Similarly, she is happy to let others know about the opportunity to give back by volunteering. Lisa is an active member of the Church of the Redeemed of the Lord, singing in the choir and participating in missions to support Baltimore's homeless population. She is currently working on a youth fiction book about a boy who finds a cure for lupus. She sees this as an extension of the positive message to inform, enlighten and inspire that she feels called to share. She always wants to encourage people around her to rise above. "Just because you are down today, doesn't mean you have to be down tomorrow. If God can forgive us, we can learn to forgive ourselves and move on to enjoy all he has in store for us."





# MARIAN HOUSE HEART OF THE HOUSE

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Happy Summer!

As I write this and reflect on the first half of 2020, I am hopeful that the lessons learned will lead us to positive change as we move toward the second half of the year. In shifting to the “new normal” that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought upon us, we’ve sent most of the staff to work from home with a few members reporting to work in-person, and also established new policies and procedures to ensure the safety of our residents and staff. Like many of you, we’ve come to find that flexibility is the word of the day, each and every day, as both staff AND residents adjust to changes in programming. I’ve also stepped in to run one of our outpatient therapy groups with our residents. (For those of you who don’t know, I am a licensed social worker with a specialization in substance use disorders.) I didn’t realize how much I missed the clinical work and I truly enjoy these meaningful two hour sessions with our inspirational women.

As you can see in this newsletter, the pandemic may have brought about some changes, but it has not slowed us down! We’re adjusting to the virtual world of events and fundraising, all of which are critical to the ongoing operations of Marian House. In addition, our women continue to excel, not only amidst a pandemic, but against the injustice and systemic oppression that many of our residents face in their lives.

Helping women heal and build a better life is our goal, and one that is harder to do when the systems in our society turn a blind eye to racist practices that keep cycles of inequality, poverty, incarceration, and addiction intact. Alongside our sponsoring communities, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and the Sisters of Mercy, Marian House remains steadfast in empowering women towards an equitable future. We do so in large part by partnering with our community to create a society where people of color are treated with dignity, respect, and equality. Thank you for being a part of that supportive community.

In Hope and Justice,  
*Katie*

## RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT *Wanda*

A little over a year ago, Wanda entered our doors for the first time. She grew up in a close-knit community in Cherry Hill with a single mom and four siblings. She remembers,

*“We didn’t have a lot, but we had lots of love and what we had, we took care of. We had our necessities and we didn’t even know we were poor. My mom worked a lot to provide for us, but she raised us well. My mom taught us the value of hard work and good morals.”*

Eventually her mother remarried, but her new stepfather proceeded to sexually abuse Wanda and her sister. This led to some strain within her family, but Wanda continued to love and respect her mother and family deeply.

When her mother passed in 2003, Wanda and her siblings went their separate ways and lost touch with one another.



At the time, Wanda was in a long-term relationship with a man that she would be with for twenty-two years. She remembers it being good at first, that she felt cared for and that she loved him. Towards the end, her partner became possessive and she decided the relationship was unsatisfying

When they separated in 2009, Wanda stayed in an apartment they previously had shared until she was evicted because she could no longer afford the rent by herself.

*“At that point, I started staying with different people, whoever would take me in. I started drinking and using drugs because that was the environment at the different places where I was staying. I ended up losing my job and after a while, I lost my motivation to even find a new one. I was suffering the pain of losing everyone I loved and I felt like I was wandering around aimlessly and feeling in despair. I felt like I had nobody to talk to and the pain just mounted. I lost hope and my life felt meaningless and like I didn’t have a purpose. I grew tired of living that way.”*

Wanda found a safe place to stay with a family friend, Mr. G., who was well loved by the community. But when he passed away, Wanda found herself completely homeless again. One day, when she was walking around a grocery store, a person stopped her:

*“This lady probably saw the despair written all over my face and she asked me if I was okay. I was honest with her, that I wasn’t okay – I was homeless, I had a drinking problem, and I was using drugs.”*

Wanda’s new friend connected her to a recovery program in Baltimore. That same day, she gathered what she had in a backpack and checked herself in to the program. For the next eight months, Wanda focused on her recovery, learned about her addiction, and established the foundations of a stable and sober life. As she prepared to graduate, her counselor referred her to Marian House so that she could continue building her recovery and her future.

*“Here, I have the structure I need to support me, I have hope for my future, and I’ve reconnected with my nieces and nephews and they bring me a lot of joy. I’ve learned to let go of the shame and the blame that I was holding on to from being sexually abused and how to cope with my grief from the passing of my mother, sister, and twin brother. I still don’t know where my eldest brother is, but I pray that God has kept him in His arms. I’ve been sober for nine months and I just finished GNA/CNA Training (Geriatric Nursing Assistant / Certified Nursing Assistant) this past April. Marian House changed my life – it’s given me new meaning and purpose.”*

As Wanda looks towards her future, she wants to advance her training to become an LPN, to get her own place and continue to inspire and be there for her nieces and nephews. She wants to show them and others that drugs and alcohol are not solutions, but that a stable and independent life is possible despite the difficulties we may face.







# MARIAN HOUSE HEART OF THE HOUSE

## *Marian House Acquires Historic Property*

In 2019 when the Marian House board and staff embarked on a new strategic plan, one of the main priorities identified was to expand our program opportunities in the city. Little did we know that we would be given the opportunity of a lifetime!

On June 15, The Women's Industrial Exchange has transferred their building and assets to Marian House after making the decision to cease operations at its historic 333 North Charles Street location. The Exchange approached Marian House late in 2019 about taking over the building. This historic landmark gives Marian House a variety of options including restaurant space, retail space, a conference room, office space, and seven apartment units.

“By assuming ownership of this venerable property, we can continue to focus on helping women in Baltimore become independent and self-sufficient,” said Katie Allston, Marian House Executive Director. “Our goal will be to make the best possible use of the building in keeping with both organizations’ focus on supporting women in Baltimore.”

“On behalf of the Board of the Exchange, we are pleased to honor and preserve our past while helping Marian House create more opportunities for women in the present and build hope for a brighter future, said Jenny Hope, chair of the Board of Directors for the Women's Industrial Exchange. “It has been a bittersweet moment in our extensive history; however, we are thrilled to have the building put into the hands of a remarkable organization that is truly helping women in Baltimore today.”

Marian House plans to engage members of the business community, city officials, and interested individuals in the planning process going forward. The team leading this project has also devoted a section of the Marian House website to allow interested members of the public to submit suggestions at [marianhouse.org/wie](http://marianhouse.org/wie).

For more information, contact Beth Myers-Edwards, Advancement Associate, at [wie@marianhouse.org](mailto:wie@marianhouse.org), 410-467-4246.



*With Special Thanks*

The Marian House board and staff want to acknowledge and thank the law firm of Ballard Spahr LLP for their invaluable assistance in making the transfer of the Women's Industrial Exchange building to Marian House. In particular, we owe a debt of gratitude to Attorney John Smolen. We are grateful for your support in making this a seamless transition.



MARIAN HOUSE  
**12TH ANNUAL  
RACE TO EMBRACE  
INDEPENDENCE**  
5K RUN AND WALK

**REGISTER NOW**  
[marianhouse.org/5k](https://marianhouse.org/5k)  
Sat. 9/17 - Sun. 9/27

Mark your calendars, the Race to Embrace Independence 5K is back for its twelfth year! It's more important than ever to come together as a community to show your support for the women of Marian House, celebrate their successes and encourage them as they continue moving forward in their transformative journeys.

Out of an abundance of caution, **this year's race is going fully virtual!** While we're disappointed not to be able to gather at Lake Montebello in September, we're excited by the creativity a virtual race allows. Some exciting opportunities this year include:

- **\*NEW\*** 8 day window to get your mileage in (Sept. 17-27)
- Invite friends and family beyond Baltimore to join your race team
- **\*NEW\*** Virtual programming including speakers, an energetic warm-up, raffle prizes, race awards, and more!
- YETI individual fundraising prizes
- **\*NEW\*** Youth pricing (kids under age 6 are free and kids ages 6-12 are only \$20)
- **\*NEW\*** Race registration and fundraising platform
  - Earn badges!
  - Seamlessly share updates on your social media
  - Fundraising thermometer
  - And more!

As many of you know, the race serves as our primary annual fundraiser so we appreciate your support in making sure that it's a success. A huge thank you to our 2020 sponsors, whose generosity is so valuable in these uncertain times. It's not too late to sign on and receive sponsorship benefits! You can learn more on our race website or by reaching out to [advancement@marianhouse.org](mailto:advancement@marianhouse.org).

## *When the Going Gets Tough, The Tough Go Virtual*

When the Advancement Team of Marian House scheduled a new fundraising event for March 25, 2020, we had no idea what the winter/spring of 2020 would bring. As one can expect, BLINGO! Play Bingo and Win Bling, became a virtual event held over four nights on Zoom with 25-35 participants each evening, playing 6 games for BLING, gift cards, and cash. Although not as much fun as having a live event, many players told us that they had a lot of fun and appreciated the diversion from staying/working at home.

We made it work but we are hopeful to have a live BLINGO! event in 2021. We are so grateful to the BLINGO! sponsors, BLING donors, wine donors, and in-kind donors. We hope to see you at BLINGO! in 2021.

### *Diamond Sponsors*

SERVPRO OF HUNT VALLEY & HARFORD COUNTY  
BLUE OCEAN

### *Ruby Sponsors*

BEST FRIENDS FUR EVER  
CONSTELLATION, AN EXELON COMPANY  
KPMG

### *Emerald Sponsors*

ABSOLUTE SERVICE, INC.  
ECO-SCIENCE PROFESSIONALS  
INHOMES ADVANTAGE  
HWK LAW GROUP  
NFL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION - BALTIMORE CHAPTER

### *Sapphire Sponsor*

MARY KRAFT HR