House Retreat Addresses Future Growth

On January 19th House and Garden volunteers, Board Members, Community Members, and Staff joined together for an afternoon of discussing the development of Clara’s House to date and planning new ways to generate growth through innovative outreach and funding. The retreat was led by Colleen Dolgan, executive coach and consultant, who did a great job grouping ideas and helping the participants produce action plans. Our guest speaker was Dr. Wayne Sotile, Co-Director of Sotile Psychological Associates in Winston-Salem. See page 2
Retreat (continued)

Dr. Sotile specifically commented on the love and compassion that fill the atmosphere at Clara’s House and the “heroes” who help to create a truly “safe place” for all. The retreat helped us to generate many ideas which will serve as the basis for new initiatives and participation from the community. To close the program, Kelly Pritchard, the new Clara’s House relief manager, shared her observations after 3 months of working nights and weekends. Her moving speech is reprinted here. Thank you to all who helped make this retreat such a success!

A Special Message from Kelly Pritchard, New Clara’s House Relief Manager

I'm so enamored with what a special place this is and what a gift it is to the community and beyond. What a spectacular place to be both as a staff member and as a witness to all of the life happening inside these halls. It can be overwhelming at times, both good and bad, as I hone my "healing presence" skillset. I'm learning how much practice it takes to neutrally support, without absorbing the emotions of the folks that reside with us. When I was hired, you told me it was a ministry of sorts and indeed that is true. What a gratifying way to earn a living.

God definitely does permeate this place, and I notice it in many ways. Perhaps it's in the quiet of the middle of the night as a guest comes down to whisper their nervousness about the oncoming day. I feel Him as the mist rises in the early morning as I unlock the Healing Garden ….such a sacred place. I ask for His blessings for the man that saunters down the hallway early in the morning, off to face the difficult surgery that lies ahead for wife of 52 years. He's in the shining faces of those that share miraculous news. What a gift to witness the exciting news of a birth and, at the other end of the spectrum, the love & heavy emotions of a family that gathers to lay their most loved ones to rest. It's such a cross section of humanity here where people show you their worst and their best, and the only thing that we can do is be a soft place to land.

The beauty of this space, this garden, and of course, these wonderful volunteers, oh my!!! It all matters and I am grateful. Whenever you get bogged down with your daily tasks and become desensitized to the larger picture remember what a difference you make in the lives of others. I see it time and time again as I check in the weary, the exhausted, the nervous, and the brave.
Grateful Guests

The following letter was received from Nyla’s (pictured to the left) mother who was a recent guest at Clara’s House.

As I reflect on our nearly week-long stay at Clara’s House, I am left with a tremendous sense of love and spiritual renewal. The week has been a journey that many families will have. However, I hope that they experience Clara’s House, and we will share in a common understanding of kindness. My daughter, Nyla, and I came to support my mother in extremely trying times. Nyla found kindness and tenderness that children immediately recognize when it’s genuine. She also found peace as she and her daddy grew closer and became stronger to help me.

In a world of uncertainty and almost daily calamity, knowing the kindness of Clara’s House allows us to know that all is not dark...indeed the light at the top of hill glows with the hope and kindness that brings peace to families in need.

--The Rhodes Family

This is such a wonderful place. It was truly a blessing for my family to stay here. When we found out my grandfather had a stroke we were in a state of shock and disbelief. I wasn’t sure I was going to be able to make it but my mother called with information about this place and everyone was able to come. The stress of looking for a hotel or a meal or a friendly smile or a kind face or a beautiful soul to comfort you after a day of sadness is hard to come by. But these last two days you have lightened our hearts and everyone took the time to learn our names and it feels like a second family here. Without this wonderful place, I wouldn’t have made it. Thank you Clara McLean House for everything. May God continue to bless this home and build millions of these houses around the world.

Thank you.

The Paddyfoot family, Winterville, NC
Year-End Appeal Success

In 2014, volunteers joined with staff to explore the possibility of a Sustaining Gift program for Clara’s House where people can donate funds on a regular basis and in a manner that works best for them. These types of programs are especially beneficial for organizations that must raise their operating costs each year, as Clara’s House does.

After several meetings, the group decided to focus on getting out a year-end appeal letter with various giving options as a first step. Volunteers and staff then worked together to write personal notes on each and every letter.

Although donations are still coming in, we are thrilled to report that the effort has raised more than $18,000 to date for Clara’s House. In addition, many were new donors and indicated an interest in making sustaining gifts monthly, quarterly, or annually.

We plan continued follow up with these donors in order to share the wonderful events and happenings throughout the year that make Clara’s House such a special place. And we look forward to our joint partnership with volunteers to ensure continued growth and success.

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all who participated and who generously donated their time and resources to ensuring the success of this effort.

Clara’s House volunteer, Cynthia McIver, keeps Clara’s House neat and organized. Here, she tidies and sanitizes after children enjoyed the playroom so it’s ready for the next visitor. Thank you Cynthia!

Clara’s House and Healing Garden volunteer, Nancy Kendrick, shows her many skills by doing repair work on a frying pan.
The Foundation is Making a Difference

The Health, Healing and the Humanities Series
John W. Coffey, Curator, North Carolina Museum of Art
February 4, 2015, the Country Club of North Carolina

Curator’s Choice
John Coffey Picks His Favorite Ten Pieces of American and Modern Art

Hosted by the Clara McLean House Advisory Council & The Foundation of FirstHealth, Inc.

Please join us as John Coffey shares his Curator’s Choice. He will highlight his top ten selections of art—relating the healing nature and effect of each piece.

Curator’s Choice: American and Modern Art — John W. Coffey — Curator, North Carolina Museum of Art
Wednesday, February 4, 2015
The Country Club of North Carolina

Welcome Reception at 5:00 p.m. / Lecture at 5:30 p.m.
Cocktails and Heavy Hors d'oeuvres following the program

RSVP by January 28, 2015 to register for this complimentary program by returning the enclosed reply card, or calling (919) 695-7510 or by email at lholland@firsthealth.org.

Chagall Mini Series Save the Date:

April 15, 2015, 3pm: The Stained Glass Windows — A look at the 15 stained glass windows of Marc Chagall located in England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Israel, and the United States.

July 15, 2015, 3pm: The Tapestries and Sculptures — An examination of the Chagall tapestries and sculptures located in France, Israel, and the United States as well as private collections.

A Note from the Director

As I reflect on the comments of our new staff member, Kelly Pritchard, that Clara’s House is a “soft place to land,” as well as Dr. Sotile’s definition of a hero: “those who create safe spaces for others,” I am reminded of our opening almost 3 years ago.

There was an overwhelming flurry of details to work through. Finishing touches were given to this big, brand new, beautiful building. We were gathering supplies from soup to nuts (literally), and we were establishing our guidelines for how this house would serve others.

In the midst of all these last minute preparations, how do you also create a “soft place to land” for that first family that walks through the doors? I can tell you the answer. It is all about the human touch and the intentional selection of volunteers and staff who would eventually give Clara McLean House the spirit of kindness that lives here today. And we hear it constantly from the families we serve.

We appreciate everyone involved. As we know… people may not remember what you say; however, they remember how you make them feel. We look ahead to 2015 and anticipate great things at Clara’s House!

Rebecca Ainslie

First Connections Celebrates President’s Day

What better way to celebrate President’s Day than an informative history lesson on U.S. Presidents?

Dr. John Dempsey, president of Sandhills Community College will be our special First Connections speaker on Monday, February 16th.

Dr. Dempsey is a graduate of Notre Dame, has a Master’s Degree in Government from the College of William and Mary, and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Massachusetts. He is a Vietnam veteran and served in the Executive Office of the President during Jimmy Carter’s Administration. He clearly has a wealth of knowledge to share, and we hope you can join us for this wonderful event.

For more information or to make a reservation, contact Laura Kuzma at 715-4230 or lkuzma@firsthealth.org.
A Peace of the Spirit by Pam Hudson

A new year has begun and once again we have the chance to begin anew. Our world is full of instant this and that and we no longer have to wait for much of anything. If there is something we need to know or are curious about, we go to the internet. If we get hungry we can always pop something in the microwave or go out. If we have something to tell someone we can post it to the world.

I don’t know, but I do believe real change comes from within and generally happens in layers. It is kind of like our skin and how our skin cells grow and change from day to day. Our skin provides an amazing cover, protection and functions in ways that fit us like a glove.

Here at Clara’s House we have come a long way and continue to grow and change. We work to make room, both literally and figuratively, for healing changes to occur and to ask and think about all we may do. What can we do to help, what boundaries can we set and honor that will give us integrity, and in what ways can we be all we are meant and made to be? We can just go along with the days ahead, or we can resolve to be alert, and ever seek opportunities that will be supportive. Let’s put some skin on it and resolve to do just that! Happy New Year everyone!