

RESTORE MINISTRIES, INC.

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2016

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 1

Hard lessons learned the hard way.

Last year, during one of our Sunday morning services, I was asked to read the story of the Binding of Isaac with my then 8-year-old son. While in the course of the scripture reading, I unexpectedly became overwhelmed with emotion. Tears started to freely flow. The thought of facing what Abraham faced was just too much for me as I looked down upon my own son. So many thoughts were running through my head.

Well, last night I attended a series of short plays presented by a number of theater groups in Dallas. All the plays had been commissioned after the trial and acquittal of George Zimmerman. Two, in particular, profoundly struck my heart. The first was a telling of the Santos Rodriguez shooting that



High School students and Mr. Bagby during Homework Center

occurred in 1973. The other was a short play entitled "Dressing". The latter brought those thoughts of that Sunday scripture reading rushing back to me.

"Dressing" depicted a conversation between a mother and her son. She expressed her concern about how her son was dressed. It

wasn't about fashion, it wasn't about indecency...it was about safety.

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Monthly birthdays celebration



February Cooking Class

Executive Director's Message

Across from Bayway Ave and four blocks east of the public school I work, a meeting was underway and the topic was territory or turf that lead to shootings, hospitalizations and sadly death. When I went to work the next day there were no signs of yesterday's violence. After work I went to Sebastian house to take him to Restore. His mom seemed distant. I was feeling that something was worrying her. Finally she told me Sebastian was playing outside when she heard the shoots. All she could do was grab at

her heart, pray and run to get her 10 year old son. I hope you give this January/February edition a chance to sink in. The program directors' article highlights the help we received from our corporate partner, Phillips66, the Bayway Refinery in Linden, with the science fair and the high school student's luncheon and tour of their facility. And as usual, the student profile section tells the impact Restore is having on our members. Our lead article is written by Vince Gonzales. I met Vince at an interdenominational gather-

ing of ten churches on the issues of race, power and privilege. Vince shared with us his experience with violence in the form of "implicit bias." Both, Vince and Sebastian's mom face day to day struggles that can be fatal to their children. Both are trusting in God to provide an alternative to sacrificing their children to a violent society. For Sebastian and many children and teenagers that alternative is Restore. Restore is not a drop in/drop out after school center.

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Volunteer Melinda Nye coaching SAT session



Volunteers Carmen Duarte and Michelle Ramos helping students in Homework Center

Hard lessons learned the hard way. Continued from page 1



Phillips66 Engineers ; Jessica Masterson and Scott Moore tutoring our children



By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.”

(Hebrews 11: 17-18)

This black woman was warning her son that his manner of dress might evoke trouble from others. Shortly after he leaves the house, she hears a gunshot.

After the plays ended and during a group discussion with the director, I mentioned that I had a feeling that a disconnect might exist between a parent of a bi-racial child and the need to have this type of conversation. I was thinking how difficult it would be for Shelly to have “the conversation” with our sons.

People of color must have these conversations with their children all the time. My father had this type of conversation with me. I remember it well. It was timely too. The year I started as a freshman at Southern Methodist University, 1977, the Justice Department was investigating the cities of Highland Park, University Park and Dallas for pulling over drivers that were passing through the university area and happened to be brown or black. I was stopped.

That conversation my Dad had with me informed me how to behave. It went beyond acting with respect. It is the same lesson we teach today. It is the conversation that reminds our children that they are treated differently when they walk into a convenience store, shop in a department store, walk into a new school or classroom, have a substitute teacher, drive “too nice” a car, enter into a new church or simply walk through a neighborhood. Most im-

portantly, they are treated differently when they are stopped by a police officer. I’m not sure that one can appreciate the importance of these conversations if one has never experienced security following them around a department store, having the police stop you when you’re simply walking (we always seem to fit the description of someone the police are looking for), or being pulled over for reasons like “one light is dimmer than the other” (yes, they have all happened to me, some more recently than I care to think).

My wife is well-read, intelligent, intuitive, and can be extremely empathetic, but she grew up in a white, middle-class family and was shielded from what people of color face every day. I am not sure she can grasp the concern I have as a male, person of color, with the concept of driving while brown. My car did not pass inspection recently and I needed to have a repair done so that it would pass. That forced me to drive with the sticker expired while I drove the needed miles to reset the computer. I was terrified to drive because I know how things can go drastically wrong in a second.

Implicit bias knows no bounds. The manner of dress, the level of education, how well-spoken a person is can be easily lost by the tone of one’s skin.

Which brings me back to the

Binding of Isaac. Abraham was faced with following God’s instruction to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. God demanded Abraham’s faith be put into practice. Well, we all know the story and we all know the ending. As I look down upon A.J. and Max, in their youthful innocence, I hope that I never have to have “the conversation” with them, but I know that I will. I know that I will tell them, time and time again to not wear their hat turned at that angle, don’t wear that hoody, don’t play the music too loudly in the car when you are driving, be aware of your surroundings and who you associate with, don’t give your friends rides, go straight to school/work and straight back afterward. But like Abraham, I will offer them into the hands of God, daily, in faith, praying and hoping that God will bring them home safely by providing an alternative to sacrificing my child to a society that sees only the color of their skin. Because for people of color, sometimes just going about our day-to-day business can be risky. Sometimes it can be fatal.

Why did I cry when I read scripture that day? Because the Binding of Isaac is, in reality, the faith commitment people of color make daily with their children whenever we send them out our doors.

***By Vince Gonzalez, Esq
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Executive Director's Message, Continued from page 1



Phillips66 presentation by Engineer Jack Taylor to Restore

Our goal is not just to keep kids off the street and keep them safe. Yes, the adults at Restore have created a welcoming and safe place for our members, but what makes us unique is that any child or teenager that comes during Restore days and hours must spend at least 45 minutes in

the Homework Center where staff and volunteers build quality time helping them complete their homework assignments and school projects. At Restore, we concentrate our years with our members in helping them fully participate in their schools, develop their leadership potential, demand they get the highest grades they can make, provide them with in house SAT and college preparations and take them to visit State and private colleges and universities throughout the east coast. We find that colleges are looking for urban young people who can handle the workload and still partici-

pate and contribute to college life.

This time Sebastian was unharmed. Even though his mother didn't know the people who were involved in the shooting, her heart aches for the mothers of the young adults who were shot. She lives in fear that one day, and most likely for no apparent reason, Sebastian would not be so lucky. But today she kisses him goodbye as he jumps into the back seat of my car, buckles up, and talks about his school day and which of his friends he hopes will be at Restore.

Linwood Bagby

Program Director's Message:



Phillips 66 Engineers Rachael and Jarell presentation for Career Day.

On Monday February 15, on President's Day, schools were closed, but not Restore Ministries. A group of ten high school students joined with 4 chaperones to visit Phillips66 Refinery in Linden NJ. The Phillips66 new hired employees hosted a Career Day and Tour of their facility. Most of their already volunteered at Restore as tutors, so they were familiar with us and understood the powerful message and impact this Career Day would have on our teenagers. Along with their peers, the new hired

employees did excellent and exciting presentations about what they do and their mission at the Refinery. Our students participated by observing various grades of crude oil, asked questions and got a better understanding of what it takes and the teaming involved to work in a corporations like Phillips66.

Joshua was intrigued about the operations at the control tower. Joshua said that he would love to work in a place like Phillips66. A few days after the tour he asked one of the engineers what career paths he should consider. All of our teenagers discovered that becoming a professional in their field of studies will require education after high school, skills in working with different people and thinking out of the box. They will have a better future and can reach their life goals if they continue to be open to positive new people

and rewarding experiences at Restore.

Phillips66 has become a major stakeholder at Restore. They provide a yearly donation for the Homework Center and we receive an additional monetary donation for the volunteering time of each Phillips66 tutor. In addition to the February 15th tour, Phillips66 volunteers support our children and teenagers in many ways throughout the school year. They come to tutor, they take the lead in Restore's annual Science Fair and they have become a part of the Restore family. After many of the kids finish with their homework, a Phillips66 volunteer practices time tables and vocabulary words with them. SAT tutoring with Phillip66 tutors will begin after the Spring Break. But what the children and teenagers like most is that Phillips66 volun-



Saying grace before dinner



Phillips66 volunteers: Jack and Scott at Homework time

teers spend time with them playing soccer and basketball in the gym and board games with the younger children in one of the break out rooms.

Restore is an after school program with a small paid staff. We can do so much because of our volunteer network that we have development and nurtured. We are so thankful that we have dedicated men and women as part of Restore sharing their talents, knowledge, and time to help make Restore a safe place where children and teenagers can come and find people who believe in them and are willing to help our members build a good future for themselves.

Ximena Carrasco

Congratulations to our alumni: Trevon, a sophomore at Lehigh University, on your selection for a 12-week paid internship this summer in Singapore. This super news builds on Elmi's graduate school admission at Temple University's Tyler School of Art. To top it off, Ronnie's promotion to Marines' Sargent.

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 Non-Profit Organization

REALIZING...

POTENTIAL...

MAXIMIZING...

ACHIEVEMENT...

RESTORE AT A GLANCE



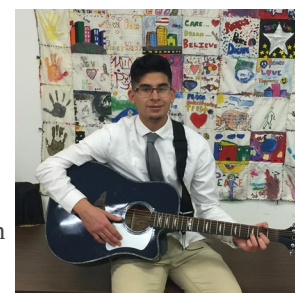
Student Profile:

Anthony Maldonado



I heard about Restore when I was in sixth grade. I overheard my friends who were members talking about Restore and I thought they said "The store". They tricked me into thinking it was an actual store where you can buy soda, chips and candy. Once we got to the program, I was confused because it wasn't an actual store, but a building with a whole basketball court and a huge kitchen, but no place to buy soda, chips and candy. What I did discover were people of different races and ages playing sports and communicating with each other like friends and family. My friends started introducing me to everyone. Mr. Bagby, the director of the program, was in the kitchen preparing the dinner for the night. He shook my hand and asked if my parents knew I was at Restore and to call them so he can talk to them. I was a bit nervous being my first time, but by the second week, I was feeling like I belong

I can't believe my first visit to Restore was five years ago. Now I'm a sophomore and receive scholarships from Restore donors each year to go to St Mary's of the Assumption High School in Elizabeth, New Jersey. I am a student leader at Restore and help with tutoring younger children and playing sports with them. I really like being around the younger children at Restore. They make me feel crazy happy. I also like being a role model and showing them by example the benefits of making right decisions. I am in the Honors program at my school with a 3.75 GPA. I am a lover of nature. My Dad, during the summer, takes me hiking, fishing and on river trails. We would search for animals and catch frogs, turtles and fish. We wouldn't keep them. My Dad and I would search for animal trails and see what type of habitat the animals live. Spending these special times with my Dad, spiked my interest in animals and pulled me towards a career in Marine Biology. The adults at Restore encouraged my career interest by getting a scholarship for me to attend an afternoon session at the Camden Adventure Aquarium for high school students interested in aquatic sciences. That afternoon in Camden inspired me to work hard in school and to make my career goals possible. Now I am looking into a summer science program for high school students. The funny thing is that my experiences at Restore are not unusual. My friends who invited me are all still members of Restore. Two receive Restore scholarships like me and we are sophomores in the Honors program at St Mary's. All of us are student leaders at Restore and give our input on the programs and the direction of Restore. I plan to continue in Restore throughout my high school years. I am very thankful and appreciative for the education, leadership, and friendships I have found at Restore.



Anthony Maldonado