

MOMMAS House



Annual Report

2008

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For the past 22 years, MOMMAS House has been offering group residential care to single mothers, pregnant or parenting and their children. All residences are located in Nassau County, New York, but applicants are not limited to that area.

There were 30 mothers and 35 children who shared our four homes for all or part of 2008. All were offered the opportunity to stay for two years but some did not need that much time and others were unable to adjust to the program requirements. Those who stayed the longest had the highest chance for successful independent living.

There were 153 requests for admission between January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2008. These referrals were from many various sources: the Department of Social Services, hospitals, adoption agencies, schools, churches, health care facilities, former residents, pregnancy counseling services, shelters, domestic violence agencies, friends and relatives.

There are many very unique stories, e.g. Natalie and her daughter, Madelyne, moved into MOMMAS House in Glen Cove in 2007. She was homeless and sheltered temporarily at Covenant House. Her family was unable to provide for her and the baby because they were also on subsidized housing. She went to an educational program to obtain her GED. Then, she was accepted into Hunter Business School, where she took an Office Technology course. Upon graduation, she was able to begin working at a local social service agency and has been working there ever since. By April 2008, she was able to move into one of our transitional apartments and is supporting herself and her child. She is a dynamic young woman, who only needed someone to believe in her ability to succeed. Since many women and girls apply, the next step is deciding who is offered a place. This is very difficult and depends on many factors, including the current make-up of the house, and what problems the mothers in residence are already dealing with. The successful applicant signs a contract and agrees to live by a defined set of rules.

The age range of the mothers was from 17 to 27, with the median age of 20, and the children from pre-born to 5 years old. There were 3 children who attended pre-school. Referrals were made for Early Intervention and Special Education evaluations on all of our children because they demonstrated some developmental delays or learning disabilities, or the mother did not receive adequate pre-natal care.

The racial make-up was 50% Black, 34% Caucasian, 10% Hispanic and 6% American Indian or bi-racial. The mothers were generally living in Nassau and Suffolk Country and the Metro New York area.

In 2008, of the 30 mothers, 40% completed their educational goals, 28% are still in school/training objectives, 11% started working and the 11% left before completing their education/training objectives, 3 mothers placed their babies for adoption. 10% had to enter full time treatment programs and therefore could not attend school until they completed that phase. Of those in school, 16 attended post-secondary vocational/business school, 8 graduated high school or received GED and 6 began employment. Everyone, who stayed with the program, showed progress toward their goal of being independent.

Once their goals were reached, we also had 13 families move out into their own apartments or to a different housing situation, sometimes reuniting with family, and 2 families moved into our transitional living apartments. Continued support services are offered to our “graduates”, so that the initial stage is not so traumatic.

MOMMAS, Inc
Annual Report 2008

In 2008, our transitional living apartments in an East Massapequa house were fully occupied. The success of these young women is how we gauge the effectiveness of our program.

The mothers received instructions in subjects important to the health and well-being of themselves and their families. Workshops were offered at all three houses and addressed the following subjects: Parenting, Debt Counseling, Self Directed Budget, Health and Wellness, Safe Start, Nutrition, Reading and Writing, Financial Literacy, Time Management, Self-Esteem, Job Search and Interviewing, Fire Safety, Cooking, Yoga, STD/AIDS Education, "How to be a Single Parent," Domestic Violence, Anger Management, Medication, Bias Help and Home Ownership. Kate Nowack from Financial Literacy gave a Literacy Workshop that talked about investing money in stocks and mutual funds. It gave the women an interest in the economy.

For recreation the mothers attended the Splish-Splash, a Halloween Party, pumpkin picking, sports challenges, Mother Day dinner and parties, Mardi Gras Party, a pool party, picnics and an luncheon with students at St John's public relations classes. All graduations were celebrated, as were birthdays and baby showers. Each mother was given the opportunity to obtain her driver's license. Grants were obtained to sponsor 10 new drivers and our Independent Living social worker devoted much time to obtaining necessary documents, scheduling, testing, driving lessons and five hour courses. But in the end, it was one of their most exciting days to receive their licenses.

The staff has increased since we started the new house. Each house has 2 house managers and a day care worker. The staff of MOMMAS House is very dedicated to the goals of reducing homelessness, improving pregnancy outcomes and insuring healthier babies. Each of our four homes has supervisory staff and three are managed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The fourth is the transitional home where there is less intense supervision. There are 11 full time employees and 3 part-time. There are about 250 volunteers, who work in various capacities, and who enhance our program in many ways. Two interns from C.W. Post, mental health interns helped with our residents this year. There were also Eagle Scout awards for Boy Scouts and Gold Awards for Girl Scouts for MOMMAS House projects. There were group projects. Volunteer service/learning hours from St John's University, Molley College, Adelphi College and C.W. Post. Cohen Optical sent a mobile eye exam van to our houses and provided free eye exams and prescription glasses for all residents. Some of the mothers had a great need for corrective lenses and never has the funds to obtain them. Speech and Language, Masters Level, students from S.J. U. performed individual assessments on each child and sometimes the mothers. They then referred for services or taught the mothers how to improve their child's ability to communicate. Currently MOMMAS is working collaboratively with Catholic Charities and Nassau County government on several projects.

MOMMAS House is a member of the Pregnancy Services Network, the Residential Service Providers Group, and the Inter-Agency Council of Glen Cove.

There were 40 speaking engagements at organizations (both civic and religious), schools and women's groups. There were featured spots on radio as part of a volunteer P.R. Firm. Our newsletter is published 3-4 times/year and there have been several newspaper articles in the religious and secular press. Our web site (www.mommashouse.org) generated much interest and about 25 new volunteers and supporters.

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This was also the vehicle for referrals from all over the country. MOMMAS House is going paperless. Newsletters and emails for event dates can now be received electronically.

Our 2008 operating costs were \$691,165. Because of increased fund raising revenue and grants, there was a net income of \$717,932. This has finally given us an opportunity to do needed improvements, and to have an ability to meet unforeseen expenses. A complete report may be obtained from the N.Y.S. Charities Registration Bureau (www.oag.state.ny.us/charities.hxml) and Guidestar.com.

A capital fund campaign is about 70% toward raising the money to purchase one of our houses. It is time that we stop renting and start investing income into property that MOMMAS will own. Our future is more secure and our organization continues to grow in an effort to meet the needs of these most vulnerable members of our society – the homeless mothers and their babies.