

# To The Point



A semi annual publication of Walker's Point Youth and Family Center. Our mission is to meet the needs of runaway, homeless and other troubled youth and their families from Milwaukee's diverse communities by providing services to empower youth, help them resolve personal and family problems, strengthen relationships and support safe and stable homes.

## Resident Returns to Serve as Peer Mentor

It started with a promise from a youth resident, Raymond, to help those who were like him—homeless and in trouble.

For as long as Raymond could remember, his father worked temporary jobs and depended on friends and family to provide him and his son with a place to stay. Two years ago, the situation escalated – they became homeless and Raymond had no adult supervision and ended up getting into trouble with the law.

Raymond heard about the Walker's Point Teen Crisis Shelter from one of his friends and his father asked him to stay there while he got back on his feet while Raymond received the supervision he needed. He was nervous but glad to come to Walker's Point, especially when he learned that it had a basketball court and comfortable beds.

However, Raymond benefited from his stay more than he thought was possible. Not only was he able to do normal teenager activities like relaxing, playing video games and getting help with his homework, but he also received



Peer volunteer, Raymond, speaks to a teen caller who is concerned about having no place to stay for the night.

the guidance he needed from staff.

During his stay, he determined that he wanted to be a police officer and staff helped him become a participant in a youth volunteer program, Police Explorers. Today, Raymond is back living with his father in long-term housing, attending MATC high school, preparing for college, working as a police aid and volunteering as a Police Explorer supervisor.

Despite his busy schedule, Raymond made good on his promise to Walker's Point staff by becoming a youth peer counselor last year. "Walker's Point

changed everything for me. Before I came here I didn't have goals, dreams or motivation. Now I do. I want to be a positive influence for other kids in the same situation I was."

Raymond and the other seven peer volunteer counselors are fully trained and entrusted to help the youth shelter residents when they feel uncomfortable talking with adult staff about issues they are experiencing. This is a vital reason that Walker's Point involves youth volunteers because it is especially unhealthy for youth in crisis to bottle up their emotions. By providing them as many  
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## From the Executive Director Andre Olton, Ph.D.

Our newsletter has a fresh look, as we bring you news and stories from Walker's Point Youth and Family Center this fall. We are serving record numbers of runaway and homeless youth and families, and the impact of our programs remains critical. We share this impact with you through both statistics and individual stories of young lives changed for the better.

Recently, the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act – which funds our emergency shelter, street outreach, and transitional living programs – was re-authorized for another five years. This is certainly a cause for cheering. Indeed, a large portion of our agency budget comes from federal grants through the

Departments of Health and Human Services and Housing and Urban Development.

Our organization is facing a critical time, though. To continue to receive all our federal grants, we must increase the level of giving from private donors. For every \$4.00 that we receive in government funds, we must raise \$1.00 in private funding. This amount may not seem a lot. In recent months, however, we have already felt the pinch locally from a struggling economy, and the country is now facing one of its worst financial crises in decades.

I know that you value and support the critical work that we do for vulnerable youth in need. I truly thank all those

who give of their time and their expertise, who bring non-cash gifts and, of course, who contribute financially. These are uncertain economic times for all of us, but the problems of youth in crisis are not lessened by these national trends. Indeed, the often impoverished local families from which these teens come are facing even harsher situations. These inevitably increase the stresses on family life and relationships and the potential for personal crisis and homelessness.

I encourage you to support us in ways that fit your abilities and priorities. Together we must ensure that our vital services continue to help youth and families in crisis. They may have nowhere else to turn.

## Day of Help ... Lasting Change

On Saturday, October 11th, the Board of Directors of Walker's Point Youth and Family Center added "program volunteer" to their repertoire and were reminded of why they dedicate so many hours and so much effort each year to help the agency.

In addition, to the regular monthly board meetings, board members helped with upgrades to the Runaway and Teen Crisis Shelter. "As a board member, this is another way to contribute to the organization's purpose."

After completing the upgrades, the board of directors joined the residents of the program for their afternoon meal and had the opportunity to meet those that are served in part because of their help.

"I am glad this will be helpful for the residents who live here. A little paint goes a long way to brighten up their lives."

One resident, who was unable to be there with board members, thanked them in a letter by saying, "although I could not be at the shelter when you were there, thank you for removing the graffiti from the beds and repainting them, as well as the walls. He also thanked them "for being good people".

***"As a board member,  
this is another way to  
contribute to the  
organization's purpose."***

"It's important to give back. Under different circumstances, any one of us could have been in this situation, and I'm glad I can help out", said Don McKinnon, treasurer of the board of directors.



**Board members Don McKinnon and Karla Hill took part in the "Day of Help" by painting the group home's bunk beds.**

## Resident Returns as Peer Mentor *(Continued from Page 1)*

resources as possible, we can promote a healthier existence for the youth.

Peer volunteers build trust by socializing with the youth residents – playing board games or basketball. In addition, they are responsible for leading educational groups, which Raymond finds especially rewarding. When he was staying at the shelter, he was afraid to even participate in these groups, but now he’s leading them!

Raymond plans to be involved as a volunteer well into the future. He knows that the youth need him as a positive influence and his experience

as a volunteer is personally beneficial. By working with the youth and answering the shelter’s 24-hour crisis line, he is learning how to deal with difficult situations, which will help him in his future as a police officer.

Raymond admits that, “we need more people—youth and adults— to help. It’s obvious that the residents gain from numerous positive influences in their lives.”

If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering, please contact Ke’Andra Hagans at (414) 647-8200.



**Peer volunteers come together to discuss activities for the upcoming week.**

## Join Us in Supporting Milwaukee’s Homeless and Runaway Youth

◆ **Make a Financial Contribution.** Use the enclosed reply envelope to show your support or make a secure gift online at [www.walkerspoint.org/donations](http://www.walkerspoint.org/donations)

◆ **Shop at Pick’n Save.** Register our charity number, #910960, on your Pick’n Save Advantage Plus Savers Card and use the card when you shop. A percentage of your purchases will benefit Walker’s Point.

◆ **Volunteer.** There are many ways to offer your time to support those we serve. Consider being a mentor, managing an in-kind drive, hosting a holiday party or help to repair or revamp our properties.

◆ **Make an In-Kind Donation.** Deliver any of the following NEW or VERY GENTLY USED items to the Walker’s Point Administration Office at 2030 West National Avenue, Milwaukee, to support the immediate needs of our clients.

### IN-KIND DONATIONS CAN INCLUDE:

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|---|--|
| Milwaukee Bus Passes                            | New Cleaning Supplies                                      |
| Event or Museum Tickets                         | Laundry Detergent  |
| NEW Blankets                                    | Plastic Utensils   |
| NEW Twin-Size Linens                            | Cooking and Baking Tools                                   |
| Disposable Cameras                              | Dishes and Flatware  |
| NEW Undergarments                               | Small Kitchen Appliances                                   |
| NEW Socks for Men and Women                     | Non-Perishable Food Items                                  |
| Bathrobes and Slippers                          | Lawn Mower and Yard Tools                                  |
| Plain Sweat Shirts & Pants for Men and Women    | Gift Cards for Pick’n Save, Target and Walmart             |
| NEW Basic School Supplies                       | Furniture (Bunk Beds, Dressers)                            |
| Games, Sporting Goods, Books                    | Hats, Gloves, Mittens, Scarves, Coats                      |
| NEW Bathroom and Kitchen Towels and Wash Cloths | Paper Products for Kitchen and Bathroom                    |
| Office Supplies                                 | NEW Toiletries: Shampoo, Toothpaste and Brushes, Deodorant |

**To make a donation, please call 414-672-5300.**

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## Executive Director Recognized by State-Wide Coalition

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We are proud to announce that Andre Olton, Executive Director of Walker's Point Youth and Family Center, has been awarded the **2008 Ren Svanoe Youth Leadership Award** by the Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services (WAHRS).

This award is presented annually in honor of one of the coalition's members "in recognition of outstanding dedication working with youth and families".

As past President and current Treasurer of WAHRS, Olton collaborates with other community-based non-profit agencies dedicated to advocating for and supporting a state-wide system of services for homeless and

runaway youth and their families.

The mission of WAHRS is to provide the best, most efficient and most effective services to runaway and homeless youth, including those who are pregnant and/or parenting.

WAHRS, through a cooperative, strategically organized system between private member agencies, provides programs that strengthen families, prevent family dissolution, promote self-sufficiency, and assure safe, stable, and supportive homes for youth, young parents and their children.

For more information regarding the Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services (WAHRS), please visit <http://wahrs.org/>.



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