

at Raphael House

Dear Friends,

I want to thank Victoria Crichlow-Debro for sharing her story with us in this newsletter. Victoria was three when she and her mother came to stay at Raphael House. She's now a long-time volunteer, school-break employee and a senior at the Rhode Island School of Design. I think you'll appreciate her story.

Thank you for your support of Raphael House as well. Your contributions make all the difference in the lives of children and families who stay at Raphael House.

We're in this work for the long run. We hope you are, too.

Thanks again,

Fr. David

Father David Lowell
Executive Director



Victoria and her mother when they stayed at Raphael House in the late 1980s. Victoria is now in college, and she volunteers and works at Raphael House.

‘For the first time, I had brothers and sisters’

Almost twenty years ago my Mom moved to San Francisco with a suitcase full of clothes, a can of spray starch and an iron. I was two when she left me in Washington, D.C., with a close friend of hers after she had been discharged from the military.

My father left my mother when she was pregnant with me. Left alone to raise me, it had been a dream of hers to live in “Sunny California” since she was a little girl in Trinidad. I believe that with the combination of so many traumatic and unexpected things going on in her life, it was time she made a dream of her own come true.

She lived in the Nob Hill Residence Club and looked for jobs in San Francisco, which was tough going in the 1980s, but she managed to find work as a legal secretary. When she brought me to San Francisco I remember feeling really excited at times to see my Mom so happy, but alternately feeling helpless and low when she would become depressed. We couldn't afford rent, so we moved into Raphael House, which seemed like a really big family that we were joining, and for the first time I had brothers and sisters.

PLEASE SEE **VICTORIA**, NEXT PAGE



1065 Sutter Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
www.raphaelhouse.org

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From homeless shelter to college

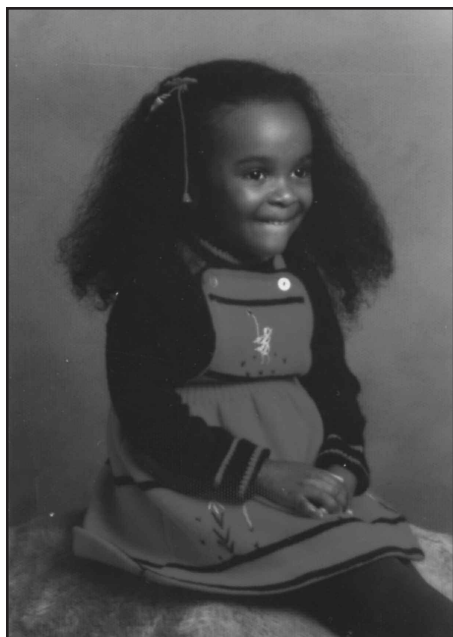
VICTORIA, CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

My Mom seemed a lot calmer and I know it was because, at last, she felt safe at Raphael House. This was a place where she could really work on getting our little two-person family together. At night, the parents would make the kids' lunches for the next day, and sometimes work on an art project to share with the children. My Mom always liked that. Having meals at regular times, learning to read in the Children's Garden and being led to my room by candlelight with the other children were all part of the loving family experience I received at Raphael House. It was almost like coming in from a harsh storm and being shown to a fireplace with a mug of cocoa; this is what family could be like.

One of my favorite memories was the Thanksgiving dinner they would serve to the local elderly. Brother Juniper's Restaurant – which for many years was part of Raphael House – was decked out with cornucopias and lacey tablecloths. I was beaming because they let me bring the baskets of rolls to the tables. It became a tradition of my Mom's and mine to be servers at Thanksgiving. That became just one of many traditions in my life that I associate with Raphael House.

My Mom and I stayed at Raphael House for two months, and in that time she found a job and an apartment two blocks away. She always wanted the best for me, and staying at a family shelter was probably not in her grand plan, but it was the best thing that could have happened to us.

I went to private schools most of my life on full or partial scholarships, graduating from Convent of the Sacred Heart High School in 2001.



Victoria shortly after she stayed at Raphael House.

It was almost like coming in from a harsh storm and being shown to a fireplace with a mug of cocoa; this is what family could be like.

--Victoria Crichlow-Debro

During that time, Raphael House was a part of our lives. In middle school, my best friend and I would volunteer in the After-School room and then play with the kids on the roof before dinner. My mom became active in the new AfterCare building and worked on the newsletter and the SHARE food program which brought fresh produce and meat from local growers directly to families in need.

When I got accepted at the Rhode Island School of

Design, most people weren't very supportive of my going there because it was so expensive and I hadn't received very much aid from the school. That, coupled with the price of materials, was well beyond our means. Peter Wright, the former Program Director, alerted me to a scholarship from the Starbucks Corporation that I applied for, received, and went straight into an account at the RISD Art Store that they had set up. This is just one



Victoria Crichlow-Debro 2006

more example of the generosity of Raphael House and those who work there.

I was a senior in the Illustration Department of RISD in 2005 when I realized that I wasn't going to be able to afford this last year's tuition and expenses, so I took the year off from school to get a job, which proved more difficult than I had expected. When Raphael House found out about my being back and in need of a job, I dropped off my résumé and had my job training the next day. I had worked two years earlier in the Raphael House Thrift Store, and as the overnight person on the Front Desk, so I was excited to have the same jobs again.

Also, working these two jobs exposed me to some of the different aspects of the House, including the Thrift Store. I am amazed by just how much this city loves Raphael House as evidenced by the amount of donations we receive every day. And on the Front Desk I get to see the inner workings of the House, meet new families, and to get to know the live-in staff better, some of whom I have known for more than 15 years.

One thing I've noticed since working at Raphael House is how different it is to have a job that you really are happy to go to every day, and that is the feeling that emanates from everyone who works here. I feel blessed that Raphael House has let my mother and me into their community in such a personal way. I will spend the rest of my life trying to give them back as much as they have given me.

Thanksgiving 2006 will mark our 20th anniversary of serving the Senior meal, and I'm sure it won't be our last. I can balance two trays of food now and a decaf coffee pot, which I must say is an improvement from a single basket of rolls. My Mom and I are officially designated as head servers and who would ever think that such a distinction would mean so much more to me than half of my current résumé!

Victoria Crichlow-Debro

We've got old neighbors everywhere

A chance meeting with a mother who lived at Raphael House 10 years ago – now she's giving life back to the community

Living and working at Raphael House for the past year has helped me feel that I'm in a community, but sometimes I need to get out. I go for a bike ride every day, on a route that takes me past a blood bank.

For the past few weeks, I've been noticing a huge banner on the front of their office, "Blood Shortage." I keep meaning to stop in and donate, just as I've been meaning to write my aunts in Maryland and thank them for the Christmas gifts they sent me months ago.

Today, I finally do go in. The staff at the front desk give me the donor questionnaire, which includes all sorts of questions about where I've been traveling, if I've been in jail and with whom I've been living. When it asks for my address, I put down "1065 Sutter Street."

I don't write "Raphael House" as I usually do when I give someone my address. I'm afraid if they find out that I live in a homeless shelter, they might stop me. It's a healthy place, and I'm glad to live there, but I know that the blood bank staff, being guardians of the blood supply, are going to be extra careful.

They let me in, and a sweet middle-aged technician whom I'll call Hannah directs me to lie down on the bed. She gives me a detailed explanation of this procedure, which I had never heard of – "double red blood." The blood will come out of my arm, go into a centrifuge, and then it will be separated into plasma and red blood cells. The machine that she's hooking me up to will take two units of red blood cells from me, but I'll get the plasma back – all in and out of the same tube. I'm a little uncertain about all this -- it sounds like my blood is getting run through a washing machine or something and then I'm getting it back, but her explanation is so professional that I decide to trust her.

Hannah is a kind woman, and a little sassy, arguing good naturedly with another technician over a missing role of tape. As she gets me ready, she looks at my application, and stops. "Ten sixty-five Sutter Street – is this where you work or live?"

"I work there, and I live there," I answer.

"Raphael House," she says.

"Yes! That's where I live."

"I lived there, too, with my kids."

I'm a little taken aback by the exchange, not sure what to say next. I'm delighted to meet one of our former residents, but I don't know if she'll be comfortable with my talking too much about Raphael House in front of her co-workers. For a moment,

I feel like there's a big invisible secret hanging in the air between us.

"I live on the third floor with the other staff members," I say cautiously. "I love it."

"How is Sister Carmela doing? How is Sister Mary?" she asks. "They're real women. They walk with confidence. Other people, they say, 'we're going to pull you through this,' without really meaning it, and you can tell that it's not real. With those women, they intended to get you to something better."

I give her a little news about Carmela Biggs, our AfterCare caseworker, although there's little that I can say that she doesn't already know – she's providing for the needs of our former residents every day, just as she was in 1996, when Hannah stayed at Raphael House for six months.

Our conversation continues easily, and both of us avoid the words "homeless" or "shelter," but she's obviously comfortable with talking about that period of her life.

I relax, too, even though I now have a needle stuck in my arm. There's so much that we can talk about at Raphael House that sounds like an ordinary person's life.

That's one of the main points of our program, providing children with experiences of a happy childhood – arts and crafts, story time, playground games and summer camp – in a way that they don't have to feel homeless.

"Do you still do summer camp in the redwoods? My boys used to get so excited during the weeks leading up to that every year." Her sons are now 15 and 18. I tell her about Gregory Lowell, the son of Elaine Lowell and Fr. David Lowell, our Executive Director. Gregory is also 18, and is enrolling in college in New Mexico. Her 18-year-old son is starting college in Hayward, California.

I tell her about Peter Wright's three children, including his new twins, and she lets out a little whoop and says, "That's wonderful!" Peter was the Program Director when she stayed at Raphael House.

As the last 200 milliliters of blood collect in the bag, she tells me that when she was homeless she sought help from several other charities and shelters before coming to Raphael House.

At those agencies, she met other clients who seemed to have resigned themselves to being stuck in a situation of homelessness (or "stuck that way," as she puts it).

"I didn't want to stay that way. A situation had made me need to go there, but I really wanted to get out of that. At Raphael House, they gave me a hand up, but it's not just one hand, it's many. They really help get you beyond it, not just continue in it. Other places, they put a bowl of cereal in front of you to eat. What you need is flour and water and oil and you need to learn how to make bread."

– Thomas Ruthford
Raphael House Staff

Treasury and Children's Program

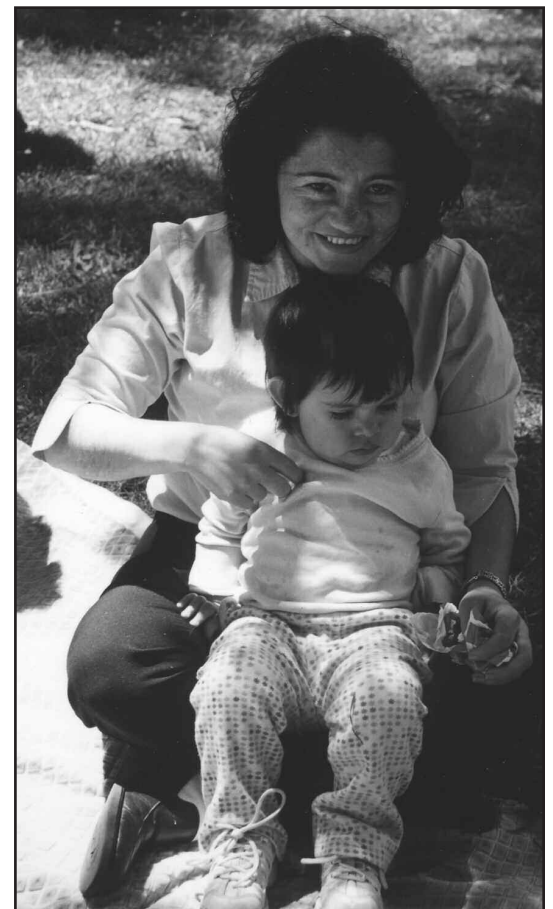
"They really help you get beyond it, not just continue in it. Other places, they put a bowl of cereal in front of you to eat. What you need is flour and water and oil, and you need to learn how to make bread."

--"Hannah"

It's picnic time!



The Fourth-of-July Picnic that Raphael House hosts in Golden Gate Park is an opportunity for children and adults to relax and for the families to stay connected with staff members and with the friends they made among the residents during their stay at the house. This year, 238 former residents came to the event.



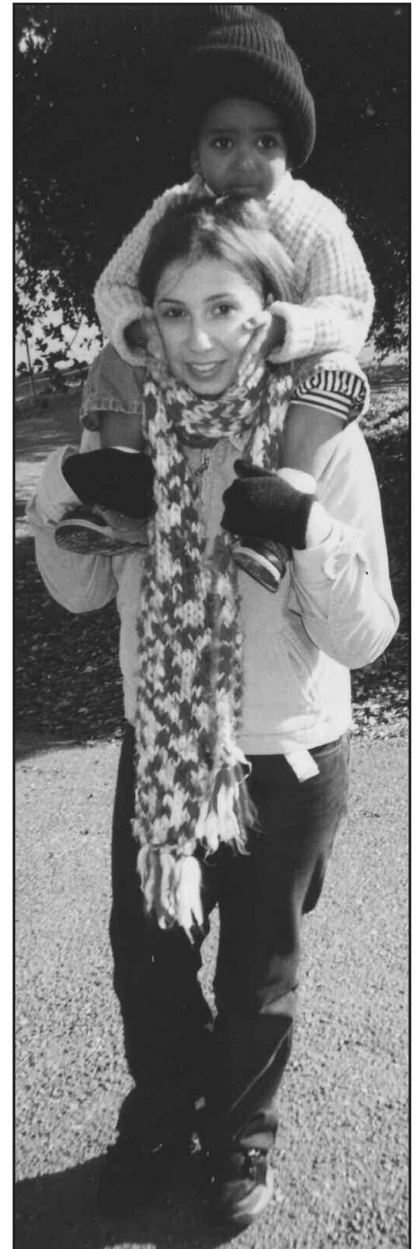
**Raphael House children
break for lunch during
an outing.**



Race you to the park!



**Playing an ordinary game can be
an extraordinary event for any child.
Raphael House fosters joy and a
sense of wonder.**



**Volunteer Naomi Funk
lends her height to a boy
going on new adventures.**

Year-end program report: August 2005 - July 2006

	People Served		
	Unduplicated Totals +	Shelter	AfterCare
Total Individuals	1,116	208	1,070
Adults	382	86	363
Children	734	122	707
Total Families	335	73	319
Family composition			
Single mothers		60	
Single fathers		0	
Couple		11	
Other		2	

Original cause of homelessness per family:

Lack of move-in funds	24
Domestic violence	20
Dangerous living situation	3
Job loss	4
Asked to move out	6
Substance abuse	2
Relocation	3
Mental Illness	1
Other	10

Average length of stay in Residential Shelter Program: 51.5 days

Families who departed to stable housing: 84 percent

+ Many families were served both by the shelter and AfterCare during the year.

"Unduplicated totals" is all families served, counted only once.

Shelter	
Bed nights	
Adults	4,001
Children	6,267
Total	10,268

Meals

Adults	12,003
Children	18,801
Total	30,804

Volunteer Program

Venue	# hours	#people
Live-in volunteers	4,543	10
Thrift Store	1,151	3
Adopt-A-Family	2,500	479
Program volunteers	3,543	34
Corporate Chefs	1,710	435
Event volunteers	427	138
Board & committees	2,300	20
Farmer's Market	224	14
Development	120	5
Maintenance	752	98
Total	17,270	1,236

Holiday 2006 needs list

FOR THE CHILDREN

Beading kits
 Art kits
 Craft kits (e.g. Klutz books and supplies, etc.)
 Puzzles with 500 pieces
 Legos, especially for 8+ years
 Baby dolls of Black, Asian and Hispanic coloring
 Infant toys
 Boots and rain coats for ages two through seven
 Picture books with children of all cultures
 Board games for ages 6 and older
 Adult and children's books in Spanish
 Books for children ages 11 and older
 Payless Shoes, Old Navy and Mervyn's gift certificates
 Plastic (non-breakable) tea sets, other kitchen play sets
 Wooden Playhouse equipment (play refrigerator, oven, doll beds, child-size table and chairs, etc.)

FOR TEENS

Professional quality fine art kits and paper pads
 (watercolor sets, drawing sets, oil or chalk pastels, etc.)
 Gift certificates from Borders Books, Shoe Pavilion,
 Ross, Nordstrom Rack, Mervyn's or Old Navy

FOR MOMS AND DADS

Calendar planners and pens
 Clothing store certificates (Ross, Mervyn's, Old Navy,
 and The Gap)
 Shoe store certificates (Payless, Shoe Pavilion)
 Bathrobes and slippers
 Towel sets
 Bath and body care kits
 Scarf and glove sets
 Wool socks
 Shaving kits for men
 Men's electric shavers
 Movie theater gift certificates



PLEASE: No toy weapons, Barbie or Bratz dolls, compact discs or disc players, video/computer games or video game systems or other items that require batteries (except alarm clocks).

If you have Holiday donations, please drop them off at the front desk at 1065 Sutter Street, San Francisco, labeled "Holiday Wish List." On behalf of the Raphael House families, **thank you so very much.**

Raphael House serves homeless and formerly homeless families

Our goal is to keep families together

Raphael House was the first shelter in San Francisco to serve the whole family – children with their parents or guardians. Eighty-two percent of the families we serve are single-parent mothers. By the time a family comes to Raphael House, they have usually exhausted whatever hospitality may have been available through members of their own extended family.

While working with families in crisis may, at times, be stressful, mostly it is pleasantly routine, very normal, and a lot of fun. Approximately 59 percent of the population we serve are children, and they are what keep the shelter vibrant and lively. Instead of watching television, we provide art activities, outings, supervised play and special events for the children, as well as tutoring and educational support. These children have their whole lives ahead of them and the staff and families at Raphael House enjoy building for the future.

Raphael House is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Our Federal Tax I.D. number is 94-3141608.

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By Fax: (415) 474-7020
By email: info@raphaelhouse.org

To learn more, please visit our web site at:
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WE NEED YOUR DONATIONS:

Baby stuff, books, household goods, furniture,
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1065 Sutter Street, between Hyde and Larkin.
100% of the proceeds go to Raphael House.

For drop-off info,
call **415.474.4621** or raphaelhouse.org

Herbst International Exhibition Hall is located at the intersection of Moraga and Montgomery Streets in the Presidio, at the top of the Main Post, 2 buildings away from the Officer's Club.

Free parking at the Main Post Parade Grounds just below Herbst International Exhibition Hall.

Easiest access is into the Presidio through any of the gates and follow the signs to the Officer's Club, which is only 2 buildings away from Herbst International Exhibition Hall.

