



... uniting families ...

Summer 2007

Quite a bit has been developing with Our Children's Place (OCP) over the past several months so we thought this would be a good time to bring you up-to-speed!



Cassie Smith, Melissa Radcliff, JoAnne Morris

New Faces

It is with great pleasure that I introduce **Melissa Radcliff** as OCP's first full-time Executive Director. Melissa came to us from the Family Violence Prevention Center of Orange County where she worked as the Community Services Coordinator first and as the Executive Director most recently.

Building on the work of Sarah Shapard, Melissa is writing the business plan for OCP in conjunction with the Department of Correction while overseeing the process of renovating Deerfield Cottage, the soon-to-be home of OCP. She is also seeking community and faith-based partnerships and is available to give presentations when asked.

It is Melissa's commitment to quality-of-life issues for women and children supported by her excellent management and networking skills that make her the unquestionably right person for the job. Welcome, Melissa!

- Mary U. Andrews, Chair, Board of Directors

Since last fall we have also welcomed two other staff members: **JoAnne Morris**, Bookkeeper, and **Cassidy (Cassie) Smith**, Program Assistant.

JoAnne owns JMK Business Services, a consulting company specializing in small business accounting and training. Being a small business owner has given her the flexibility to work with clients in various states (Arizona, Massachusetts, and now North Carolina) as her husband has accepted job transfers. She loves to garden, travel, and read mystery novels.

A native of Yanceyville, North Carolina, a small town about 45 minutes from Chapel Hill in nearby Caswell County, Cassie is a rising junior at UNC-Chapel Hill, majoring in journalism-public relations. She enjoys cooking, traveling, and watching episodes of *Lost* with her roommates.

We Have An Office!

Thanks to the generosity of UNC, we now have an office at the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus. We are settled in and have been made to feel quite welcomed!

National Advocate Writes Letter of Endorsement

We were honored to have a private meeting with Sister Helen Prejean when she was in Raleigh in mid-April. Author of *Dead Man Walking* and *The Death of Innocents*, Sister Helen has written a letter of endorsement to support OCP. An incredibly dynamic and caring woman, she immediately agreed that OCP is a necessary program to enhance the lives of children of inmates and their mothers.

Sister Helen also asked actress and activist Susan Sarandon to write a letter. We're quite pleased that she too agreed to write one.

We have already received letters of endorsement from Altrusa International, Inc. of Chapel Hill and the North Carolina NAACP, and are working to secure others.

If your group is interested in writing a letter of endorsement, please call us at (919) 843-2670 or e-mail us at ourchildrensplace@gmail.com. We can provide you a draft letter.

Alternative Markets

You may be familiar with our "hat initiative" where female inmates handcraft hats and other items that we have available at various locations where folks can make a donation in exchange for one of these items. Alternative markets hosted by faith communities, usually held in the fall, are a wonderful opportunity for us to display these items.

Our goal is to be involved in as many of these markets as we can this year. If your faith community (or other group) holds one of these, please let us know. We'd like to be included!

Faith Community Support

The faith community has done a wonderful job supporting OCP. We have been able to establish and develop these relationships over the past several years and hope to continue doing so in the future. The following have supported OCP in one or more ways (made a financial contribution, invited OCP to speak, included OCP in an alternative market, etc.):

- Chapel of the Cross, Chapel Hill
- Church of the Reconciliation, Chapel Hill
- Epworth United Methodist Church, Durham
- Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Chapel Hill

- Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Durham
- Newman Catholic Student Center Parish, UNC-Chapel Hill
- St Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, Raleigh
- St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Durham
- United Church of Chapel Hill

Interested in having your faith community included in this list? Call us at (919) 843-2670.

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If you wish to be removed from our mailing list or if your contact information has changed, please call our office at (919) 843-2670.

Our Children's Place (OCP) is a residential initiative allowing young children (babies and preschoolers) to live with their mothers while the women serve out their sentences for non-violent offenses. OCP is designed to break the intergenerational cycle of crime, poverty, substance abuse, and family violence. It will empower the child with the mother's help to enhance cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development. OCP plans to open its doors in 2009.