

St. Ann's Center for Children, Youth and Families *2024 Fall Newsletter*



In Her Own Words: Paige's Story



*Paige with her son, Phoenix, at local pumpkin patch.
(Photo courtesy of Paige)*

Hello everyone. My name is Paige. I go by PJ sometimes. I am from Landover, Maryland, PG County. You have to say "PG County," because when people hear Maryland, they think of Baltimore! I am 25 years old. I have a son who is a year old and will be two in December.

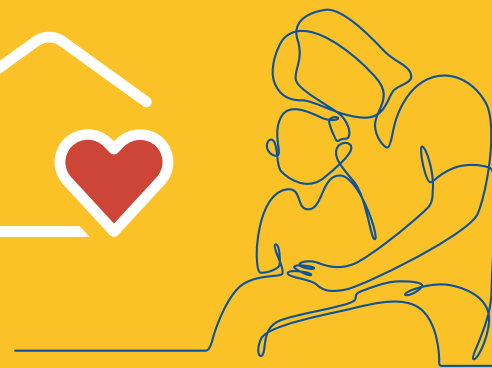
I was recommended to St. Ann's by my step mother. I was living with her and my father at the time and they felt that another living situation would've been good for me and my son. My step mother actually volunteered here in the late '90s and early 2000s.

What brought me to St. Ann's was a mixture of things. When my grandmother died, I spiraled, and I went down the wrong path...

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Thanks to you, **24 families** call St. Ann's Center "home" as of September 2024.

Thank You!



www.stanns.org



2024 Fall Newsletter

Message from Sister Nancy Downing, CEO

Thank you for your commitment to St. Ann's Center's mission: *supporting women and children as they move from crisis to stability and independence*. I am grateful for you!

Today, **24 mothers and their children** call St. Ann's Center home as they heal, grow, and prepare for new futures beyond our doors. Each of these 24 families has a unique story and trajectory. Their stories include:

- The mother who secured and started her first professional, full-time job this September. Mom has enrolled her little one in the new school year at our Child Care Center, freeing her to grow and succeed in her new role as breadwinner.
- The mother who, in less than one year, has flourished with her children at St. Ann's after significant life adjustments; taught herself English (having at first relied 100% on Google Translate); and secured her work permit and initiated her job search.

- The 18-year-old woman completing her senior year of high school while bravely managing the demands of being a brand-new mom to a one-month-old baby. Mom can meet her educational goals knowing her child is well cared for during the school day.

You are the catalyst in all these stories, and so many others. Your care allows St. Ann's Center to respond when a young woman reaches out to ask, *"My family needs help. Where do we start?"*

Thank you for being there for St. Ann's, so that St. Ann's can be there for vulnerable mothers and children. Please enjoy this newsletter – and please, join us at one of our social events this Fall. I would love to see you.

God bless you!

Sister Nancy Downing, CND
CEO, St. Ann's Center for Children, Youth and Families



Sister Nancy's Note

Subscribe to Sister Nancy's Note!

Sign up with your email address at stanns.org to receive Sister Nancy's monthly reflections, along with other newsletters, resources and updates from St. Ann's!

Our Child Care Center
Children served (FY24):

101

26

Residents

75

From community



8

Families have **moved in** to our housing programs since July 1, 2024

8

Women

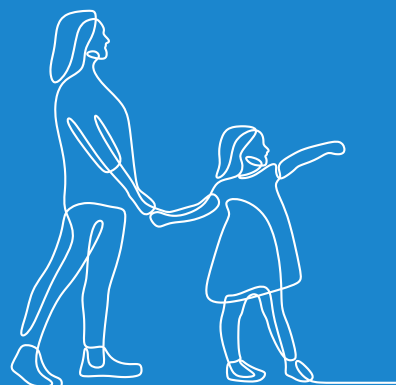
7

Children

7

Families

Transitioned to Independent Living in CY24





Paige's Story, Continued

... I burnt a lot of bridges. I didn't think there was a life worth living without her [my grandmother], so I tried to destroy this one.

But God said "No" - and He gave me something worth living for. He gave me my son, Phoenix.

I named him that because the Phoenix is always reborn – and that's what I felt God was doing for me, and my grandmother as well.

My son and I moved in on January 25, 2024. The transition was hard for me at first. I moved from a house with a family to just a single room with only me and my son. But as time moved on, I knew this was the best place we could be.

One challenge I've overcome here is learning accountability. St. Ann's put me in charge of my own bills, my son's schedule, and other program requirements. Even though I was already a mother before I came here, this situation has really taught me how to parent on my own. I've learned accountability and I've done a lot of growing up.

One thing I'm really proud of was getting therapy. I'm proud that I had an open mind towards therapy, and that I went and I stuck to it, and I feel like I've gained emotional intelligence. My therapist Miss Tally was awesome.

I'm proud of where we are today. I now have my first "big girl" job working in an office setting, thanks to St. Ann's. My son is in speech therapy and behavioral therapy because he is on the spectrum. So yeah, those are big accomplishments.

We are looking forward to Halloween and "Spooky Season." I am looking forward to getting a car. And I am looking forward to leaving St. Ann's on a great note, when the time is right.

My mother is my biggest inspiration. When I was 13, she suffered a massive hemorrhagic stroke. She lives at a facility right nearby St. Ann's. She's been there for 11 years. I walk over and visit her. She's still fighting every day. She's completely incapacitated, so she cannot move anything but her eyes and mouth. But she's here. I love her to death.

My grandfather was also an inspiration to me, as a man and as a person. He took care of his

whole family, he just put us all underneath his wing. He was a DC homicide detective.

What I've learned about myself at St. Ann's is that I can be alone. The family I grew up in was close, really tight knit. Once my grandparents, the heads of our family, died – once that dynamic broke, I didn't think that I would be able to be alone. But now I know I can be by myself.

And I know I'm strong. People have *told* me that I'm strong because of the things that happened to my mom. Now, through situations I've put myself through, I *know* that I'm strong.

Through motherhood I've learned to be selfless *and* I've learned to be selfish. I've learned to be patient. I've learned to be impatient. I've learned right from wrong because it has a different meaning when you have another person that you are looking out for.

My advice to other women experiencing what I have: Help is coming. Help is coming, and it's always going to be God.

Maybe He can't reach your hand, but you can always reach out to His. This might feel like the worst time in your life, so you can't remember the good times, but help is coming. It can never storm forever, I promise you.

My goal for the future is stability for me and my son. I would like to be stable mentally, financially, physically, and spiritually. I would like to know my place of where I am and be happy in that place. Stability is everything for me right now.

My hopes and dreams for us are health, wealth, and stability. I just hope we have a long, flourishing life that is wealthy, not just financially, but with love, knowledge, and health.

For any woman considering St. Ann's – be open to the help that is available here. Appreciate the program and take everything it has to offer. Sometimes people aren't used to taking, having a handout. But you cannot get through this world alone. You need help.

St. Ann's has career guidance, with Mr. Victor. There is financial guidance. There is therapy. There are weekly Life Skills classes. There are social workers who can help you get into school, or get into a job that you want. And oh my gosh, they have a daycare center. That is the best thing.

It's an interactive and fun program, and you should be part of it.



YOU Help Moms and Kids Make **SUPER** Memories at St. Ann's Center

Moms are heroes - especially the women we have the privilege of working alongside at St. Ann's. The moms (and moms-to-be) who enroll in St. Ann's supportive and transitional housing programs have all made **brave, bold decisions** for their families: *to begin the challenging journey of healing from the past while building the foundation for a new life beyond St. Ann's.*

Homelessness and housing insecurity are often part of a young family's story before they arrive at St. Ann's. **However, new stories begin** once Mom and children get settled in our *Grace House, Hope House, or Faith House* programs. These stable, nurturing environments equip and empower Mom to focus on *her* self-determined goals and visions for success. Then, aided by our caring staff, Mom and her little ones can begin to heal, bond, grow together, and even start to thrive.

There's another hero in this picture: YOU. That's because *you* power these remarkable transformations families achieve at St. Ann's. *You* ensure the continuation of our housing programs and wraparound services. And best of all, *you* help moms and kids create truly special memories together. Here are just a few of the many **SUPER** moments you've enabled this summer and fall!



Days of Adventure and Growth, Powered by YOU!

You power annual traditions like **St. Ann's Day** each July 26 - a special occasion for resident families and students in our Child Care Center to enjoy on-site pony rides, popcorn, and magic shows with plentiful audience participation.

The ponies are pint-sized and friendly, but St. Ann's tiniest riders still need a lot of courage to hop up into the big saddle. And once the ride begins, **uncertainty turns to confident smiles!**



Real-Life Heroes, Big-Time Fun

In August, real-life heroes from the **Blue Knights** (motorcycle club of active and retired law enforcement) continued their inspiring 30+ year tradition of hosting annual end-of-summer BBQs for St. Ann's families.

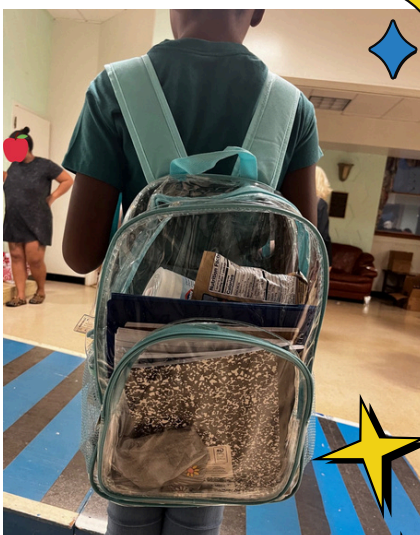
Resident families, **including brand-new moms and their little ones**, bonded over DJ music, bounce house awesomeness, and many motorcycle "rides" and selfies.



SUPER School Year - ACTIVATED!

Back-to-school can be an exciting *and* anxious time of year for St. Ann's families.

To help moms and kids feel equipped and empowered, volunteers from **Jiffy Lube Live** and **Live Nation**, **Order of Malta**, and other donors and volunteers visited with residents in August to provide book bags, notebooks, snacks - and most importantly, **heartfelt encouragement for the year ahead.**



Pizza Party with an Olympic Champion!

One month after winning gold in the Paris Olympics, women's triple jump champion **Thea Lafond-Gadson** hosted an intimate pizza party for families at St. Ann's, speaking 1-on-1 with moms and encouraging the young residents who showed Thea their very own jumping skills.

Thea shared briefly about her own journey and how "it takes a village." Thea added - **"The moms here, you're truly an inspiration to me... Thank you."**



New Skills Learned, plus a Plant-Based Power Up!

Vegan Chef Ebony recently felt a calling placed on her heart: *to use her gifts to serve the community.* This calling turned from a plan into action this September as Chef Ebony served up a fun Creative Cooking class, teaching St. Ann's residents how to make delicious and nutritious black bean burgers!





Learn More! Email Anastasia at volunteers@stanns.org

Make an Impact! Join St. Ann's *New* Community Ambassadors Program

Are you passionate about the difference St. Ann's Center is making in the lives of children, youth, and families in our community? We are looking for enthusiastic individuals to join our team as **Community Ambassadors**.

This is a fantastic opportunity to actively support our mission and help us expand our reach. As a Community Ambassador, you'll have the chance to:

- **Promote Us on Social Media:** Share our stories, events, and updates to help raise awareness and engage your network in supporting our cause.
- **Staff Tables at Community Health Fairs:** Represent St. Ann's at local health fairs and events to connect with community members and inform them about our programs.
- **Organize Fundraising Events:** Team up with friends, family, and social groups to host fundraisers, contributing vital resources for St. Ann's families.
- **Lead Donation Drives:** Coordinate donation drives to gather essential items and supplies for the families we support.



Join us in our mission to uplift and empower mothers and children. Your involvement will make a meaningful impact in our community and help us continue providing crucial services to those in need.

Ready to make a difference? Contact Anastasia Sissamis at volunteers@stanns.org to learn more about becoming a Community Ambassador and how you can get involved!

Young Professionals Raise \$500 for St. Ann's at Beer Garden Event!

Thank you to everyone who joined us on Tuesday, September 17 for our end-of-summer happy hour fundraiser, hosted by St. Ann's Young Professionals! Network

20 attendees of all ages purchased wristbands and raffle tickets raising \$500 for St. Ann's programs serving women and children in crisis.

We particularly thank **Dacha Beer Garden**, **Navy Yard, Jiffy Lube Live / Live Nation**, and **Miss Navy Yard Kisa Motiwala** for helping organize this great night out!



Join St. Ann's Young Professionals!
Contact Mike at info@stanns.org

Join Our Playground Heroes!
Contact Ellen at etoups@stanns.org



Join Our New Playground Campaign!

“At St. Ann’s, the goal is to ensure every child has the best start possible and benefits from indoor and outdoor learning through updated, safe environments. Outdoor playgrounds require the same thoughtful design to ensure learning continues.

“That’s why St. Ann’s is working with **KABOOM!**, a national playground equity non-profit organization, and with parents, children, staff and community members to build a [new playground] inspired with and for children. Outdoor play builds confidence and provides children with the tools they need for lifelong success.”

~ **Monique Harper**
Director, Child Care Center

Join Our Playground Heroes!
Contact Ellen at etoups@stanns.org

YOU ARE INVITED TO
**ST. ANN'S CENTER
NEW PLAYGROUND
FUNDRAISER**

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2024
6:30 PM
ZINNIA
4901 COLESVILLE RD
OVERSPRING, MD 20910

TICKETS: \$50.00
[https://apps.stanns.org/
upcoming-events](https://apps.stanns.org/upcoming-events)

QUESTIONS?
PLAYGROUND@STANNS.ORG
301-559-5500 **PLAYGROUND**



Have You Heard About St. Ann’s Center’s 1860 Alliance?

The 1860 Alliance recognizes the generosity of those people who have included St. Ann’s in their estate plans.

Consider helping women for years to come by including St. Ann’s Center in your will!

You’ll need our official name and address:

St. Ann’s Center for Children, Youth and Families
4901 Eastern Avenue
Hyattsville, MD 20782

and EIN number:
53-0204626

Thank You!



A Tradition of Caring

St. Ann's Center for Children, Youth and Families

4901 Eastern Avenue
Hyattsville, MD 20782-3301

2024 Fall Newsletter

YOU ARE INVITED TO

ST. ANN'S CENTER'S
NEW PLAYGROUND
FUNDRAISER

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2024

5:00 PM - 8:30 PM

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

4901 COLESVILLE RD

ROCK SPRING, MD 20910

TICKETS: \$50.00

[https://apps.stanns.org/
upcoming-events](https://apps.stanns.org/upcoming-events)

QUESTIONS?

PLAYGROUND@STANNS.ORG
301-559-5500 PLAYGROUND

Save the Date!

St. Ann's Center's
Annual Christmas
Open House



Date:

Sunday, December 8

Time:

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Location:

St. Ann's Center
4901 Eastern Avenue
Hyattsville, MD 20782

