



HGI Newsletter

Helmer Global Initiatives exists to promote a culture of generosity by using our resources to engage our people to their highest level of capability in order to provide aid and justice to the poor and vulnerable.

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 1

MARCH 15, 2011

CALENDAR OF EVENTS IN MARCH:

March 19

2011 Ms. Wheelchair Indiana Pageant

March 22

PassWord Night at Scotty's Brewhouse

March 23

Compassion Easter Card Party & Letter Writing Day

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The Laski School for the Blind



Written by Mike Andrus, Sales Manager at Helmer, Inc.

"As I stood in the parking lot of a local retail store last week, talking to people from many organizations, who had congregated as a part of End Poverty Now, a thought occurred to me that was actually very discouraging. There are so many needs in so many places. Do our efforts really matter in the scope of significant hardships around the world? The statistics are always in the millions. How can we dare to think that we could actually be a part of the solution?

Most sighted people believe that blind people need a lot of help. It's almost always the first reaction people have when they meet a blind child: "How can I help this dear, sweet, helpless child?" But is it true?

What do you believe about blindness? Do you believe that blind people need help? Are blind people limited in certain ways? Can blind people know as much as sighted people? Can they be competitive? Is blindness a tragedy? Do blind people need compassion?

Beliefs are important because what we believe affects the way we behave. There may be limits

to what any individual can achieve, but those limits do not have to be because of blindness.

My late grandmother, Katherine Andruszkiewicz believed the very same. From my earliest memories growing up in Cleveland, Ohio to first generation Russian & Polish immigrants I knew we had a strong link to the town of Laski, Poland. Each holiday season until 1982 when she passed away at the age of 87 "Busha" (slang for Grandma) would joyfully remind us, "Never forget the children of Laski". This was the cue for my brother, sister and I to crack-open our piggy banks.

The Laski School is a private school formed in 1922 by the Countess Roza Czacka, a woman from a prominent family who lost her sight at the age of 22. She came up with the idea of developing an educational system that would teach the blind and special needs students how to become self-supporting. She had previously formed the Society for the Care of the Blind, and in 1918, she founded the Order of Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross to carry out her plans to support the needs of the blind.

When Grandma passed away my father Edward Andruszkiewicz kept up the tradition of "Never forget". When my children were born he got them involved and would show them the colorful postage stamps and thank you letters from Laski, Poland. When

my daughter Sarah was in high school she joined the Eastern European Club and championed fund raising for Laski.



Mike Andrus with his daughter Sarah and son Dustin

My father passed away six years ago, our family name has been shortened to Andrus; and I am now responsible for "Never forget".

Working for Helmer and witnessing the passion for philanthropy at our company with HGI, I was very motivated when David approached me and said he was interested in my Laski story and that he would give me a platform to take this wherever I wanted to take it.

Laski has changed a lot over the generations from its start as an orphanage for abandoned blind children. There are now 300 students (from Pre-K to high school) that live at the campus, which is located on the grounds of an old nunnery in the town of Laski outside Warsaw. *(Continued on Page 2)*

Kyle and Lisa Brown celebrating Christmas at the SWAT House



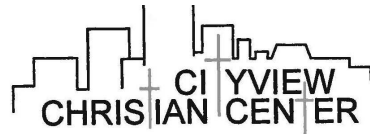
Josh, a member of the SWAT program, opening presents on Christmas morning.



Busha Katherine Andruszkiewicz, never forgot the children of Laski.



There Is No Stopping Now



www.indycityview.com

Written by Lisa Brown,

Regional Sales Representative at Helmer, Inc.

For Christmas in 2010, my husband and I decided to start a new tradition. After the last 3 years of being involved with preparing/serving meals for homeless families at CityView Christian Center, we knew we wanted to be more involved in

their lives. We wanted more interaction than the scheduled meals, two times a month.

The S.W.A.T. House as it is called (Servants With A Testimony) is a duplex house at West 18th St, approx. two blocks from City-View. SWAT is an 18-22 month life process developed by CityView to aid/nurture homeless men, in hopes of healing them from the brokenness of their past. A "Swat Mom And Dad" (house parents) are a vital component to the mens' lives, living as one big family.

My husband and I had the opportunity to be a part of S.W.A.T for the entire Christmas weekend. We spent the night, cooked together, and opened presents together. For many of the men (ages 32-48), it was the first real Christmas they can remember. For my husband and I, it was the ultimate way to appreciate Christ-

mas.

As my husband and I were sitting in the living room watching Allen, Jim, Josh, Eric, and Chad open their presents, my husband looked at me and said. " This is what Christmas is all about."

Long story made short, we went back for New Years and repeated the previous weekend!

The term, "Homeless" describes a person's current living situation not their self-worth or value to society. Just pondering about the thought of being without a home, without shelter and most importantly without the thought that someone cares about my well-being is more of a reality check than I can imagine. All I can think is, "there is no stopping now, what if that were me."

The Laski School for the Blind

(Continued from Page 1)

The school's mission statement includes the belief that, "children grow up to accept their handicap." They don't use the word "handicap" in their lexicon, rather, that the student has certain needs that must be met. In the case of vision-impaired students self-reliance, is taught to students from an early age to immerse themselves in society and become completely self-reliant.

One of the most impressive aspects of the Laski program is their assistive or adaptive technology. The school prints their own documents in Braille, as well as provides students with technology to use the internet

and virtually any software application. Since the blind can't see the monitor and use a computer mouse like a sighted person, they teach students to use a totally different keyboard and device, which activates the different software applications the students, might need.

Play, games, and recreation are also important parts of learning for children who are blind or visually impaired. These resources can help educators and family members find the right toys to support and stimulate the cognitive, physical, psychological, and social development of children with blindness or visual impairment.

So, where do I go from here?

I am planning a trip to Laski, Poland this spring to visit the school and gain a better understanding of their needs and how we at Helmer might play a role in their future and try and learn a little bit more about my family connection.

In the meantime, if you have an interest or connection to the visually impaired and would like to contribute I would love to talk with you.

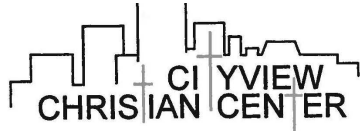
"Never forget".....we cannot restore their eyesight, but we can contribute and bring light to the hearts of these children.

Until next time...

Mike Andruszkiewicz

(aka Andrus).

Serving Others



www.indycityview.com

Written by Shannon Heavilin,

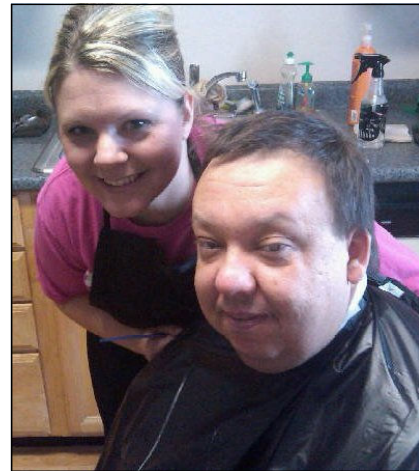
Buyer in the Purchasing Dept. at Helmer, Inc.

Living on the streets is tough, but making the transition back into productive society can be even tougher. The reasons for homelessness are as diverse as the people who are homeless: some people are struggling with addictions, others with health problems, and most are unable to cope with everyday life. That's where the S.W.A.T House comes in. S.W.A.T. House assists men who are trying to get back on their feet. They need help learning life skills, including how to take care of their health. One day over lunch, Lisa Brown asked me if I would like to get involved by serving these men food and giving them

much-needed haircuts. Of course my answer was YES!!

When we arrived at the S.W.A.T House on Saturday Jan. 22nd we were warmly greeted with huge smiles and hugs. Even through growls and grumbles the schnauzer, Dior, was happy to see us.

I gave five haircuts to five very different men. The first was Allan. He was understandably a bit nervous: he had just grown out his strawberry blond buzz cut as a result of a previous bad haircut. Next was Eric. He has two beautiful young boys and was thrilled to have a fresh fade. Jim, who wobbled over due to losing half a foot from diabetes-related complications, was happy to get the hair off his ears. Next was Josh, the jolly one who joked with the others about going for a mullet. Finally it was Chad's turn. To me, he seemed like the wise one of the group and is currently attending Seminary College



to become a minister. **Shannon Heavilin and Jim**
These five men came **after a fresh hair cut**

together because of their shortcomings, but the fact that they are learning to change and become productive citizens is a miracle within itself.

Lisa and I had an amazing time that day and I can't wait to go back. It is amazing what can happen to your heart when you put aside your selfishness and serve others!

Indy Haitian Community Gives Back



www.indycityview.com

Written by Leonce Jean-Baptiste,

Regional Sales Representative at Helmer, Inc.

As the anniversary of the January 12th earthquake approached, the Haitian community in Indianapolis began to think about how to commemorate the tragic event. The board members of the Haitian Association of Indiana decided they wanted to give back to the community which so generously supported

them during their time of crisis a year earlier.

Leonce Jean-Baptiste joined forces with his sales colleague, Lisa Brown, and her work at City View Christian Center and chose the SWAT House as a place for HAI to serve.

On January 15, 2011 members of the Haitian Association of Indiana helped the residents of the SWAT House paint three rooms of their house.

In retrospect, the extraordinary implication of this tremendous act of giving from a grieving community to a needy one is twofold: First, it had allowed the Haitian community

through HAI to become more bonded with its surroundings and further foster its relationship with the community it lives in by assisting the underserved. Second, it had helped alleviate our grieving process by removing and substituting deep mourning with an act of gratefulness by which we could all start to remember that day by.



Leonce Jean-Baptiste with the Haitian Association of Indiana



“...these girls are often lost in cities far from home. They don’t speak the language, they don’t know their way around, and they are told that if they go to the police they will be thrown in jail for prostitution. In other words, they are dreadfully afraid to leave.”

Barry Rodriguez tells the story about sex trafficking from his recent trip to Cambodia.

Visit his blog at www.worldnextdoor.org/tag/human-trafficking/.

Calendar Of Events - March

2011 Ms. Wheelchair Indiana Pageant

March 19 will be an enjoyable evening for these women to give voice to the disabled condition. Visit www.peopleonwheels.org/mswheelchair.html.



PassWord Night at Scotty’s Brewhouse

PassWord Community Mentoring provides year round services to address the specific needs of students for their return to school. Join them on Tuesday, **March 22** from 5 – 10:00 pm at Scotty’s Brewhouse.



Compassion Easter Card Party & Letter Writing Day

Mark your calendar on Wednesday, **March 23** to create beautiful Easter cards and write letters of encouragement to our 31 Compassion children.



To get more information on HGI activity please contact Penny

Witzke: pwitzke@helmerinc.com

www.helmerinc.com/newhgi.aspx