

CITY HOUSE

BEAVER FALLS, PENNSYLVANIA

March 2011

819 Lincoln Place
Beaver Falls, PA 15010
www.cityhousebeaverfalls.com

Issue 3



Back Row: Tyrome, Caitlin, Liz, Becca
Front Row: Becca, Anne, Anna, Jamal

Top 10 Highlights of 2010-11 (so far)

1. Hump-day Donuts (Oram's donuts, every Wed. morning at 7, you're welcome to join us if you'd like).
2. Spending a weekend at the mill in Emlenton.
3. Regularly squeezing 9 people around the table at dinner.
4. Fires and smores in the front yard.
5. Enjoying dinner with neighbors.
6. Breakfast at Athens.
7. Birthday cake. It seems like we have a birthday every other week.
8. One-on-one's (discipleship meetings) in the hot tub at the Y
9. Watching Becca get her belly-button pierced.
10. French Crepes for dinner.

Civic Engagement: Beaver Falls (SOC 270)

Over the past eight months the directors, with the help from the City House Advisory Committee, have been re-imagining how we might further develop an already rich experience for students into an accredited living-learning community. In November, this proposal was approved by the college which began the process of developing a course for the house that will be called "Civic Engagement: Beaver Falls". Our hope is that this class would be a powerful learning experience where students will be challenged to make connections between their faith, our life

together, and important topics such as hospitality, community development, urban neighborhoods, the environment, race, poverty, and economics, all in the context of Beaver Falls.

"Civic Engagement: Beaver Falls" will not be a typical college course for several reasons. Rather than using a classroom, students will meet together in the house, take field trips, go on retreats, and direct individual research. Moreover, we plan to utilize faculty members from a variety of disciplines as well as members of the Beaver Falls community in the facilitation of the class. We are particularly excited

to have such a diverse and gifted group of individuals involved in this initiative.

Further, as our ideas have developed over the past few months, we have also, for the first time, received more applications than we have space in the house. While we hate to turn people away, we are encouraged to see an increased level of student interest at Geneva College. We recently confirmed 10 students for next year and look forward to what they'll bring to the community. Brad and I are deeply grateful for the Lord's provision and for these new opportunities.

2nd Semester Book Discussion:

The Irresistible Revolution by Shane Claiborne

The Irresistible Revolution, written by Shane Claiborne, has been a great resource for us as we discuss how to influence the people in the community around us. Claiborne begins his discussion by taking us through his search to understand Christianity. He begins by acknowledging some of the problems within the church and then explores how building relationships with those who are poor may be the best way to serve.

Throughout our discussion of this book we have

focused on Claiborne's defense of a group of homeless folks staying in an abandoned church who were being forced to the street by the city and church hierarchy. Claiborne and many of his college friends chose to resist this eviction and took up residence with the homeless in order to stop the police from forcibly removing them. We considered the Christian's obligation and Biblical duty toward this dilemma as well as what we would have done if we had been in that situation.

The majority of our discussion focused on the author's work with The Simple Way, a Christian community located in a distressed Philadelphia neighborhood which he developed to provide the homeless with a place of provision and hope. Their main mission is to reconcile the rich to the poor and in Claiborne's view, restore the brokenness of the city.

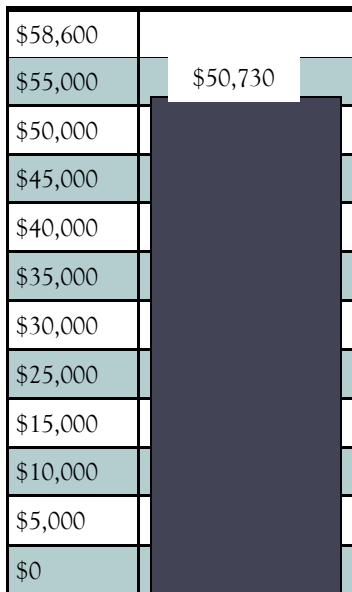
Written by Anne Reiner

A Year Well Spent: Anna Chisholm



“I DIDN’T EXPECT TO BE CHALLENGED AND CHANGED SO MUCH THROUGH MY EXPERIENCE IN THIS COMMUNITY”

2010-11 Sustainability Goal



Student payments and contributions have been applied to our mortgage payments, cost of utilities, director salary, food & program expenses. Our income for current fiscal year (ending May 31st) has reached 87% of total expenses.

When I became a member of the community of City House, I had recently studied abroad in Latin America and learned the concept of solidarity. Solidarity means a “union of purposes or sympathies; walking alongside one another.” However, I forgot to carry this idea over into other areas of my life. Instead of having a vision of solidarity, I came with a well-intentioned resolve for service in the city. I didn’t expect to be challenged and changed so much through my experience in this community.

God often puts themes in my life that challenge the way I think and are reinforced through different people and experiences. A year before I came to the City House, my experience with the Latin American Studies Program focused on topics like solidarity, the poor, sustainable living, social justice, and the significance of fair trade and supporting local economy. I did not expect to encounter these same ideas so richly in my experience at the City House, as well as additional ones like the concepts of “new” monasticism and relocating to the “abandoned places of Empire.”

It was truly a blessing to sort through these issues with a group of people that was so diverse in many ways, yet alike in the way we desired to live, think and learn. Each person with whom I lived in the community taught me and challenged my way of thinking.

In one of my first “one-on-ones” with Wendy at the Beaver Falls Coffee and Tea Company, I eagerly asked her about how some friends and I could enrich or help out in the city. She never tried to tell me how to think, but asked me a question to make me do the thinking. She said, “What would it mean for the college to help or enrich Beaver Falls?” This started a long train of difficult and sometimes uncomfortable questions that challenged the way I viewed service.

I realized that service without a reciprocal friendship can be offensive and even empty, although well-intentioned. This is a difficult realization for a Geneva College student, especially for those that live on campus and struggle with the question of how to connect the gap between students and residents of Beaver Falls. I realized that although I had good intentions, my attitude was wrong.

We need to live life being Jesus to everyone around us, but also seeing Jesus in everyone as well. This means that when I go to the soup kitchen to help out, I am not stooping down to give service to people, but I should be walking alongside them in solidarity, in the same way I would hope they would do for me, were I to be in the same situation.

When our community met each other in the fall, we created value goals that set the tone for this kind of learning. We agreed upon

a few values with Matt Talladay, our PISGAH facilitator and in some ways our community counselor. These goals are to live with truth, grace, joy, and sacrifice. They are written on our dry erase board that hangs on the wall as we first come in the door. Christian community is flawed by the Fall just like any community, but the difference is grace, “undeserved favor.” We each have strengths we add to the community and flaws for which we require grace. Community can be a difficult thing, especially in a Western culture that is infused with drive and individualism. We can romanticize these concepts of justice and community, but it is similar to the reality of a family or a marriage. The more we fight for it and the more we experience together, the more beautiful it is looking back. I have found that the things that are most difficult for me at first create the best learning times and also the best memories. This community never felt plastic, but rather authentic where each could be real with one another.

This year will hold many good memories, like having neighbors that know me by name and kids playing in the street, jumping in leaf piles, singing together, talking in southern accents, making root beer floats at the block party, going through hardships together, having coffee and Oram’s doughnuts on Wednesday mornings, and picturing the kingdom of God and redemption in people and in our cities.

