

FINDING HOPE FOR TOMORROW



VOICES OF HOPE NEWSLETTER

A FRESH START

Not many people look forward to doing their laundry. For most, it's a chore squeezed into the margins of a busy life or a lengthy trip to the laundromat. But for Tara, a deaf resident who moved into Paxton Street Home a year and a half ago, laundry day represents something much bigger: independence, dignity, and a fresh start.

With help from her mental health case manager, Ruth—who is fluent in American Sign Language—Tara recently shared her story and explained why Paxton's laundry room has become one of her favorite spots. "I had a pretty difficult life growing up," Tara explains. "My mom was very strict, and even though I went to school and got a full-time job, she thought I couldn't learn how to do things." When Tara hit a rough patch at work, her mom urged her to take an easier job washing dishes. The reduced hours, combined with her mother's strict rules at home, made Tara feel like **her world was shrinking.**

Aside from approved outings for work, church, and rigidly-enforced exercise routines, Tara was rarely allowed to leave her apartment. Ruth, who worked with Tara for several years, explains that Tara's mother struggled to communicate with her daughter and didn't fully understand her needs. "I think she was afraid something might happen to Tara," Ruth says. "She believed keeping her at home was the safest option."

That protection came at a cost. **Tara was isolated from friends and peers and given little opportunity to build independence.** She wasn't permitted to own a phone or use a computer, nor was she allowed to cook or make her own dietary choices. Her mother wouldn't even let Tara operate the washing machine. The withholding of these responsibilities took a toll on Tara's mental health and on her relationship with her mother. "I would complain to her that she was too strict, and we argued," explains Tara. "I felt very lonely." Despite mounting tensions, Tara loved her mom, and worried about her declining health. These worries turned to dread when she learned about her mother's cancer diagnosis. Although Tara understood the gravity of the situation, nothing prepared her for the shock of waking up

one morning and finding her mother had passed away in their apartment.

In the aftermath of this traumatic loss, Tara's condition rapidly deteriorated. With no transportation, no phone, and no way to access groceries, she became frightened and overwhelmed. She stopped working and struggled to care for herself. Although a cousin stepped in to help out, **it was clear that Tara needed a higher level of daily support than family could provide.**

Before long, Ruth had to take Tara to the hospital for emergency care. While searching for a long term solution—including deaf group homes with yearslong waitlists—Ruth reached out to Paxton Ministries. She figured it was a long shot, but after the team at Paxton met Tara, they were determined to help.

"I felt nervous at first," Tara recalls. "I didn't want to leave my hometown." But Paxton Ministries offered something Tara knew she needed: a fresh start. Over time, Tara has settled into new rhythms that have restored her sense of safety and wellbeing. She takes long daily walks around the property, savoring the lush greenery and large shade trees. She watches TV with other residents, borrows books from Paxton's library, studies scripture, and uses a new iPad that helps her communicate more easily. With consistent support from staff, she's formed friendships and routines rooted in trust and stability. "I like it here," she explains. **"It feels so peaceful."**

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Do you know ASL? Tara would love to connect with you! Contact us at volunteer@paxtonmin.org to learn more.

DETOURS, DUST, AND DIVINE RENEWAL

The rattle and hum of construction vehicles outside my window this season offer a vivid reminder of what it takes to make something new—or at least refreshed. From firsthand experience, I can say the process is loud and messy. Detours are inconvenient, utility interruptions are frustrating, and patience is tested along the way. And yet, when the work is finished, those temporary inconveniences quickly fade as we enjoy the beauty of what has been renewed. The process isn't easy, but the result is worth it.

I often think God works with us in much the same way. The journey that brings us where we are—the missteps, the detours, the noise and mess of everyday life—can feel disruptive and uncomfortable. Still, God is steadily at work, shaping and renewing us. This perspective comes to mind whenever I read Revelation 21 and its promise of a new heaven and a new earth. That vision is breathtaking, and it reminds me that renewal is not only necessary, but holy work. Perhaps we are invited to be grateful—not just for the finished result, but for the work it takes to get us there.

At Paxton, we are blessed to witness this process firsthand in the lives of those we serve. Our staff and volunteers see the hard, often messy work of renewal—lives being restored, dignity reclaimed, and hope rediscovered. Fresh starts happen here every day. Whether you serve alongside us or support Paxton through your prayers and generosity, you are part of this beautiful work of making things new.

For now, renewal may look simple: a fresh haircut, a newly planted garden, an inspired word from a guest preacher, or perhaps a new home made possible through your support. Together, we participate in God's renewing work as we await the day when all things are made new and we hear the words, *"It is done."*



David M. Zilka
Chief Executive Officer

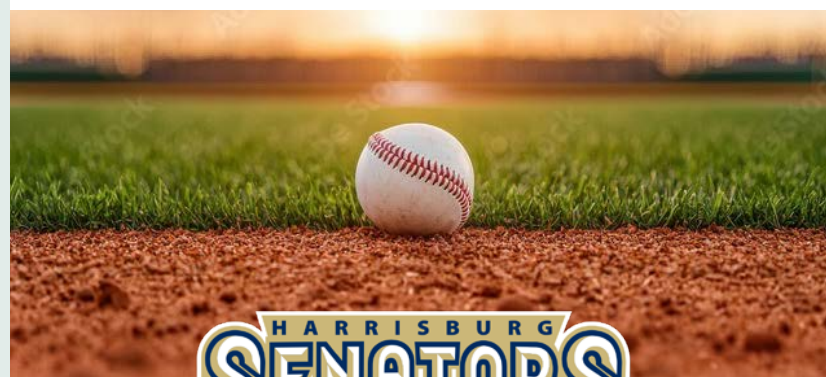


A FRESH START *cont.*

Most importantly, Tara enjoys stretching her limits and becoming more independent. She's proud of her ability to make healthy choices about what to eat and how to spend her time. And she's especially proud to finally be doing her own laundry.

"I LOVE washing my favorite clothes!" she signs enthusiastically. As she folds a freshly laundered shirt and breathes in its clean scent, Tara smiles. **"I didn't know I could get this far."**

For Tara, every load of laundry is a reminder that God is doing something new in her life—and her fresh start at Paxton is just the beginning.



Fresh AIR, Summer FUN and a NEW FUNDRAISER

Join us for a memorable outing to City Island on Tuesday, June 30th at 6:30 PM as Paxton Ministries partners with the Harrisburg Senators for our first-ever Fundraising Event at FNB Field!

Watch the Harrisburg Senators take on the Richmond Flying Squirrels and enjoy a classic summer evening of riverfront views, ballpark food, and post-game fireworks—all while supporting the vital mission of Paxton Ministries!

Bring family, friends, and your team spirit as we come together to celebrate 45 years of providing housing, help, and healing in the name of Christ! As the featured organization for the night, Paxton Ministries will be sharing our mission through a display and a table, as well as a pre-game interview on the field. We hope you'll join us to show your support for Paxton!

Please scan the QR code
(or visit www.paxtonmin.org)
to secure your tickets today.
**Let's hit it out of the park
for Paxton!**



A CUT ABOVE: Care That Connects



Spring is a season of renewal, and for Paxton residents, that feeling of a fresh start sometimes arrives with the simple snip of a pair of scissors—thanks to Donna Stoak.

Donna has worked as a med tech at Paxton for 12 years, a role that's made her particularly attentive to any changes linked to residents' wellbeing. When COVID restrictions halted visits from outside beauticians, Donna quickly noticed residents getting "a little shaggy." Ever the problem-solver, Donna—who had years of experience cutting her family's hair—happily offered her amateur services to any residents who wanted a free haircut.

What began as a practical solution became something far more meaningful. For Donna, each haircut turned into time for conversation, connection, and trust. Sitting one-on-one, she listened to stories, shared laughs, and built relationships beyond the meds room—strengthening the sense of familiarity that makes Paxton feel like home.

Six years later, demand for Donna's complimentary services has only grown. With nearly half of Paxton's residents vying for her services, Donna now spends 90 minutes every Thursday in Paxton's beauty shop. She makes sure to prioritize new residents with significant grooming needs.

"It's so gratifying to see the look on a resident's face when they see themselves in the mirror after a substantial trim," says Donna. **"It's like they're seeing themselves again for the first time."**

Donna's story reflects Paxton's culture at its best—where care goes beyond routine tasks and dignity is restored through small, thoughtful gestures. As spring brings renewal once again, Donna's efforts remind us that sometimes a fresh start comes simply from showing up and helping someone feel like themselves again.

Donna loves picking up interesting tidbits about residents in the beauty shop. During a recent trim, Stephon (above) shared that he'd been on the show *Romper Room* as a child!

Service that Nourishes Body and Spirit

As spring gives way to early summer, the Paxton community is continually refreshed by the people who give their time, talent, and heart to serve. Volunteers bring fresh energy and purpose to everyday moments—and few embody that spirit more fully than Denise, a familiar and much-loved presence at Paxton Ministries.

Denise first came to Paxton as a guest preacher shortly after being licensed through the Brethren in Christ church. From the beginning, she was struck by the love, acceptance, and hospitality she encountered here. "I was a brand-new preacher with no experience, and they accepted me with open arms and encouragement," she recalls. "I remember being nervous that first time, but Gil met me with a bulletin and a cup of water, Donna introduced herself and asked me to pray for her sister, and Steph brailled every

word of my message." With each subsequent visit, Denise's heart for Paxton grew.

Her service has likewise expanded. Last year, Denise joined Paxton's Board of Directors, helping guide our organization's mission and future. She also started helping out in the kitchen every week, serving lunch while offering smiles, encouragement, and connection to staff and residents alike.

Through each role—preacher, leader, kitchen volunteer—Denise brings a sense of refreshment to those around her. **"For me, time spent at Paxton is about love—showing it and receiving it."** Her story is a reminder that Paxton isn't just a place to serve, but a place to be nourished in return.

This season, we thank Denise—and all our volunteers—for the love and joy they bring to Paxton every day.



There are so many ways to help out at Paxton! Contact us at 717.236.5508 or email volunteer@paxtonmin.org to find out how you can enrich the lives of our residents!



Save the Date

Paxton Ministries' 45th Anniversary Celebration

BRINGING Hope INTO FOCUS

THURSDAY EVENING *October 8th*

The Willows at Ashcombe Mansion | *Mechanicsburg, PA*

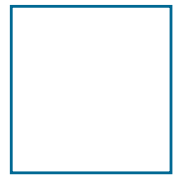
Join us for a very special evening celebrating God's faithfulness and raising funds to support the future of Paxton Ministries!

Tickets on sale soon!



2001 Paxton Street
Harrisburg, PA 17111

717-236-5508 | www.paxtonmin.org



CULTIVATING a Space for Growth

After years of planning and preparation, **The Jodie Smiley Prayer Garden** is taking shape at last. Thanks to the vision and leadership of Master Gardener Cheryl Peterman, along with a hard-working group of administrators and students from Messiah University (including newly announced President Jon Stuckey), this formerly brown space was recently transformed into a verdant and inviting oasis.

It's hard to walk past and not want to step inside.

Already, staff and residents are regularly dropping in to bask in the spring sunshine, listen to the birds, and enjoy quiet moments of serenity and prayer. Chaplain Mike Spellman is particularly pleased to have such a tranquil space where he can meet with individual residents needing prayer and one-on-one support.

We're thankful for the many donors, staff, and volunteers who came together to make this vision a reality!