

THE INQUISITIVE scholar

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House of Hope 10th Anniversary Concert

By Lia Fourakis and Anna McNaull

This spring marks the 10th anniversary of West Chester East High School's *House of Hope Concert*. This concert benefits Home of the Sparrow, an organization which works to help local women and children suffering from homelessness.

As the concert's founder, Stephanie Ou states, "The House of Hope concert started from a passion for music, which led to a vision for a good cause, and has now developed into a tradition over the past several years. It's encouraging to see the House of Hope concert continue each year thereafter as students, faculty, and the community join together to give back." Each school year, the student-led planning committee meets weekly to organize ticket and poster designs, advertise to the community, host auditions, and compile a list of performances. The concert showcases a variety of acts, including singing, instrumental, and even dancing abilities, from students and teachers alike.

Every year, Dr. Scanlon, the West Chester Area School District superintendent, provides opening remarks to kick off the concert, reminding the audience of the district's continuing support and patronage of the arts. With interludes and comical introductions made by student MCs, a wonderful mix of acts takes the stage to perform. In the middle of Act II, a Home of the Sparrow representative addresses the audience about the meaning of



the concert and the support the organization has received. The audience members are encouraged during the famed *Miracle Minute* to donate to one of the many "basket runners," as the music heats up and the time counts down. Last year, the House of Hope concert culminated in a grand finale, combining all performers, volunteers, and planners for one last song, a sing-along, crowd favorite. Also, outside of the concert hall, Home of the Sparrow sold their homemade bracelets and presented a photo-walk of stories of the women they have been able to aid. Last year, the 9th annual concert raised over \$ 9,000 for the nonprofit's programs, through a combination of ticket sales, donations, bake sales, and a generous matching contribution.

WC East principal, Dr. Kevin Fagan said, "This is not your typical high school talent show. It's far more than that. I've attended this event in each of my seven years as principal, and I swear it gets better each year. Last year was incredible! I bet this year will be better yet. The *House of Hope Concert* is one of our premier events each school year, and it's one of the things that makes our school unique. Not only are our students talented and organized,

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but they are charitable. They profit nothing from all of their work for this concert. *Everything* goes to Home of the Sparrow. It speaks to the character of these individual students and the school as a whole.”

Home of the Sparrow utilizes these donations to provide housing support, access to educational opportunities and improved employment, financial literacy and life-skills training, access to local resources, counseling and parenting support, and affordable housing solutions and companionships, through initiatives like the Graduate Program, Supportive Housing, Pre-Senior Bridge, WRAP, and Emergency Solutions. In the 2017/18 year, they were able to aid 742 women and children, 35% more than the previous year.¹

Volunteering opportunities are available, including completing administrative tasks or maintenance, being a part of the Speakers Bureau, instructing or

tutoring affected families in a specific skill set, donating baked goods, running a collection drive, buying new supplies for back-to-school backpacks, sponsoring a child/family for the holiday season, or helping out at fundraising events like the Annual Gala and Fashion Show. Monetary contributions and donations from their needs lists are always accepted to Home of the Sparrow. More information can be found at their website, <https://homeofthesparrow.org/>.

Join us for the 10th Anniversary concert on March 27, 2020, at 7 PM in the West Chester East High School Auditorium! Your attendance, contributions, donations, and support will help make this year’s event the most successful yet!

¹ Home of the Sparrow. "2017/18 Impact Report." 2018.

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