

# Joshua Group



... Providing hope and support to at-risk youth through educational and vocational opportunities ...

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Kirsten Reinford  
*Joshua Farm Project Manager*

Endrias Gebreab  
*Staff Intern*

## THE JOSHUA GROUP

1442 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17103  
PH 717.236.4464  
FX 717.232-4536  
EM [joshcenter@comcast.net](mailto:joshcenter@comcast.net)  
[www.joshuagroup.org](http://www.joshuagroup.org)

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*Joshua 1:9...be firm and  
steadfast. Do not fear or be  
dismayed for the Lord your  
GOD is with you wherever  
you go.*

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April, 2009

Dear Friends,

*Sept 5, 2008 Editorial - The Patriot News - School Value - "a new report claims that raising the high school graduation rate in Pennsylvania by 10 percent would prevent as many as 150 murders every year."*

We are growing - with a formula that we think is working to combat this statement. It seems each day, more and more youth from the neighborhood are hearing about us and calling and/or coming by asking to be part of this formula, a formula based on THEIR education being THEIR chief means to overcome THEIR challenges, be they social or academic. We provide the mentoring--our youth are doing the work.

Currently, on a daily basis, we are very active with 70 low income students in our in-school, after-school, and mentoring programs in the City of Harrisburg. They are just about evenly split between public and private schools. (It's their choice which they would prefer to attend as part of our program) This year, all of our private high school students are achieving at least a 2.0 GPA or better with 80% at 2.5 GPA or better, and five on the honor roll. Several of our eighth grade public school students were urged to apply and have been accepted to SciTech High, and all of our public school students are continuing to show sustained and increased academic success along with reduced absenteeism and behavior problems.

It's a lot for our small staff to manage. That's where our junior mentors have been so valuable to us. Right now, we are employing, part time, eight longtime Joshua guys; they are helping us with tutoring and mentoring the younger ones. We are also supporting four students at Harrisburg Area Community College, one at Thaddeus Stevens College, one at Syracuse University, and four studying for their GED certificate with hopes of attending college and beyond when they are finished.

Our plans for the upcoming academic year are to increase our J Crew sessions from two to four times a week. We'd like to start a separate girl's component of the J Crew program, and we'd like to increase our overall number of students as well, which will require additional staff, space and increase our transportation costs - quite a lot to think about in these times.

Be assured, we don't plan to jeopardize the quality of the program with uncontrolled growth. Also, we don't plan to place ourselves in a situation where our support does not match our ability to meet the needs. However, we remain faithful and encouraged that we will not be turning any youth away who really need us, understand what Joshua is about and possess those "at-promise" characteristics. We know that with our mentoring, a life can be changed, if not saved.

We also know you will be there with us in whatever way you can. Thank you.



Joshua Group Junior Mentors: (Left to Right) James, Tyquan, Brian, Ralph, Kaliq, Travin, and Endrias

Sincerely,

Kirk Hallett, Founder and Director

## Purnell Richardson Navy Ceremonial Guard

Purnell Richardson first connected with Joshua Group through Midnight Basketball more than five years ago. Kirk and Sally supported Purnell at Harrisburg Christian School and then saw him off to Valley Forge Christian College. Purnell returned to Harrisburg after two years and began working as a Junior Mentor for the J Crew Program. Over time his role expanded, and he led many of the lessons for the J Crew youth as well as mentoring them. September 2008 found Purnell at Basic Training for the Navy in Chicago, where his dedication and commitment led to his selection to the prestigious Navy Ceremonial Guard training program. Once again his hard work and dedication to duty and to others was so impressive that he was awarded Honor Graduate of his training class! Purnell returned to lead another J Crew program in early March. He shared his experiences with the youth, who listened attentively as he encouraged them to set goals, dream big, and work hard to achieve something they, their families, and Joshua Group can be proud of.



Family dinner after a Joshua Group afterschool tutoring session.



Shawn and Kyree studying at the Joshua House Afterschool Program.



JaQuan and Maurice studying at the Joshua House.



Kirk accompanies Joe Davis and Endrias Gebreab on a college visit to St. Francis University.

Joshua Group  
educational  
support offers  
many rewards.



Younger private school students, Malik, Anthony, Marcus, and Myron receive tutoring and educational support.





Tyquan and Khaliq first came through the Joshua Group doors to obtain their GEDs. Now they come through the door to tutor and mentor other youth from the neighborhood.



Josh Gebers, staff intern, meets 4 times a week with each GED student (approximately 10 hours a week) to prepare for each of the 5 tests required to earn a GED.



Jamel McMillian, Robert Wright, JaQuan Johnson, speakers at the Joshua Student Scholarship Assistance Fundraiser Event.



Travin Coslow, Bishop McDevitt Coop student, tutors every day after school for Joshua Group. Travin received help from the Joshua Group and now he is giving back as his way of saying thanks.

## Irosha Peterson Earns Her GED

February 2008 found eighteen year old Irosha at the Joshua Group door asking for help to earn her GED after family moves made high school graduation impossible. Sally has spent the past year helping Irosha through homelessness, obtaining health insurance, and preparing her for the GED, which she earned in December. Irosha moved into the Lourdes house, a home for pregnant teens in Harrisburg, and in January the Joshua Group welcomed a new addition to the family, Irosha's young son Davantae. Irosha and her son recently moved into an apartment in the city made available through Brethren Housing. She is in the process of applying for entry into HACC's Medical Assistance Certification Program, which she hopes to begin this summer.



Irosha Peterson and new son Davantae with Sally Snyder, Program Manager.

*Dear Kirk, Sally, Josh, and Deb,*

*I would like to take the time to say thank you to all. I've been with you guys for over a year. I can't express enough thanks and love for the program and help you have given me. Now I'm a mother to my handsome son Davontae, and I know I can come to you guys if I have any problems. Thank you once again.*

*Irosha Peterson  
April 7, 2009*

## JOSHUA GROUP PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Joshua House Resource Center  
J Crew Afterschool Program  
Joshua House Residence  
Joshua Group Transition House  
SOS Scholarship Fund (Support Our Students)  
Joshua Urban Farm

## Joshua Urban Farm

Joshua Farm is entering its fourth year of offering employment opportunities to Joshua Group youth, affordable organically grown produce to our neighbors in Allison Hill and beyond, and service-learning experiences to students of all ages. In the shelter of the greenhouse, a small group of youth have been planting thousands of seeds. Many of the resulting seedlings will later be planted in the field, but a number of them will be sold at our plant sale Saturdays in May from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. If you are looking for flower or vegetable plants for your garden, stop by the Joshua Farm at 213 S. 18th Street, Harrisburg.

Seventh grade students from nearby Rowland School will be visiting the farm this spring to compare and contrast their observations from an earlier visit in the fall. Students from that school are also developing landscape plans for the field's perimeter, which will be planted with native species to provide habitat for pollinators.

Other projects in the works are a rainwater collection system in collaboration with students from Messiah College, a mural on the walls facing the parking lot, and a small-scale neighborhood beautification effort. Additionally, the farm has received a small grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture to expand our summer farm stand. Over the next weeks, we'll be going door to door in our neighborhood getting input on people's needs and ideas for easier access to fresh produce. We plan to partner with other local farms to supply a wider variety and quantity of vegetables at the farm stand, since most of Joshua Farm's produce is directed to members of our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program.

For information on volunteer opportunities for groups or individuals, contact Farm Manager Kirsten Reinford at [joshuafarm@joshuagroup.org](mailto:joshuafarm@joshuagroup.org) or call (717)213-9316.



Kirsten Reinford, Joshua Farm Manager, teaching 7th grade Science students from Rowland School in Harrisburg to plant potatoes.

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The Children's Home Foundation  
United Way of the Capital Region  
United Way of the Capital Region YAP  
(Youth Allocation Panel)  
YWCA of Greater Harrisburg and  
the South Central Allison Hill Generations Fund

Thanks to the Youth Group of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church in Mechanicsburg for preparing a week's worth of dinners for the J Crew Afterschool Program.

Mail to:

The Joshua Group  
1442 Market Street,  
Harrisburg, PA 17103  
PH 717.236.4464  
[joshcenter@comcast.net](mailto:joshcenter@comcast.net)

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My check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed

The Joshua Group is a member agency of the United Way of the Capital Region (giving # 7047) and a registered 501(c)(3) organization, EIN 31-1372530.

- I will pray for The Joshua Group
- Please add me to the mailing list
- I would like information about volunteering
- I would like to request a speaker
- I would like information about making an in-kind donation
- I know a young person who needs to know about The Joshua Group