



Dear Harmony House Friend,

Two weeks ago, as I was walking in the outdoor space of the shelter grounds, I came across a common sight: a group of 6 women were sitting together laughing and chatting. I smiled, my heart was happy to see a group of women holding space for each other, especially women who all share a bond of trauma and abuse, but still able to find the joy that exists in this world. A few children played at their feet, and two teenagers sat in the group, listening to the bubbling laughter of happy spirits, seeing their mothers' smiles and basking in the feeling of a safe family.

As I got closer, they welcomed me to join their group. I stood with them, and listened to the stories they were sharing. They were telling their birth stories. The monumental struggle to bring forth a new person and share this beautiful and broken world with a brand-new tiny person. Stories of pain, of struggle, of misfortune, of hospitals, homes, tubs, beds, stitches and c-sections. Stories full of their own mothers, the advice, the hand holding, and sometimes their sadly notable absence.

Everyone has such a story, whether it was them bearing down with contractions, or a story passed along from their mother about their own struggle to enter this world. Even the children chimed in, knowing these stories by heart, having breathed them in as long as they could remember.



The birth story bonds us all. But it is just the beginning of our story, and of our mother's life-long love. This work of creating, protecting, teaching, cleaning, feeding and encouraging tiny hearts is not for quitters! A mother's most important work is ensuring we are safe, can grow up healthy and loved. Along with joy, pride and deep love, a mother's job is also stressful, exhausting, painful, full of sacrifice and sometimes boredom. **Due to the downs that come along with the ups of motherhood, we should make sure that we look after our mothers as much as they look after us, and make sure they too are healthy, loved and safe.**

This year, Harmony House is investing in the mental and physical wellness of mothers, as well as all those women who have had a mother, will become a mother, wish to become a mother, have no desire to be a mother, or have a difficult relationship with their mother. **We are striving to not only provide one-on-one in person therapy sessions with a registered therapist, but to create opportunities to move and reconnect with the joy of physical activity!**

** Picture – Momma Ruth Eskritt and baby Ray Eskritt.*

After two and half years of confinement, many of us have gotten used to sitting still. Relying on comforts we hold within our homes, we have leaned heavily on books, screens, games and hobbies that would keep us safe from a virus that kept us apart. Harmony House is looking to shake those cobwebs off, and start to move outside once again!

The women who reside at Harmony House often struggle to find the time and space to feel safe to try new things, including forms of movement or ways to build muscle. To help them overcome this barrier to wellness, we are seeking donations to create an exercise and physical movement space for residents to reconnect with their bodies. With your donations we would purchase equipment that could be shared amongst residents, on their own schedule. We are looking for things like adjustable dumbbells and weights, resistance bands, weighted ropes, jump ropes, yoga mats, and yoga balls. We are also seeking instructors for classes like Yoga, Zumba, dance, or martial arts to lead women in experiencing the joy of movement and control.

Because everyone with a birth story, whether they are the birth giver, the helper or the newest addition to love, deserves to write a new story. Their own birth story, of how they created a new life, in a post-COVID world. Please consider making a donation this Mother's Day and help the women who are raising up the next generation, as mothers, aunties, friends, cousins, sisters and as the women in our community, become stronger, more resilient, healthier and happier.

Together we can help! To make a gift, you can **scan the QR code** or fill out the form included. Please consider setting up a recurring monthly donation to provide a sustainable, reliable source of funding for our work.

Thank you and Happy Mother's Day!



Ray Eskritt
Executive Director
Harmony House

