

Women's Program

Immediately after the construction was finished at Bergen Street and the population of the men's program was doubled, the work began to rehabilitate Park Place as a women's program with the capacity of 20. After it began ministering to women, the building next door was purchased and the real estate capacity of the program was doubled. Who would have realized fifty years ago that Alfredo Cotto-Thorner's dream would have become a reality this way?

Continuing The Vision

Over the fifty years hundreds of lives have been changed. Individuals have been emptied of drugs and filled with Christ. Alumni of Anchor House have gone into all types of vocations. Some have become ministers and others have become productive through vocational training they have received while in treatment at Anchor House. Some have returned to Anchor House as members of the staff. We welcome this year's graduates and pray for Christ's love to be with them as they become an inspiration.

We also give thanks for the volunteers over the years. They have shared their love and concern. Some have come on a weekly basis and others have helped through their local churches or served on committees and on the Board of Directors.

On a personal note, Nancy, inspired by Rev. Lopez' appeal for toiletries for the residents, worked with the Outreach Committee of Memorial Church and every year for 25 years brought special gifts to each resident. Richard distributed them when he spoke at the annual Christmas Eve Service. The vision continues under the outstanding leadership of Alison King as Executive Director.

In 2013 the women's program expanded from a capacity of 20 to 28. In 2016 OASAS approved a capital project to expand the real estate property for Bergen street. The hope is to have a larger capacity to help families as well as an outpatient program.



Anchor House—"The Beginning"

By Rev. Richard & Nancy Rice



50 years of restoring lives.



"This hope we have as anchor of the soul...A hope both sure and steadfast..." Hebrews 6:19

Anchor House—“The Beginning”

Rev. Richard Rice and his wife Nancy were good friends of Rev. Alfredo Cotto-Thorner and his wife, Dorothy. These are some thoughts that began with our friendship and continued over the years with the development of the Anchor House program. Alfredo came from Puerto Rico and Dorothy came from Minnesota.

South 3rd Street United Methodist Church

In the 1960s the Williamsburg area of Brooklyn was filled with addicts. Alfredo and Dorothy ministered to those who were near the church on a daily basis. Many of them would spend most of the day in the program. They would use the church's lower floor and the lower floor of the attached parsonage where the Cotto-Thorners and their two boys, Lester and Daniel, lived. Alfredo wanted to have a 24 hour program but the church wasn't able to provide overnight services for men. His frustration was that he had to let the men go at night and then they would shoot up drugs. At Thanksgiving time Dorothy and the women of the church would have a big dinner for the people of the community. Dorothy would put the turkeys in the bathtub to thaw, and cook the following day. The members of the church, under Dorothy's direction, provided meals and donated clothing for the men.

Park Place

The residence at Park Place had been the parsonage for the Union United Methodist Church. They were planning to sell it and find another parsonage. Through negotiations with the Brooklyn and Long Island Church Society, one of the two predecessor organizations of The United Methodist City Society, the property was purchased by the Brooklyn & Long Island Church Society. The doors opened in the Spring of 1967. It was Alfredo's program and it was called Anchor House (Addicts on Narcotics Christ Oriented,) an acronym proposed by an early member of the Anchor House Committee, The Rev. Arthur Barton, who was then serving Andrews UM Church in Brooklyn. Richard Rice was the first secretary of the committee. Alfredo stated his program simply, “Empty them of drugs and fill them with Christ”. This continues to be the theme.

During the early years of the program the men had recreation at the gym where Richard Rice was serving, St. Paul's UM Church. They would walk to Nostrand Ave. subway and take it to Ave. D and then walk to the church. Nancy's father worked for Volkswagen and was able to secure a van for the house. This was the first and only van they had for many years. St. Paul's women would bring dinners to Anchor House several times a year.

There was an immediate need for furniture and Nancy and Dorothy formed a woman's auxiliary through the New York Annual Conference United Methodist Women. It was called NOAH (Neighbors of Anchor House). The women actually bought the furniture, the men put the beds together under Nancy's direction. During the early years the residents would come to St. Paul's for various services and activities. Each Christmas Eve they would come to the 11:00 PM service.

The program grew with a staff of eight. A statistical study was done in 1973 that showed a very high success rate. A Board of Directors was formed and has helped to guide the program. There were many directors of the program over the years. One of them, Hyrum Irizarry went on from being a resident to director and then became a Chaplain in the Federal Prison System. Enrique Lopez, a graduate of the Teen Challenge program became a volunteer, then a counselor and then director of the program for over twenty years. While he was director the program received a citation as the best narcotics program in the United Methodist Church. It also was recognized by New York State as the best small program in NY State. It was during this time, with the support of NY State OASAS program that Anchor House sought to double the size of its residence.

Bergen Street

After Richard Rice and Henry Lopez searched for available properties they came upon the two gutted apartment houses and adjacent empty lot on Bergen St. HUD offered to give a grant of 5 million dollars, 1 million for acquisition and construction and 4 million for program for five years. Senator Alfonse D'Amato sent a letter to Richard Rice announcing the grant. We had a year to take possession of the property. Trudy Grove, then Treasurer of the City Society, worked hard to bring together the funding from HUD and OASAS. We actually got the Bergen St. property through an attempted murder trial. The owners, a man and the woman had been in an estranged relationship and she was cut by a machete in her face and lost parts of some fingers. Even though there was a recording devise that picked up the sounds of the attack, he was acquitted. He wanted cash for his part of the sale. She wanted his money set aside because she was going to sue him. Finally, Dr. John Carrington, the Executive Director of the City Society and a strong supporter of the program over the years, suggested that he and Richard go to see the woman. We spoke to her. By her selling the property it would make it possible for us to minister to other battered women like herself. We had the closing on the last day our HUD grant was available.