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Dear Friend of Vincent House,

The holiday season gives us occasion to express our gratitude for your continued support of Vincent House and its members. However, during this time of economic scrutiny did you ever wonder how your donations are actually used? Consider these:

Our Financial Management is efficient. Because of prudent financial management, Vincent House's building and property are paid for. Therefore, **a higher proportion of our budget goes directly for professional services and staff salaries.**

Our exceptional staff are highly dedicated. Staff make our members' recovery from severe and persistent mental illness possible. Here's one story:

Leilani Smith takes pleasure in working at Vincent House. In her role of Rehabilitation Specialist, she adds a big dose of youthful enthusiasm. Born in Vero Beach, Florida in what she describes as a "struggling artist family", Leilani finished high school and attended the University of Florida. Unlike many of her college-peers, she opted for humanitarian service by joining the Peace Corps and traveling to a small African village to work as a volunteer.

In 1978 a teenager named Berhanu "Abe" Youssouf fled across Africa's Djibouti desert with a band of refugees. Confused, frightened and with no family by his side, Abe escaped from Ethiopia during the years of Red Terror violence. Abe survived the trials of torture and a refugee camp and he grew up working sporadic jobs, never again to return home. He drifted across three continents, sometimes as a stowaway, until finally given political asylum in the United States and eventually citizenship in 1998. This past year found Abe unemployed, alone and quietly struggling with a mental illness.

Back to Leilani. After her stint in the Peace Corps, Leilani found that adjusting to life in fast-paced America was even more of a challenge than adapting to life in an African village. The transition back to America was difficult. After several jobs in human service and education, she began working at Vincent House earlier this year.

"From the first moment I visited Vincent House, I felt like I belonged. This is where I was meant to be. Every day I feel like we accomplish great things."



Berhanu "Abe" Youssouf, left, with Leilani Smith, right, while on the job at Galleria Showcase.

Leilani's first major project consisted of providing vocational training for Abe in a paid clerical job with Galleria Showcase. Their relationship, built on similar experiences in cultural adaptation and stories of Africa, ensured Abe's success on his first paid job in six years. "I feel by working, I am contributing to society once again. I have begun to value myself – and also feel valued. The Vincent House Transitional Employment Program has made that possible. Being from another country, I don't have any family here in the States. Vincent House has become my family and it is here where I feel accepted and understood."



Staff Leilani Smith, far right, works to prepare lunch with members (from left to right), Jason Michaud, Erin Gleason and Rebecca "Gigi" Behar.

Our services are cost effective: These achievements are typical of our nine person staff who work with 502 lifetime members. Our members find purpose, develop meaningful friendships, experience a ***decrease in hospitalizations and incarceration, work in paid employment and begin paying taxes.***

We are growing: Vincent House is no longer a little known resource nestled in the heart of Pinellas County. *In just the past six months, 117 people from South St. Petersburg to Tarpon Springs have inundated our Clubhouse with interest in our programs. Most of these potential members are still waiting for intake and orientation because of our limited space and staffing levels.* The average certified Clubhouse with our size membership (daily attendance of 50-55) has twelve staff and a working space of 6,000 square feet. Vincent House has just nine staff and less than 3,000 square feet. We urgently need more staff and increased working space.



"Abe" working the front reception desk at Vincent House.

As you can see, Vincent House offers its members a positive, employment-focused alternative, as opposed to the more traditional options of financial dependence on family, hospitalization, or incarceration. We continue to rely on the generosity of Vincent House friends, like you, to make Leilani's work and the tireless efforts of our other staff possible. In Leilani's words, *"Vincent House is an uplifting place to be; every day I feel so fortunate to be involved in the lives and successes of those living with mental illnesses."*

Please join us in helping to fund the recovery of people who experience mental illnesses. Start living your legacy today and make a tax exempt contribution that will make possible this positive, constructive and self-enhancing alternative for people like Abe. Thank you, in advance, for your generous support.

We wish you and your family a wonderful and happy holiday season - one made more meaningful by your role in transforming the lives of our members.

Sincerely,

Elliott Steele
Executive Director

William McKeever
Program Coordinator