

Healing Broken Lives with God's Love

BY GINA HERRING

On Saturday, April 10, Angela and Exavier Johnson held an open house to officially open Reconciliation House; a faith based non-profit recovery after care center for women offenders who are being released from the Georgia Department of Corrections. The Johnsons, along with a lot of help from family and friends, have remodeled the basement in their home to accommodate five bedrooms and three bathrooms. The new living area will house women who need to mend their lives. Their ministry offers an alternative for women other than going back to the life they knew before jail. A life that lead them to jail.

Angela and Exavier co-founded Reconciliation House in 2001. Previously located in Jonesboro, Reconciliation House is now situated on 52 acres in the southern end of the county on Rock Quarry Rd. It is a place where women with broken lives can heal. It is a place where they can discover that love is God's healing touch.

The mission of Reconciliation House is to eliminate recidivism, the cycle of going in and out of jail. They hope that

by building a therapeutic after-care community, that provides family style living quarters, the women will be able to develop into prominent citizens and ambassadors for Christ.

ACCORDING TO Exavier, the female inmate population has doubled since 1997 and 60% of people who are released from jail will return within three years. He said that faith-based after care helps reduce that number by two-thirds.

"We can't expect them to do it on their own," said Exavier. "We need to help each other. The most important thing for women coming out [of jail] is to be able to go to an after-care facility with a positive environment."

The women who live in Reconciliation House aren't just going to get a free ride. They are first carefully screened. They are recommended for the program, usually by the prison Chaplain. They also have to complete a thorough application process.

They must first be truly committed to changing their lives. After they make that decision, they will be able to live in Reconciliation House for

one year. There the women will receive counseling and training. They will learn valuable skills such as word processing and other computer skills needed to get a job. The women will be able to get their GED if needed. They will also be taught valuable life skills so that they will be able to function once on their own.

THEY WILL not only be living in a positive environment, the women will become part of the Johnson family. Exavier, Angela and their children also live in the home. The residents of Reconciliation House will interact with them on a daily basis. "We will all sit down together at the table each evening and have dinner together," said Angela. "Eating dinner together as a family is something that seems like a small thing, but it is very important." She said that families across America have become too busy to eat together anymore.

Angela grew up in a large family and realizes the important role that family plays in our lives and our success in life. She has successfully housed women who are homeless due to incarceration or



The Johnson Family will welcome women who need help in getting their lives back together. Pictured are Exavier, Angela, Jireh and Javier Johnson.

because of other hardships. Angela is the founder of the HUG (Helps Ugly Go) ministry, intercessory prayer and pen pal club for inmates and their families. Angela and Exavier are members of Trinity Family Worship Center, where she serves on the benevolence board and he serves as Care Pastor. She is an ordained minister with The Last Call World Outreach Mission and is also a volunteer Chaplain in the prison system.

SO, ON THAT Saturday afternoon, invited guests, family and friends who helped them along the way, came together to celebrate the purpose that they are so passionate about and to dedicate the house to the service of God. "It's still a work in progress," said Angela Johnson, while leading visitors on a tour of her home. "I was wor-

ried that the renovations would not be completed in time." However, she said that it only seems fitting that there is still work to be done on the house because we are all "works in progress." That's what this whole thing is about.

The Johnsons would like to thank all those who helped them with this project. They said there is no way they could have done it without God's help and the many services of a lot of friends. Special thanks go to: GEC Electrical, David Long Framing, Heritage Construction HVAC, Professional Plumbing, Billy's Masonry and many others

If you would like to make a tax-deductible contribution or would like more information about Reconciliation House, you may contact them at 706-472-3031 or write Reconciliation house, Inc, PO Box 2983, Stockbridge, GA 30281.



As part of the open house celebration, they decided not to cut the ribbon, but to break through the ribbon because the house will be a place for breakthroughs. Pictured above is Angela's mother, Margaret Williams breaking through the ribbon.



Reconciliation House is located on 52 acres in Monroe County. The residents will have a beautiful place to live, but will also participate in maintaining the property.