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Housing for New Hope News

For information about Housing for New Hope's programs and housing, visit www.housingfornewhope.org or call (919) 489-6282.

Alphonso's Walk by Terry Allebaugh

I want to tell you about Alphonso Williams' walk.

Alphonso, who died on Epiphany Sunday, January 6, was a big man—about six feet, four inches tall—with a long stride. For the last four years of his life, he would arise by 5, no later than 6 a.m., and go for a walk.

About three years ago, I joined Alphonso for those pre-dawn walks. At first I had to jog almost to keep up. Over time, I learned to quicken my pace, and his slowed down, until our steps found a rhythm as we talked of work, family, and God. Sometimes, we walked in a comfortable silence.

Those same big strides carried Alphonso many others places as well. They took him under bridges, into the woods, and into shelters and abandoned houses to give hope to the homeless. His message was challenging as well: he was often heard telling men on the streets who ask him for spare change, that he had change for them, just not the kind they were asking for. He knew change was possible because he too had been homeless.



Alphonso Williams

"If I can do it, so can you," he told them.

Those big steps took him to Housing for New Hope's Phoenix House, where he was program director. He would tell residents that this was a good time for them to make positive changes in their lives. He knew such change was possible because he, too, had been a Phoenix House resident and graduate.

He told them, "If I can do it, so can you."

On numerous occasions, Alphonso walked into City Council telling elected officials of his journey through active addiction, incarceration, and homelessness into recovery, freedom, and home ownership. He advocated for funding for services and housing for those still homeless, telling Council members, that if he could do it, so could many others just like him.

Alphonso and I traveled together on multiple occasions to Washington, D.C. to meet with our Senators and Representatives. He also led a workshop for other formerly homeless people from around the country, encouraging them to utilize

Stewards Success!

Thank you for helping us meet the Stewards Fund Challenge. In all, more than 145 families and individuals, twenty-one family funds and giving circles, and twelve congregations contributed more than \$97,000 to our end-of-year campaign, almost double our goal.

Thank you again for working with us to prevent and end homelessness in our community.

their experience as tools for advocacy.

In D.C., we would walk to the mall that runs between the Capitol and the Washington Monument. One morning, Alphonso commented that he wished he could have seen Dr. King's famous address, and he reflected his fear that too many people abused the hard-won freedoms for which King and others fought. For him, freedom was about helping somebody else who was struggling.

As the effects of Alphonso's terminal cancer worsened, his shortening strides took him into the homes and hospital rooms of others battling cancer. He encouraged them not be defined by their illness, but to keep pushing, keep living, and keep focusing on the powerful energy of will and spirit they each had, telling them, "If I can do it, so can you."

His witness of hard work and dedication led the board of Housing for New Hope to name their proposed 24-unit housing development for formerly homeless people the "Williams Square Apartments." He didn't live to see their fruition, but for the sake of those he most cared about, hopefully Durham will.

In a time of so much talk about what plagues us, Alphonso acted. He often said that "big talk don't cook no rice." His walk is over, but his witness is an enduring challenge to each of us, whether we live under a bridge or work in a D.C. office, to examine the authenticity of our talk.

If he could do it, so can we.

On Monday, January 21, the Martin Luther King Steering Committee of Durham posthumously awarded a "Keeper of the Dream" award to Alphonso Williams. His wife, LaFrance, accepted the award.

Help Us Honor Recent Graduates

You are invited to a graduation ceremony on **Sunday, March 2**, as Carolyn, Donald, Harry, Howard, and Kevin celebrate their transition from homelessness to leading independent and healthy lives through the completion of their year-long residencies at Dove House and Phoenix House.

The ceremony will take place at **Triangle Presbyterian Church**, located on the corner of NC Highway 54 and Tudor Place in southwest Durham near the Woodcroft subdivision.

The ceremony will begin at 5:45 p.m. Dinner will be offered prior to that at 5:00 p.m. Please join us to celebrate their achievement.