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## Pineapple Hospitality House by Sarah Culbertson

Pineapple was not always a commonplace fruit. Europeans first learned of the new pinecone-esque fruit in the 15th century, after Christopher Columbus returned from a Caribbean voyage, having discovered pineapple at Carib Indian settlements. Renaissance Europe was bereft of ordinary sweets; fresh fruit was very rare as orchards were sparse and refined sugar was imported at a great cost. People fell in love with pineapple for its natural, sugary taste, and the ability to enjoy it in many forms: dried, glazed, candied, fresh, etc. However, because it was a tropical fruit, it took gardeners nearly two centuries to perfect a method mimicking the hot climate necessary for growth. Until the 1600's, pineapple was an item of celebrity reserved only for the extremely wealthy, and it became known as a symbol of royal privilege.

While Kings were receiving pineapples as gifts in Europe, across the Atlantic in America, they were taking on other symbolic meanings. At this time, the American colonies were small, rudimentary towns, where homes served as the main hub of community events. Visiting another's home was the primary form of entertainment, cultural interaction, and a way to hear the latest news. The warmth, charm and care with which guests were invited into the home were a key part of one's daily emotional life.

Creative displays of food were at the center of these home visits. The woman of the house was in charge of creating a display that was not only an edible culinary masterpiece, but a delight to the eyes as well. Often when receiving guests, the doors to the dining room were kept closed until the pivotal

moment when they would be flung open to reveal the evening's main event. Because of pineapple's rarity and expense, guests who were greeted by a food display adorned with a pineapple felt especially honored by their hosts. The presence of this simple fruit would indicate that their hosts had spared no expense to ensure their guests' pleasure. It was in this manner that in America, the pineapple came to symbolize a sense of welcome, human warmth, good cheer and familial affection. In a word, pineapples became to symbolize hospitality.

As pineapples became more readily available, their symbolism did not change. However, instead of creating lavish food displays, people began adorning their homes with permanent pineapple motifs. Pineapples were carved into walls near the front door to welcome all visitors into the home. They were woven into tablecloths and napkins, and painted on plates so that the feeling of good cheer would be felt at each meal. Nowadays, this display has faded to a quaint craft, except here at PHH. While we don't adorn our nightly meals with pineapples, nor are there pineapples carved into the woodwork, the guests and hosts of PHH make pineapples visible to those around them in a different way, by wearing them on their sleeves. By enjoying meals together, playing with the children, listening and sharing stories, we are examples of the few vestiges left of an era when all life literally revolved around the dining room table. The enduring pineapple, a fruit symbolizing Providence Hospitality House's abiding commitment to hospitality, family, friends and good times.

## New Year Resolutions

by Essi

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*“At first, it was just a place I rested...but within the first week Providence became my home.”*

With a new year comes new resolutions, and while number one on most people’s list is to either lose weight or quit smoking, mine is to find semi-permanent or permanent housing before the birth of my second son in April. You’re probably thinking to yourself, “Well, that is easy. There are agencies out there to help people like you,” but you’re only half right. There are plenty of agencies out there that are capable of helping a pregnant, single mother, but most have waiting lists of up to five years while others are out of funding. The next logical thought would be to get a job, right? Even though that would be the best next step, how many employers would hire a pregnant woman this far along?

My name is Essi, and I thought all these things when I first moved to Seattle from Denver in November. I thought it would be easy to find some kind of

housing because one: I was a single mother, two: I was pregnant and three: (most importantly) I was homeless. When that didn’t turn out to be the case, God lead me to the open and loving arms of Providence Hospitality House. There I found shelter, guidance, warmth and, most importantly, love, not only from the staff but the volunteers as well.

At first, it was just a place I rested my weary body after a long day of housing and job hunting, and I was reluctant to leave my son with the staff, but within the first week Providence became my home. My two year old son, Khalil, found a new grandma in Sister Marie and a playful friend in Sarah, while I found the tools and support I needed in my quest to fulfill my New Year’s resolution.

## Meet a PHH Volunteer

### Volunteer Reilly Curran

Hi there, my name is Reilly Curran, and I absolutely love volunteering at Providence Hospitality House! I was born and raised in Bellevue and I am currently a senior, majoring in History and Humanities, at Seattle University. I began volunteering at PHH during fall quarter for my “History of Motherhood” class, but I have had such awesome experiences here that I plan to continue volunteering. Like a lot of people, I was nervous coming into an unknown and new environment, but those nerves disappeared instantly with the welcoming and comfortable ‘home-like’ atmosphere. As a volunteer I always feel like I am able to contribute in some way, be it helping make dinner, setting the table, doing chores or playing with the kids. But, above all, what keeps me

coming back each time are the wonderful mothers and their children.

One experience in particular that brings a smile to my face was my interaction with an adorable four year old girl. When she first arrived at PHH she was very shy and didn’t want to leave her Mother’s side. But after a few visits, one day she opened up and we spent the entire time having a blast, playing doggy, grocery shopping, building blocks and house. I left that day feeling on top of the world. PHH has given me the opportunity to be involved in a wonderful and important organization and for this I am deeply grateful.



## Valentine's Day

As Valentine's Day approaches, we search for special ways to tell our significant others how much we love them. And while romantic love is deep and sweet, I would like to turn our attention to the strongest love: The love between a mother and her child.

Everyday I watch the mothers at Providence Hospitality House struggle with homelessness. They deal with challenges and obstacles that most of us can never imagine, but there is one thing that gives them the power to move through crisis and that is the power of love for their children. I asked our current guests, Bonetta, Essi, Jen and Azjah, how they feel and express love for their kids. I would like to share with you their responses.

Bonetta has a sweet son named Brian. She told me about the bond created between her and her son during pregnancy. She told me that carrying Brian for nine months created a love that will conquer everything. Essi is seven months pregnant and has a

precocious 2 year old, Khalil. She often talks about the best way to raise her son. Essi wants to bring up a strong and kind man who will help everyone. The sensitivity and devotion that Essi gives to her son is obvious to anyone who is blessed to spend time with her. Jen has a quiet 7 month old, Aaron and an intelligent 8 year old, Skylr. Jen expresses to me that the love she has for her sons is a source of constant amazement to her. Finally, Azjah, a mother with a lovely daughter, Beige and a happy son, Vazjahn, tells her children that, "I love you up to the sky and back to the ground and back up to the sky. I will love you that much, for all my life and all of your life". I asked Azjah if I could quote her on that and she said, "[that would be hard]...because that doesn't even begin to describe it."

On this Valentine's Day, I will be thinking about the amazing love our mothers at PHH have for their children and on that day, as on every day, that love will inspire and strengthen me.



## New Feature - Donate Online!

We have just added a new feature to our web site - a **DonateNow** button. This button enables visitors to our web site, [www.providencehospitality.org](http://www.providencehospitality.org), to donate online, instantly! Our **DonateNow** button is a major step forward into the growing world of e-philanthropy.

We believe that the **DonateNow** button will allow us to cater to a broader audience over the Web. We are very excited because it offers a safe and easy way for our current supporters to contribute to our work and the ability to reach new supporters in a low-cost way.

The **DonateNow** feature is made possible through Groundspring.org, a

nonprofit Internet foundation created by the Tides Foundation. All donations are processed by Groundspring.org, utilizing the newest secure technology developed for e-commerce to ensure that a donor's information is kept private and secure.

Be sure to check out our new **DonateNow** button at [providencehospitality.org](http://providencehospitality.org).

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1) Visit:

[www.providencehospitality.org](http://www.providencehospitality.org)

2) Click the **DonateNow** button in the left margin.

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MISSION

To provide a temporary home for women with children in crisis. The guiding principles are compassion, respect, justice, advocacy, and a family-like environment

## PHH Wish List

For those who can give the little things that help keep normalcy in the lives of families in crisis:

**Food:** Chicken, hot dogs, pork/ham, cheese, assortment of teas

**Clothes:** Boys' and girls' age 7-11, maternity, women's coats

**Seasonal:** Umbrellas, raincoats (child and adult), long-sleeve shirts and sweaters

### A Little Something Extra-

Please sponsor some family fun by donating movie passes through Fandango.com. The fun and luxury of a trip to the movies is a value to all our guests. We can give passes to whole families and use them for our Mom's Night Out occasions.

*Simply go to:*

<http://www.fandango.com> and follow the links to Fandango Bucks.

### Recipient Information:

Name- Providence Hospitality House

Email- [staff@providencehospitality.org](mailto:staff@providencehospitality.org)

Fandango emails the passes that we can then print out and give to our moms to use!

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