sibling story

“No matter where you come from, it can always get better,” Tameka shared when she and her two siblings, Teron and Tachena, came back to visit People Serving People after more than 15 years – not as guests, but as members of our community.

Tameka, Teron, and Tachena began their lives in Chicago, Illinois. As their mom, Renee, shared with People Serving People in 2004, “You have to know where I came from. I’ve been out there, and didn’t do myself any good. I made bad judgments.” A survivor of domestic violence, Renee long struggled with compounding and traumatic events. Her children went to stay with a grandparent but, after grandma passed, Renee was determined to give her three kids a life of stability and moved to Minnesota for a new start.

Tameka arrived in Minnesota as a 10 year-old with her younger sister, Tachena, in 2002. Recalling their first few nights with their mom in emergency shelter at People Serving People, “It was nerve-racking – the building was so big, and everything was so new,” Tameka said. “But I had my sister and my mom, and I felt that in my heart everything would be okay, and it was.”

Teron joined his family in Minnesota in 2003, and they were later approved for People Serving People’s supportive housing program. As a 16 year-old teenager, Teron’s memories of that stressful time in their lives were very different than those of his sisters’. As Teron recalls, “I was reluctant, and it didn’t matter what they had to offer…I was going to hate it because it forced me to move.” His feelings changed, however, as he started to meet staff, make friends, and participate in the programming. “As I thought about all of the positive benefits People Serving People offered, it quickly turned into home,” Teron said.

“Coming back here made us see how far we’ve come.”

“Everyone was so friendly. I just remember a lot of smiling faces, and a lot of people telling us, ‘It’s going to be okay.’ It was comforting, because we had a lot of help that we didn’t have before,” Tameka added. “People Serving People provided a lot of basic needs that you need to function in day-to-day life,” Teron said, but to his family, “it was so much more than that.” When asked what about People Serving People made the biggest impact, Teron said, “It was the intangibles that you need to be successful once you take off from this place.”

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People Serving People’s newest initiative, the Center of Excellence, is growing! Our Preschool and Learning Center opened last year with four classrooms, serving children ages 16 months–5 years old, and school-age children up to 12 years old. In the first six months, we saw a large need in our community for infant care so we expedited the opening of an infant room. In March 2018, we welcomed five babies into our new infant classroom. This new room increased the center’s total capacity to 57 children. We are excited to serve the youngest members of our community and look forward to seeing them learn and grow throughout the program.

In January 2018 the Preschool and Learning Center was designated a Strong Beginnings site by Hennepin County. Strong Beginnings sites are required to serve at least 65% students with low income and/or special needs. This designation affirms our commitment to serving those with the most need, engaging the whole family, and using data to track progress. We are also proud to have a 4-Star Parent Aware rating from the State of Minnesota.

What does it mean for People Serving People to work on systems change initiatives? The lives and experiences of our shelter guests are shaped by the interconnected systems with which they interact. Often these systems create and perpetuate economic and educational disparities, among others. Rinal leads the work to engage People Serving People in issue advocacy and public policy discussions to help inform lawmakers on the barriers our community faces. This legislative session we advocated for policies that help create stability for families experiencing homelessness through expedited access to early childhood education, rental assistance for homeless and highly mobile students, investments in affordable housing, and a taskforce around childhood trauma informed policies and practices. She will also lead our work to improve the field of trauma informed care and family resilience through increasing the trauma informed capacity of the community at large.

This work will be done consistent with our organizational values and rooted in the lived experiences of guests and community members. We move forward with a racial and economic equity lens and a trauma informed approach to our work.

Our systems change efforts are well underway. Last fall, we partnered with MinneMinds to host two Gubernatorial Forums on early childhood education. It was a great opportunity to ask questions and learn candidates’ positions on various matters surrounding early childhood education. On Election Day, 2017, People Serving People’s staff accompanied shelter guests to the polls and voted with them for their residency eligibility. They also encouraged voter education and mobilization through a fun event in the lobby where our young guests got to cast ballots in the Kids Voting Booth. They decided important contests like best superhero and favorite book.

In March, members of People Serving People’s staff and board of directors joined hundreds of our peers and allies for Homeless Day on the Hill. Prior to the event, we partnered with the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless and Simpson Housing to offer a Voices for Housing Training. This event empowered participants to share their stories and use their voices to advocate for policies to help end homelessness in our community.

Partners and colleagues from government agencies, schools, and other local service organizations joined us in March as we hosted the first in a series of community convenings on trauma informed approaches. The first gathering offered an introduction to trauma informed care. We look forward to sharing more and learning alongside one another at three additional convenings later this year.
Join us for events that benefit children and their families sheltering at People Serving People. Chefs for Change dinners are sponsored by chefs and restaurants who donate their culinary skills and the food and wine served at dinner. Our Annual Gala is sponsored by local business partners and generous donors. Event proceeds support programs and services for children and their families at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness.

This “chef’s table” experience is an elegant dinner party for 40-50 guests, hosted by a top Twin Cities chef, including a four to five course meal with wine pairings. Are you a restaurant owner or chef who wants to help families find their way home? Contact Mallory Evans today.

Upcoming events

06.18.18
Cosmos at Loews Hotels
Cosmos Modern American
$85/person

09.24.18
Republic
$60/person, End of Summer Beer Dinner

10.22.18
Bar Brigade
$75/person, Autumn in Paris

07.29.18
People Serving People
2:30-4:45pm
614 3rd Street S.
Minneapolis, MN 55415
$5/person

09.13.18
The Center of Excellence
7:00-8:30am
2400 Park Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55404

back to school breakfast
You’re invited to our first-ever morning fundraiser event, the Back to School Breakfast. Join us for breakfast and learn about People Serving People’s educational programming at our emergency shelter and new Center of Excellence.

We’re looking for table captains to invite friends, family, or colleagues to attend this one-hour complimentary breakfast and program. This is a great opportunity to introduce your network to People Serving People! To become a table captain, contact Mallory Evans at mevans@peopleservingpeople.org.

Thank you to our recent host chefs!
The Renaissance Minneapolis, The Depot, and Johnson Brothers
The SIX15 Room of the Grand Hotel
The Six15 Room

To register for or sponsor any of these events, contact Mallory Evans.
peopleservingpeople.org/events 612-277-0256 mevans@peopleservingpeople.org

people serving people helps homeless and at-risk children and their families manage crisis situations and build a strong foundation for their long-term success.
Renée and her children moved out of People Serving People and into stable housing in St. Paul in 2004. Tameka graduated high school and continued on to complete her culinary arts degree from North Dakota State College of Science. Teron completed his bachelor’s degree in social work from the University of St. Thomas and is currently pursuing a master’s program. “Both of us are in positions where we serve others,” Teron commented, “and it was because of the guidance, assistance, and the supports we had at People Serving People. We wanted to go on and perpetuate that, to share it with others.”

Tachena, Teron and Tameka’s younger sibling, currently lives in Mississippi but came back late last fall for a family visit. All three siblings decided to have “sibling day” and happened to find their way back to People Serving People. “So many memories rushed back, like playing outside and waiting for the school bus,” Tameka exclaimed. “Walking back through the front door was just like coming back home after college!” Tameka then paused, trying to find the words to share her gratitude. She said, “My heart felt so full. We were called a success story a couple times during that day. Coming back here made us see how far we’ve come.”

As part of a college entrance essay, Teron was asked to think of the most influential people in his life. Thinking of his mother, he reflected on how he once told her, “Even though I didn’t like it in the moment, the best thing you have ever done for this family—ever—is bring us here.” As Renée shared with us in 2004, “At People Serving People, I did good things. I got a job, and was able to take care of my kids. I couldn’t see doing it by myself. I’m making it, because of this place.”

Teron thinks back on the family’s time in shelter as when his mother “began to take ownership of her lived experience, and got the most out of it. I credit People Serving People with a lot of the success that my family has found today. Without the community support for People Serving People, a lot of the things that we benefited from probably would not have been possible.”

Tameka said she would always come back and visit People Serving People. “This will always be my original home in Minnesota.”

Upon completion, trainees can take the ServSafe certification exam. Graduates leave prepared for a wide range of culinary positions. Blue Plate Restaurant Company offers Culinary Arts Training Program graduates an opportunity to interview for a two-week paid internship as a prep cook or line cook at one of Blue Plate’s restaurants with the potential for an employment offer to follow. Graduates may also have the opportunity for a paid internship with People Serving People.

“Being here helped a lot. It showed me what a real kitchen is like, more than my home kitchen. It gave me a whole lot of confidence,” said recent student Magana. “As a mother of two, it’s not easy to afford further education. I’m very grateful for this opportunity at no fee.”

If you or someone you know is interested in participating in the Culinary Arts Training Program please visit our website, www.peopleservingpeople.org.
All our programs are funded by generous donors such as yourself.