



CITY COURT OF BUFFALO

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SHARON M. LoVALLO
CITY COURT JUDGE

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To Whom It May Concern:

In response to a request by Brother Tom Eades from St. John's House in the City of Buffalo, I am writing to describe to the invaluable service that the organization provides to this Court and the community.

As a Buffalo City Court Judge, I preside over countless cases involving young men between the ages of 16 and 21. Since being assigned to the Domestic Violence part in 2004, that number has increased exponentially. What experience has made abundantly clear to me is that other than jail, there is no place for these young men to go. While it is true that they stand before me charged with a criminal offense, it is often their first contact with the criminal justice system as an adult. Moreover, they are often living on their own or with guardians who have little or no ability to care for or control them.

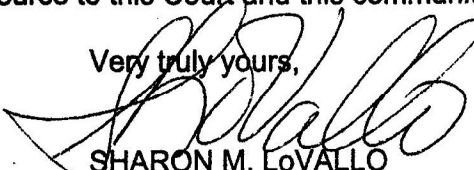
Family Courts do not have the resources to deal with these young men (children) in this age group. They often find themselves back on the street or in high risk living environments with no financial or emotional support, let alone any guidance to navigate the transition from child to adult. St. John's House and brother Tom offer one of the only chances for these young men to avoid prison or the street.

St. John's House provides more than shelter from the elements for these young men. It is a stable living environment with rules and responsibilities. Young men learn to be responsible for themselves and accountable for their actions while developing important life skills. They are able to attend school, substance abuse counseling and mental health treatment. Brother Tom and his staff ensure that young men placed with them abide by the rules of the house, but also monitor their compliance with Court mandates. Sixteen year old boys who have previously appeared in court alone are accompanied by a representative of St. John's House who can speak as to their progress and the difficulties they are facing.

Brother Tom has struck that difficult balance between discipline and compassion that gives these young men a fighting chance. Not every young man referred to St. John's House is a success story, but without Brother Tom and St. John's House, countless young men would be left adrift in a sea of poverty, violence and substance abuse.

Brother Tom and St. John's House are willing to work with the young men no one else will and provide a service to this Court no other agency is able to. I find Brother Tom and St. John's House to be an invaluable resource to this Court and this community.

Very truly yours,


SHARON M. LoVALLO
City Court Judge

SML/slk.