

April 14, 2020

A Hart-felt thank you!

Dear New Britain YMCA Staff:

“There but for the grace of God, go I.”

I must admit that, on occasion, I’ve recited that phrase when in the company of someone less fortunate than myself. How, I recall thinking, could they ever have allowed themselves to reach such a state of desperation? Never in my wildest imagination did I anticipate that one day that phrase would be directed towards me. *It was!*

During the weeks just prior to Christmas 2018, I found myself without a job, without resources and soon thereafter, without a home. Everyone shops at Wal-Mart, some sleep in their parking lot. *I’ve done both!* At that time, common everyday thoughts like what to have for dinner, what television shows to watch and what clothes to wear were replaced by those much more serious in nature: How will I eat? How will I stay safe? What clothes should I keep?

Perhaps it was by the grace of God that during that extremely difficult period, I received a phone call from Curtis Slaughter, the Hart House Residence Director. Mr. Slaughter was responding to an email I had submitted in desperation the previous week inquiring about the Y’s residency program. After discussing my circumstances, we agreed that I might be a good candidate for the New Britain YMCA’s residence program. I applied shortly thereafter and became a Hart House resident that very month – *and have been here ever since!*

Since my arrival, life at the YMCA has been extremely beneficial and uplifting. A short adjustment period was necessary, but I soon had little concern for my critical needs i.e., personal safety, reliable access to basic amenities, *and most certainly, proximity to a gym!* Equally important, I began to feel a sense of belonging again and had hope for the future!

As I write this, it seems the entire planet is at war with the dreaded coronavirus (COVID-19). Each day brings news of a growing casualty count. As part of the effort to eradicate the virus, no citizen, business or organization is exempt from the restrictive government-imposed measures necessary to win the war. Yet, you, the New Britain YMCA staff, have not wavered from your core mission: social responsibility. If anything, your response and course of action only demonstrate your resolve in fulfilling it! Free emergency child care is essential for those parents considered essential in fighting COVID-19. Moreover, your guidance and commitment to Hart House residents cannot be overstated; each day I take comfort in knowing that the required planning and preparation has been done to prevent COVID-19 from penetrating the walls of Hart House. For me, you have made this war a mere inconvenience rather than one requiring tremendous sacrifice.

With the above in mind, I extend my heartfelt – *and Hart House felt* - gratitude and appreciation to you, the New Britain YMCA staff. The culture and value system you reinforce provide great comfort, confidence and positive energy for me. But if it’s not clear by now that I consider you very special people. I assure you, *I do!*

Most sincerely,

LARRY T.

Hart House Resident, Room 304

New Britain YMCA