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Look ahead with hope



Karim Council, 7, of Camden, who was featured on a '20/20' special in Camden, talks to Diane Sawyer, the host of the program. The interview will be shown at tonight's Urban Promise banquet.

SHANNON OBERG/For the Courier-Post

Banquet to examine how TV shows aided Camden residents

By KRISTY DAVIES
Courier-Post Staff

Tonight Urban Promise Ministries will be presenting an exclusive interview, a behind-the-scenes look at "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" and families whose lives have been changed this year during its annual banquet.

Karim Council, 7, of Camden, was one of several children interviewed or featured in a "20/20" special called "Waiting on the World to Change" that featured children growing up in poverty.

Through arrangements between Urban Promise and ABC, Karim was able to go to New York City to meet and interview "20/20" host Diane Sawyer after her show, "Good Morning America."

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WEB EXTRA

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"He got to ask her why she picked Camden and what she learned from the experience," said Bruce Main, Urban Promise executive director. "It wasn't aired; it was an exclusive Urban Promise interview."

The interview will be shown during the annual banquet, which will take place at the Scottish Rite Auditorium in Collingswood.

About 700 people are expected to attend the event, including members of other families featured in the special.

The Marrero family, who received a new home through "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" over the summer, is expected to participate as well.

Billy Joe Marrero, 19, was one of the featured children in the special. Crews followed him for 18 months. The special first aired in January and an update is scheduled to air on "20/20" on Nov. 9.

Marrero's father, Victor, suffered multiple heart attacks and couldn't work. The family, including five teenage boys, often found themselves with no heat, little to eat and nowhere to sleep.

At the end of July, the Marreros received a knock on their door in Camden by "Ex-

Camden/TV coverage helped improve lives of residents

treme Makeover" host Ty Pennington. Seven days later, they had a brand new home in Pennsauken and were able to yell, "Move that bus!"

The show will air during a two-hour special Nov. 11 on ABC.

The experience of the makeover significantly affected Urban Promise as well. Comcast donated time to renovate and create a state-of-the-art computer lab in one of the ministry's buildings during the week of "extreme" projects.

"It's unbelievable," Main said. "Campbell Soup Company is renovating a cafeteria, Sodexo is doing a kitchen and All Risk is coordinating a lot of the other renovations in partnership with Space Design."

Main said updates on the current renovations will be discussed at the banquet as well as updates on the families interviewed for the "20/20" special.

Two of the Marrero boys are attending Urban Promise Academy, a Christian high school, he added.

A third child featured on the special, Ivan Stevens, goes to Camden Forward School, an Urban Promise Christian school teaching children in kindergarten through eighth grade. Urban Promise also was able to help arrange for an apartment Ivan and his mother could live in because they were homeless. Another child in the special was able to obtain some scholarships and went off to college, Main said.

"I think for people in the surrounding area — it has maybe awakened them to issues that kids are confronting in our community and has energized them to do more," Main said.

"The hope is that this is just a starting point for other things to happen, not only with our agencies but others around the city."

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