



+ THE SHEMA HOUSE

Media & Press Bio Fact Sheet 2012



Founded in 2005 the Shema House (Hebrew word for ‘hear+do’) was originally located in downtown Arlington Heights, IL. It provided a safe place for young people who had little or no family structure. It taught young people the value of service and loving others as a path to maturity and wholeness. It exposed young people to good role models, opportunities to serve, and helping run the house.



The Shema House, lead by Spencer and Lisa O’Brien-Wentzel, and staffed by young people made a huge difference in the community over the 5 years in existence:



Partnering: We partnered with Trader Joes at 3 locations and distributing over \$750,000 of non-sellable organic goods to single mother families and retirement communities. Partnering with local schools the Shema House re-distributed thousands of coats to needing students.

Serving: We gathered together twice a month at homeless shelters and other non-profits. The Shema House donated thousands of volunteer hours into the Chicago area over the course of 5 years.



Mentoring: Working with young people happened daily at the Shema House. Chores, life skills, games, fun, and preparing meals all gave Spencer and Lisa and other great adults opportunities to model Love Without Agenda to students.

The Shema House’s influence has taken the form of replications across the country. People from across the country have visited Spencer and Lisa at the house to learn and observe their methods and glean their years of expertise. The Shema House has inspired people to start new projects, change their college majors, go back to school for non-profit management, stop abusive lifestyles, and incorporated service into their way of life.

In 2010, having completed its mission of ‘raising’ the 10 original boys it started with, The Shema House closed in Arlington Heights and reopened in downtown Chicago. It carries on the legacy of partnering, serving and mentoring to this day. The Shema House residents still serve their neighborhood but also focus on equipping and networking other houses within the Love Without Agenda Coalition. They also spend time helping crafting the message and the products with the writing, that fuel Love Without Agenda’s action.