

And that has made all the difference

People often paint a bleak picture of Baltimore City. And, quite frankly, there are plenty of sad and disturbing stories to go around. Take my friend, who worked as a social worker for Baltimore City children in foster care. She would conduct home visits with parents interested in getting their children back. She spoke of apartments crawling with cockroaches, overflowing toilets not even hooked up, pet feces littering the floor and cases where parents admitted to not taking their medication. My friend would help these individuals outline the steps they would need to take to get their children back. In the midst of this, she had foster children tell her they had been abused or went without food.

But even in the bleakest of situations, light shines through. My friend treasures the hand-drawn cards from foster children she helped.

One such light in Baltimore City is Cristo Rey Jesuit High School on Chester Street in Fells Point. I have previously written about Cristo Rey student Arthur Williams.

In 2009, he was one of two sophomores chosen to meet personally with Bill Cosby.

When asked if this was one of the highlights of his life, the then 15-year-old responded, "No."

Taken aback, I remember asking, "Well then what is?"

"Seeing my mother get clean," he responded. "Meeting Bill Cosby was a great opportunity and affected my life, but seeing my mother stop using was much more crucial."

Arthur, a resident of Boys Hope Girls Hope in Baltimore, is an example of what is possible with inner determination coupled with a quality education and a supportive home environment. According to the Boys Hope Girls Hope website (bhghbaltimore.org), Arthur is now a Cristo Rey senior who has a corporate internship with Under Armour and plans to apply to Loyola University, Gettysburg

and Moravian College.

In a story which will run March 17 in The Catholic Review, writer Matt Palmer interviewed another Cristo Rey senior, Chris Ellis. Cornelia Ellis, Chris' adoptive mother, spoke of how proud she is of her son, but fretted that she didn't make enough money to give her son the education and things he deserves.

She said her son simply tells her, "I'm going to do the best I can with what I got."

"I've grown as a person here, both mentally and physically," Chris said of Cristo Rey. "I'm different now."

These young men were on a path that led them to places like Cristo Rey and Boys Hope Girls Hope. It's this difference that helps shine a light on Baltimore.



Chris Ellis, a senior at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School and his mother Cornelia, attend the school's "100 days until graduation" meeting March 8.