



Ministry Overview

Serving New Castle County, Delaware
Established, 1987

Table of Contents

- Friendship House Method of Ministry 3
 - Our Mission..... 3
 - Our Vision..... 3
 - Our Method..... 3
 - Our Programs 4
- 2019 Friendship House Personnel..... 5
- Transitional Housing Program 6
- Empowerment Program..... 9
 - Empowerment Centers 9
 - Financial Assistance 11
 - Winter Ministry..... 12
 - Breakfast Program 13
- Clothing Bank 14
 - Job Training Program 14
 - Clothing Distribution..... 15
 - Volunteers and Donations..... 15

Friendship House Method of Ministry

Our Mission

Based in New Castle County, Delaware, Friendship House is a non-profit faith based corporation in service to those individuals and families that are or are at risk of becoming homeless. Welcoming to all, Friendship House strives to serve as a sanctuary and a stepping-stone to each person in need through the traditional spiritual ministries of hospitality, education, empowerment and community.

Our Vision

Every person experiencing homelessness or displacement has full and equal opportunities of living self-sufficiently and is treated with compassion and love.

Our Method

Since 1987, Friendship House has walked with thousands of individuals experiencing homelessness or displacement on their road back to independent, self-sufficient lives. This experience has taught the staff and volunteers important lessons about the nature of homelessness, recovery and ministry. Over the years, these lessons have been incorporated into Friendship House's own philosophy and methodology of ministry known as the Empowerment Strategy Program. The Empowerment Strategy Program recognizes each of us walks our own road at our own speed. Its purpose is to develop a pathway from survival to self-sufficiency any person experiencing homelessness or displacement may choose to follow. This pathway presumes the following commitments from both the client and the community:

From the Client

- **Motivation:** A desire for one's situation to change and a willingness to take responsibility for one's own recovery.
- **Honesty:** The ability and willingness to speak the truth to oneself and others.
- **Realistic Goals:** The recognition that a person needs to set priorities and address issues in stages.
- **Dedication:** To accomplish one's goals, one must give them the time and energy they demand.

From the Community

- **Resources:** The appropriate tools, programs and support systems must be available.
- **Options:** Assistance must be flexible and recognize that goals can be achieved through various paths.
- **Collaboration:** In an era of diminishing resources, agencies must work together as a team to produce holistic recovery programs in their clients' best interest.
- **Relationships:** Since most of the underlying causes of homelessness are deeply personal, a relationship of trust must be nurtured and developed between the client and members of their community.
- **Recognition:** People need to feel their hard work is making a difference. Besides accomplishing their long-term goals, there also needs to be the experience of short-term successes.

The Friendship House method described above utilizes our six-stage Empowerment Strategy providing individuals with a strategic pathway from survival to self-sufficiency.

Stage 0 – Survival: Minimize the struggle of individuals in crisis to meet their physical needs, thereby allowing them to direct time and energy to recovery.

Stage 1 – Resource Building and Planning: Help individuals identify causes of their situation that are within their control and develop short-term strategies for resolving these issues.

Stage 2 – Strategic Problem Solving: Help motivated individuals implement the short-term strategies developed in Stage One by securing necessary resources and a desired living environment.

Stage 3 – Strategic Living: Expand and incorporate problem-solving strategies into a formulated, new lifestyle which enables the individual to achieve long-range goals.

Stage 4 – Re-Entry to Independent Living: Support individuals as they continue to implement their life strategies in the independent settings of their new careers and homes.

Stage 5 – Strategic Crisis Management: Incorporate change and choice into each person's life-strategies so they will possess the ability to weather a major life crisis after returning to independent living.

Our Programs

Transitional Housing: Twelve subsidized houses (six for men and six for women with children) provide a supportive, secure environment for individuals committed to addressing their unresolved social and economic issues.

Empowerment Centers: Open to all, locations currently reside in Wilmington, Newark, Middletown, and a satellite ministry in Millcreek. Empowerment programs include:

1. Home Base Program: Survival services providing clients with a Virtual Home (restrooms, mailing address, phone number, fax number, message service, internet access, escrow savings account, vital document storage, emergency clothing, hygiene products).
2. Job Readiness Program: Case management and supportive services to employable and motivated clients (state I.D., resume writing, online job searches, computer lab, bus tickets, work clothing, vocational certifications, etc.).
3. Life Recovery Program: Faith-based support groups. Individual consultations and referrals for motivated clients seeking to address the systemic causes of their homeless condition.
4. Financial Assistance:
 - Medical Assistance Fund: Emergency help for uninsured clients.
 - Empowerment Fund: Small grants to help jump-start clients' recovery strategies.
 - Credit Restoration Fund: Matching funds for housing residents paying their outstanding debts.
 - Homeless Prevention Fund: Emergency assistance for referred at-risk housed clients.

Clothing Ministry: A Clothing Bank through which over 150 churches, businesses and community organizations collect and distribute over 150,000 pounds of clothing yearly to more than 10,000 needy individuals in New Castle County.

Winter Sanctuary: Daily and overnight emergency sanctuary from the elements November through March.

Meal Programs: A weekly Sunday breakfast serving 100 to 150 people each week and an evening supper program for transitional housing residents in which volunteers prepare and share a meal with residents.

2019 Friendship House Personnel

Administrative Team

Kim Eppheimer: Executive Director
Marc Marcus: Assistant Executive Director/ Director of Day Ministry
Marcy Perkins: Assistant Executive Director/ Director of Housing
Bill Perkins: Program & Ministry Consultant
Roxane Blake: Office Manager
Rashita Lewis: Volunteer Coordinator

Transitional Housing Team

Marcy Perkins: Director of Housing Ministry
Paul Slowik: Director of Men's Housing
Mary Anne Matarese; Assistant Director of Women's Housing
Shawn Helmick: Manager, Women's Housing
Charon Davis: Program Worker, Women's Housing
Silas Harrison: Program Worker, Men's Housing
Heidi Hitchens: Program Worker, Women's Housing
Ronald Krier: Program Worker, Andrew's Place
Roselaine Pierre: Program Worker, Women's Housing
Benjamin Sargent: Program Worker, Andrew's Place
Kathleen Stocksdale: Program Worker, Women's Housing
James Thomas: Program Worker, Andrew's Place
Genell Walls: Program Worker, Andrew's Place

Empowerment Program Team

Marc Marcus: Director of Day Ministry
Mindy Dowsett: Site Supervisor, Newark
Patty Gross: Sr. Program Worker, Wilmington
Paul Kielar: Program Worker, Wilmington
Josh Klein: Program Worker, Wilmington/Newark
Rashita Lewis: Manager, Middletown/Odessa/Townsend
Carey Phillips: Front Desk Receptionist, Wilmington
LaShea Reams: Program Worker, Wilmington; Manager, Sunday Breakfast
Genell Walls: Financial Assistance/Hotline Manager, Wilmington

Clothing Bank Team

Robin Cross: Warehouse Manager
Eileen Taylor: Warehouse Assistant

Transitional Housing Program

The Friendship House Transitional Housing Program assists employable, displaced adults who have already demonstrated a commitment to addressing their life issues in a holistic manner. This four-stage program provides residents with up to one year of subsidized housing in a communal living environment and an aftercare program with no time limit. During their residency in the program, participants engage with Friendship House staff and volunteers to:

1. Find and maintain employment
2. Learn how to maintain a budget and manage their finances
3. Receive credit counseling and work to eliminate their outstanding debt
4. Improve their relationship-building and decision-making skills
5. Receive parenting training and, when possible, re-unite with their children
6. Address any issues threatening their long-term strategic recovery

The program admits about 120 applicants annually. On average we work with over 120 residents annually. About 35% graduate to Stage II, and of those, almost 75% graduate to stage three, and 97% graduate to stage four. After graduating to stage four, Friendship House will remain in contact with 80% of the graduates for the first year and about 40% of the graduates for the next several years. More than 80% of graduates maintain employment and housing for at least three years upon completion of the program.

All of our houses are in Wilmington, Delaware. They include Epiphany, Jane Ashford, Patterson, Palmer I, Palmer II, Elizabeth, Andrew's Place, Criswell, Corner, Daughtry, Burton and Concord. As a resident moves through the program from stage to stage, he or she will also physically move to a new house.

As the number of people addicted to alcohol and drugs in New Castle County has continued to skyrocket, Friendship House has responded by emphasizing addiction recovery as a primary goal of its Transitional Housing Program. Most of our housing residents identify recovery from an addiction as a major priority. In addition, an addiction compounds the difficulty of overcoming other life issues like poor mental health, past physical abuse, criminal backgrounds and other forms of violence.

In recent years, the challenges facing transitional housing remain the same. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) continues to emphasize a Housing First strategy which limits funding to long-term transitional housing programs. As a result, Friendship House is one of the few transitional housing programs still in existence in New Castle County. In addition, the average stay in a residential treatment program has decreased to 14 to 28 days. Therefore, to meet the needs of the community, Friendship House has dropped its requirement for applicants to be 90 days free of intoxicating substances. The average applicant is now substance-free for thirty days or less with as little as two weeks in a residential treatment program.

In response to these changes, Friendship House has added an option of 30 days in out-patient therapy. Although costly to Friendship House, this time has become critical in saving the lives of men and women battling addiction who do not receive enough sobriety time in a drug or alcohol intensive care facility. Once a resident is stable, we can begin working with them on seeking employment.

Almost 90% of women and 50% of men in our housing program are between the ages of 20 and 39 years of age. As many of them began their addiction in their early teens, they enter transitional housing with little or no life experience. Due to the short time in residential treatment, their brains are still “under the influence,” causing confused thinking and a severe desire for drugs. In addition, younger residents do not see the value of staying in our program once they secure employment and are drug free for 60 days. Although we are hoping a short time with our program will assist them in their future, it is a much smaller impact than we intend to have. We continue to celebrate their accomplishments regardless of how long they stay in our program as long as they are staying focused on recovery.

A resident’s ability to complete Stage I of the program continues to be a critical milestone to their long-term success. Most residents who graduate to the next stage have formed relationships of trust with their case managers. Building on that foundation, they begin the slow, but effective process of learning to live a purpose-driven life.

The program’s success stories require ongoing, communal support and professional services. Through the housing graduate program, more than 50 housing graduates maintain regular contact with Friendship House staff, serve as peer mentors to current residents and participate in housing community events such as graduate dinners and holiday celebrations.

Stage I: *Average stay, two to four months*

We typically receive residents into our Stage I program who are leaving a drug or alcohol rehab, incarceration, or a domestic violence shelter. Immediately, we begin working with each resident to ensure he or she has needed vital documentation like state identification, birth certificate and social security card. These items are needed for residents to receive any other state or local services and employment. We also ensure each resident has wellness attention to ensure mental and physical stability. If a resident needs additional drug and alcohol recovery services, we will start with intensive outpatient care and connect them with additional resources like therapists, AA/NA meetings, and support groups. Once a resident has become stable enough to work, he or she will begin the process of searching for employment. Our female residents have the option of joining our Clothing Bank’s Job Training Program. Each resident will work with a case worker and volunteers to prepare resumes, practice job interviewing and talk about short and long-term career goals.

Once employed, residents will begin paying a small, weekly program fee and will be required to participate in our savings and budgeting program. Stage I residents are also required to participate in our weekly evening Meal Program (Andrew’s Place for men and Epiphany House for women.). Each evening, volunteers bring a prepared dinner and sit to eat with our residents. It is a wonderful way in which our community can meet those we are working with and for those we are working with to meet our community.

Once a resident has stable employment, is showing signs of maturity and consistency, he or she will graduate to Stage II.

Stage II: *Average stay, three to six months*

While in Stage II, residents begin working with our experienced case workers to identify and address issues, concerns and goals. Time is spent emphasizing life skills beyond budgeting and meal planning. During Stage II our residents will begin thinking about the life they want to live when graduating our program and how they will achieve this goal. If a parent wants to gain partial or full custody of their child(ren), it is at this stage they will begin discerning that process. In addition, there is more freedom for the residents. Curfew is extended an hour, and they are allowed more overnights away to visit family and their children. More responsibility is given to the residents at this stage as they meet less often with their case workers and take more accountability for their daily and weekly schedules, living dependently and decently, and living in community with their housemates. Residents are likely working full-time or have two jobs that equal that of a full-time job, and they continue to budget and save money through Friendship House.

Stage III: *Average stay, three to six months*

Residents will use the knowledge and skills learned during their time in our program to practice living independently in Stage III. Although case workers are still a frequent presence in their lives, the one-on-one sessions become less frequent and begin to focus on what residents want (as opposed to what they need). Residents will use Stage III to look for a new place to live outside of the Friendship House program and often will find a house mate to rent an apartment with, someone likely also graduating from the program. Bonds are formed during our program, causing the transition to graduation to feel scary. The residents have found a home and a community which can be hard to leave after years of homelessness, addiction, and abuse. In Stage III, our case workers will spend time reminding the residents of all that they have accomplished and will also explain Stage IV, our continued program opportunities after graduating, which allows the resident to always remain part of the family. Residents will work alongside case workers to find a suitable living situation, new or used furniture, and an exit strategy that feels safe for the resident. Once graduating from Stage III, the resident is no longer living in a building owned by Friendship House and is considered a graduate of the program.

Stage IV: *Graduate program*

Stage IV is timeless. This stage is where every graduate has the option to remain in contact with Friendship House. While in Stage IV, residents are encouraged to make periodic touch points with their case workers by dropping by the office, calling or emailing. In addition, Stage IV graduates have access to emergency housing. The most likely reason we offer Stage IV housing is when a graduate loses their job due to reasons out of their control or they become ill. Most people do not have more than two months of expenses saved to carry them through a time of unemployment. When a crisis happens, Stage IV is where the graduate works with us to become stable once again.

Empowerment Program

The Friendship House Empowerment Program is a county-wide ministry for any person struggling with homelessness or displacement – whether for the first time or chronically. Our empowerment center program includes three centers, several empowerment ministry partnerships where Friendship House is onsite during another organization's ministry, a Financial Assistance program, a winter ministry program, and a weekly Sunday breakfast (details of each of these follow).

Our Empowerment Program works with over 5,000 individuals annually to assist with meeting their individual needs. Friendship House strives to ensure every person who comes to us is treated with respect, compassion and love. In addition, we give the same opportunity of access to our range of services. The Friendship House Empowerment Program will assist individuals with professional case management by meeting them where they are in their journey. Our programming is designed so that, regardless of where someone who is experiencing any kind of homelessness or displacement is on their journey, we have something we can offer.

Empowerment Centers

A Friendship House Empowerment Center serves as a resource for any person experiencing homelessness or displacement. This means different things to each person. For some, the centers become their community, allowing them a place to go where they feel welcomed and comfortable. A sense of community is a key factor in their ability to function and move from survival to productivity. Other individuals utilize the centers when they are in a financial crisis, and once out of crisis, they can maintain a sense of stability. For others, the centers become a place of learning and education by use of our computer labs, workshops, volunteers, and professional case management. With every interaction, it is our goal to have every person who enters our centers feel God's love. In addition, we want each person to have a plan of action, a positive effect on their life and others and a sense of purpose for themselves. No appointment is necessary, and all are welcome.

At every center you will find:

- Access to computers with internet connection
- Basic hospitality including coffee, water and access to bathrooms (our Newark center will also have lunch available when donated by approved restaurants)
- Financial Assistance screening
- Referrals for clothing and food
- Small grants for assistance in obtaining work or school certifications
- Assistance in accessing one's state identification or birth certificate
- Professional Case Management
- Budgeting assistance
- Someone who will listen with an open mind and heart

Each empowerment center hosts volunteers every day who make our work possible and help to make our centers more hospitable to those we serve. Without our volunteers, we would not be able to do all that we do. We always welcome new volunteers in each location!

Our empowerment centers are also host sites for several colleges and university students who are looking for internship experiences, both required or of personal interest. These internships are unpaid opportunities for students to acquire hands-on experience in human services. Each intern learns our intake process, our database, and the heart of our relational ministry.

For more information on being a part of our empowerment centers, please call our office at 302-652-8133 or email us at friendshiphousede@gmail.com.

Wilmington Empowerment Center

Monday – Friday, 7:00 am – 2:30 pm (302) 652-8033

The Wilmington Empowerment Center (WEC) is located in the Episcopal Church of Sts. Andrew and Matthew in downtown Wilmington. This center works with 3,800 to 4,000 people every year, and we see an average of 75 people every day.

Newark Empowerment Center

Monday – Friday, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm (302) 544-0185

The Newark Empowerment Center (NEC) is located in the Newark United Methodist church on Main Street in Newark. A collaboration effort amongst several Newark churches, this center works with 650 to 850 people every year in the greater Newark area. Supporting churches ensure there are volunteers, go-bags (mini, portable meals) and financial support.

MOT (Middletown-Odessa-Townsend) Center

Monday 8:30 – 11:30, Tuesday 8:30 – 3:30, Thursday 8:30 – 11:30 (302) 464-1191

Onsite at Our Daily Bread Thursday 12:30 – 2:00

The MOT Center is located in the Church on Main Presbyterian Church on Main Street in Middletown. The MOT Center is our latest empowerment center in response to the growing needs of people throughout New Castle County. This center sees 6 to 10 people every week. We will also have a case worker on site Thursday afternoons at Our Daily Bread, which serves a daily meal to Middletown residents.

Suburban Outreach

Friendship House is uniquely situated to be able to serve any New Castle County resident as resources are available. Funding for our empowerment program is completely dependent on the community. Most funding received by our

community is unrestricted, giving us the flexibility to open our doors to anyone who enters. Like much of our work, the empowerment centers are focused on filling gaps that exist in services to those experiencing homelessness or displacement. A significant issue has been accessing available services. To improve the accessibility of Friendship House and other human service agency programs, we began a suburban outreach program in areas outside of the traditional urban locations hosting most services (such as Wilmington).

Since the recession of 2008, most middle-class and lower middle-class families have been unable to remain self-sufficient when faced with a crisis. These crises happen for many reasons, such as a family member losing work, a medical emergency that either is expensive or causes loss of work for the individual, addiction issues for oneself or one's family, an increase in living costs greater than wages and more. For those used to living independently, seeking help can be difficult due to a lack of knowledge regarding available resources and the stigma of needing assistance. Friendship House is committed to being available to everyone in a time of need, regardless of location. This led to the opening of our Middletown location in 2016 (described above and serving Middletown, Odessa and Townsend) and additional ministry partnerships in Millcreek, Stanton, Richardson Park and Pike Creek.

Three primary purposes of this suburban outreach ministry include:

1. Connecting people in need with existing social services
2. Creating emergency assistance services where there is a gap in resources
3. Providing the strategic planning services and program support required to empower clients to break the cycle of dependency and move toward self-sufficiency and self-determination

In 2016, Friendship House partnered formally with St. Mark's United Methodist Church (UMC) to be on site during their weekly food give-away events each Wednesday afternoon. This allowed Friendship House to bring its services to an area where there were few other options. Since this partnership/expansion, Friendship House has worked with an additional 500 clients in Millcreek and Stanton. It has become clear to Friendship House and St. Mark's UMC that being onsite once a week does not fully meet the needs in the area. Therefore, in collaboration with six different Millcreek, Pike Creek and Stanton churches and other community members, Friendship House is proactively looking for an opportunity to open its fourth empowerment center in that area.

To learn more about how you can partner with Friendship House empowerment centers to reach people in need in your community, please contact us at our office at 302-652-8133 or email us at friendshiphousesede@gmail.com.

Financial Assistance

Friendship House gifts more than \$120,000 a year to serve more than 3,000 people in financial assistance to prevent further homelessness or displacement, or to assist to someone in improving their situation. The Financial Assistance program is run out of our administrative office, empowerment centers and through our suburban outreach partnerships. Our hope is to work with individuals before they are in crisis mode, meaning before they receive an eviction notice, before they get a cutoff notice, or before they lose their home. This is especially difficult for community members because most other agencies provide funding for these situations, not to prevent them. We are working to educate and inform

people to be proactive and call us before the crisis occurs so we can work with them on budgeting, planning and crisis management, which is usually more economical for us and the individual.

Due to limited funding, Friendship House restricts how much money is available for each individual to around \$100. Although not a concrete number, it is a guide used by our case workers. We also try to limit the frequency in which someone can receive financial help from us to every 12 months. Often times, the help we offer someone who needs more than what we offer is being assisted by other agencies. There are many agencies who offer financial assistance, and each one has rules and exceptions. Our case workers can help the client by navigating through this process. We also offer everyone in need of financial assistance case management, which includes other options to assist in someone's situation besides money.

Friendship House will award financial assistance based on the needs of an individual and their plan of action. If an individual can make full payments the following month, we are most likely to offer additional financial help. If a client has zero income available and a rent payment due next month in addition to the past due rent, Friendship House will instead use our resources to find other options for the individual. Sometimes the best help we can offer is another more sustainable plan for someone. Regardless of how we can help someone, we can walk with them as long as it takes to get them to a point of comfortable living.

Our Financial Assistance program works through referrals and walk-ins. Referrals come from partnering churches and faith communities who receive a call from someone seeking assistance. If that community receiving the call sees Friendship House's services being needed, they will send the person's information to our case workers for screening. Often, the referring agency or community partner will have some funding available to support the individual should Friendship House discern it will assist the individual. Individuals can also call our hotline at 302-482-2271 and follow the instructions given on the recording message. All financial assistance clients are interviewed via phone and then face-to-face before any monetary decisions are made. For more information or to become a partnering agency, please call our office at 302-652-8133.

Winter Ministry

The Friendship House Winter Ministry program consists of Code Purple in Wilmington and Newark as well as weekend winter hospitality in Wilmington. These programs are possible due to the collaboration of our faith community, community agency partners, volunteers and donors.

Code Purple

A Code Purple occurs when the overnight temperatures fall below 20 degrees Fahrenheit. In Wilmington, Code Purples are done in partnership with the Wilmington Salvation Army. Starting at 2:30 pm, Friendship House is on site at the Episcopal Church of Sts. Andrew and Matthew once the Wilmington Empowerment Center is closed and will start serving coffee, hot tea, and water. Starting at 5:00 pm, with the support of volunteers, Friendship House serves a light supper of soup and sandwiches. Beverage and bathroom services are available until 8:30 pm. At that time, Friendship House will close down its Code Purple services and the Salvation Army will open for overnight guests.

Newark Code Purples rotate location based on Newark church availability. The selected church will open its doors at 6:00 pm for registered Newark clients and will serve dinner and provide access to bathrooms and beverages such as coffee, tea and water. Volunteers and staff monitor the code purple overnight and then guests are asked to leave no later than 6:00 am.

Code Purples are announced on the Friendship House Facebook page and through local community and government agencies.

Winter Weekend Hospitality

In the city of Wilmington, most businesses and community agencies are closed on the weekends, leaving a gap for those who have few other options for places to be during the day, especially in the early morning hours when it is dark and very cold after overnight shelters have released their guests. Therefore, Friendship House runs a winter weekend hospitality program in collaboration with Wilmington churches.

Every Saturday in November through March, Friendship House will be on site at First and Central Presbyterian Church from 6:00 am – 11:00 am and Sundays at Trinity Episcopal Church from 8:30am – 11:00 for hospitality such as coffee, water and access to bathrooms.

Breakfast Program

Every Sunday morning at the Episcopal Church of Sts. Andrew and Matthew, regardless of weather and holidays, Friendship House serves breakfast in collaboration with several volunteer groups in the Wilmington community. On average, 100 adults and children attend. This opportunity to eat a meal in community on a Sunday morning provides an opportunity for Friendship House to meet individuals experiencing homelessness for the first time and remain in contact with clients. Every weekend, a volunteer group (from a church, business, community organization, school or a group of friends) meets on Saturday to prepare the breakfast quiches. The same group or other members from the group will then come back Sunday morning to help cook the quiches, prepare fruit bowls, and serve the food. The breakfast is made possible due to the heavy volunteer time devoted.

Clothing Bank

Hours: Monday – Thursday 7:00 am – 3:00 pm, 1603 Jessup Street, Wilmington (302) 654-1390

Established in 1998, the Friendship House Clothing Bank fulfills three primary goals:

1. Provide entry-level employment and training to disenfranchised women
2. Distribution high-quality donated clothing by coordinating the efforts of the businesses, churches, schools and community organizations of New Castle County
3. Create entry-level volunteer opportunities for churches, businesses and community organizations

Job Training Program

The Friendship House Clothing Bank works with women entering the workforce for the first time in their lives or after lengthy unemployment. In recent years, many of these women have been former offenders. Each woman receives a paycheck while learning skills necessary to find and maintain employment outside of Friendship House. An average of thirty women participate in the program annually. Sixty percent of these employee-trainees are residents of the Friendship House Transitional Housing Program. Every woman accepted into the employment-training program is motivated to get back to work and lead an independent lifestyle. Because of their various life issues, however, nearly all begin the program professionally “out of shape.”

The initial job skills mastered include:

1. Getting organized enough to show up for work on time each morning
2. Building the stamina to work a demanding job for 30+ hours a week
3. Following organizational rules
4. Accepting constructive criticism

These basic skills can feel daunting for women who have limited or no job experience. However, eight to fifteen weeks of employment at the Clothing Bank has proven to make them reliable, punctual, courteous and hard-working employees. Eighty-five percent of trainees complete the program and graduate to permanent employment and independent housing. Each job trainee has customer-service experience, including receiving donations, phone etiquette and greeting customers and clients. In addition, they learn data entry, experience interacting with a diverse group of volunteers and how to balance this new responsibility while seeking permanent employment.

Women who come to the Clothing Bank are making the best effort to rebuild their reputations due to bad circumstances. The Clothing Bank helps them gain trust by giving them a chance to work in a safe, encouraging environment where they will not be judged for their past. Their spirits are renewed through self-reflection, support from our staff, and conversations with volunteers who remind the women to stay the course and have faith and hope in the future.

These women begin building their character references by following program rules and developing good work habits and ethics. When a woman successfully completes this program, we are happy to offer letters of reference to potential employers.

The Clothing Bank offers tools for job trainees to find employment and work on her most challenging social and economic issues. For example, the Clothing Bank hosts a weekly “Empower Hour.” This weekly meeting includes topics related to job searches, proper attire, mock interviews, and discussions on what is appropriate to discuss with a potential employer. The workshop is run by staff, fellow or graduate job trainees, and trained volunteers.

Job trainees who display exceptional attitude, work ethic and self-investment after working at the Clothing Bank for 8 to 10 weeks are recommended for the Job Trainee Internship Program. This program allows the job trainee to “test the waters” once weekly at a partner organization. The organization provides a work opportunity where our Job Trainee can practice the skills learned in the Clothing Bank warehouse and gain the confidence to know she is worthy of and can obtain a permanent position. The internship is a way to reinforce the skills learned.

Upon completion of our program, each graduating job trainee receives a certificate acknowledging her success and is eligible to be part of our graduate program which includes the opportunity of working with the Clothing Bank Job Coach in continuing education, budgeting and career development. The staff of the Clothing Bank will follow up with each graduate at least once to receive an update on her employment status.

To learn more about how to support the women in this program, to refer a woman to this program or to be an intern location for our exceptional job trainees, please contact us at (302) 652-8133 or friendshipousedede@gmail.com.

Clothing Distribution

The Clothing Bank distributes an average of 120,000 pounds of clothing every year to more than 5,000 individuals in need throughout New Castle County in conjunction with over 150 participating agencies. The distribution of clothing is completed several ways. The most popular option is for an approved agency, including the Friendship House Empowerment Centers, to send a request for clothing for individual clients or families directly to our Clothing Bank. The Job Trainees fill the order to the best of their ability based on available clothing. Then the clothes will be taken to the requesting agency or the agency can arrange to pick up the clothing order(s). Each person is allowed to receive clothing from the Clothing Bank no more than every two months.

Clothing also makes its way to the community through various clothing give-away opportunities at agencies which request clothing from our Clothing Bank. In addition, each of our empowerment centers host events to ensure everyone has the clothing they need.

Since we receive clothing donations from various sources, much of our time in the warehouse is sorting and inspecting clothing. The clothing is arranged by gender (“male” and “female” is used at the moment) and size and age (adult vs. child). In addition, the Clothing Bank strives to give out excellent quality clothing. This means we inspect every garment to ensure all buttons and zippers are working, there are no tears or stains, and it appears to be clean. Clothing that does not fit this high standard is picked up by approved agencies that specialize in the repurposing and recycling of such materials.

Volunteers and Donations

The Friendship House Clothing Bank is able to provide high-quality clothing to our community because of the tremendous outpour of donations from our supporters. The Clothing Bank receives almost 200,000 pounds of clothing every year that are sorted and hung on racks in our warehouse before they are gifted back to the community. This tremendous amount of work can only be done because of the volunteer family of almost 1,000 individuals that bless us with their time every year. Volunteers help the Clothing Bank staff and Job Trainees by sorting donated clothing, hanging/folding clothing, preparing orders to go out to the different agencies making clothing requests, driving clothing orders to requesting agencies and picking up clothing from clothing drives done on our behalf. Additionally, volunteers help with administrative work in the office and

work with Job Trainees on their career development. Our volunteers can be any age! We enjoy groups of 1 to 40 people. To find out more about volunteering, please reach out to our Volunteer Coordinator at (302) 652-8133 or friendshipousede@gmail.com.