



Friendship House

Newsletter

www.friendship-house.org

Christian Ministry Making A Difference In The Lives of Homeless People

“20 Years of Witnessing God’s Miracles”

by Joanne Kassees, President of the Board

July, 2007 will mark the 20th anniversary of Friendship House’s Incorporation. Opened in the mid-1980’s by Meeting Ground, a Maryland-based ministry to the homeless, the Friendship House Thrift Store was located at 216 North Market Street in downtown Wilmington and quickly evolved from a clothing ministry to a homeless hospitality center. During the severe winter of 1986, the thrift store/hospitality center became a makeshift emergency night shelter. In the spring of 1987, after the fire marshal ordered the “store shelter” to close, Meeting Ground invited local Wilmington churches to initiate a more comprehensive homeless ministry.

That was 20 years ago. Today, Friendship House is a ministry serving the homeless of New Castle County in partnership with over 80 churches and faith groups, local businesses and banks, schools and community organizations. What began as a thrift store has grown into a multi-faceted program, providing hospitality in its day centers, transitional housing for men, women and children, employment training, education and advocacy. Each year,

the number of homeless served by the Friendship House ministries grows, and the staff and volunteers meet the needs of those who come seeking help.

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of Friendship House, Inc. The Board of Directors is inviting the community to learn about this ministry by attending any of a number of events planned for this special year. Our first event will be on Sunday, January 7, 2007 as we dedicate Friendship House’s first housing program located outside of the city limits. (See the article below on the Corner House Program).

On April 29, 2007, 1st and Central Presbyterian, one of its founding churches, will host the Annual Meeting and an Ecumenical Prayer Service. We are hoping that many of those wonderful individuals who worked so hard to make Friendship House a reality will be able to attend this event.

More details of events will follow in future newsletters. Please contact the staff or any member of the Board for more information.

Surviving on Wilmington’s Streets

by Jim Clark, volunteer Funding Coordinator

The Friendship House Men’s and Women’s Day Centers are truly “doors to the street”. Each weekday 150 to 200 homeless individuals and families enter. While most are simply trying to survive, others have begun to move forward in their lives. All are welcome because Friendship House is both “A Sanctuary and a Stepping Stone.” They get in out of the weather, get their mail, use the phone, sip early-morning coffee, and access the other necessities of homeless survival - clothing, bus tickets, referrals, I.D.’s. We call this **our Home Base Program**.

Our daytime drop-in centers serve another vital purpose. They are the bellwether, the early warning about conditions among our most vulnerable segment of humanity

here in Wilmington – the homeless and working poor, especially those destitute mothers with small children.

The bellwether is ringing – loudly. In the first eight months of 2006 Friendship House had already seen more clients than in all of 2005! We continue to witness a dramatic spike in the numbers coming into our centers seeking help. For most it is a survival crisis.. So many are new clients. “Home Base” disbursements alone are up \$7500 over the same period last year.

What’s going on? Interviews with our women and men staffers who daily serve this population, and know them well, point to several factors. The majority of our clients are driven by the difficult economic climate they

strive to live in. Specifically:

- ~ “Tougher to get a job you can live on:” Permanent jobs are scarce; lack of the needed skills; outsourcing of blue collar jobs to temporary employment services that pay no benefits and tolerate no absences; landlords deny them housing because they won’t accept temp jobs as a stable source of income.
- ~ Several reasons are given for the influx of new clients (the highest rate in our 20-year history): persons who recently became homeless; persons crossing state borders to access Delaware’s welfare reform program, having exhausted their benefits elsewhere; persons simply seeking “greener pastures”.
- ~ New clients require services threefold that of regular clients.
- ~ People without stable jobs or homes are more likely to lose everything if they are arrested or incarcerated. Upon their release, they must start over with nothing. 40% of FH Day Center clients are involved with the Dept. of Corrections in some capacity.
- ~ Notably higher proportion of mentally-ill clients: Most people who remain homeless for more than three months tend to destabilize. Shelters typically require

applicants to have a mental evaluation and be on prescribed medication to be admitted.

- ~ Getting client I.D.’s and birth certificates: With the passage of Homeland Security’s Real ID Act, it is almost impossible for the homeless to get birth certificates, social security cards and state I.D. Meanwhile clients are in limbo and unemployed. To overcome this barrier, FH is spending more money and staff hours than ever before.
- ~ Street drugs seem to be much stronger: more addictive; some persons who were able to function on weaker dosages now become dysfunctional.

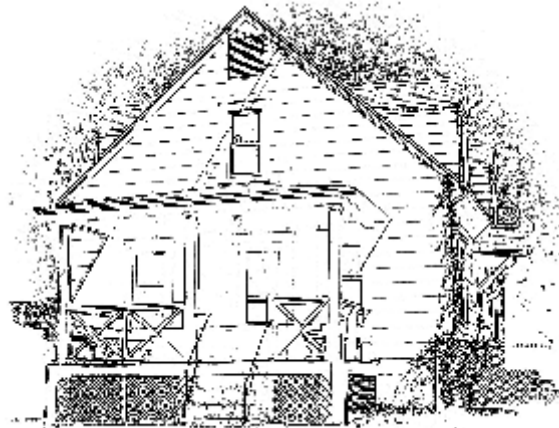
Friendship House continues to serve all who come to us, with all programs intact. Yet it faces hard financial times. To meet the 2007 budget, \$50,000 of projected expenses has been eliminated. The staff is being asked to do more with less. Please consider making a generous donation toward our work, now in its 20th year. **Watch for our Fall Appeal letter.** Friendship House does not seek nor accept government funding.

New Addition to Friendship House: The Corner House

by Bill Perkins, Executive Director

On Sunday, January 7, 2007, Friendship House will dedicate its eighth transitional housing site. The Corner House is a two-story wooden frame house located immediately adjacent to the Calvary Presbyterian Church parking lot (Maryland Ave and Boxwood Rd). Purchased 20 years ago by the church, the Corner House had been underused and allowed to deteriorate. In March 2006, the church initiated a dialogue with Friendship House about the possible use of the property for homeless ministry. Those discussions produced the Corner House Transitional Housing Program for elderly homeless men. The program will be managed by Friendship House and co-sponsored by Calvary Presbyterian and New Castle Presbyterian Church. Over the summer, Friendship House was able to secure \$30,000 in grants to pay for much-needed major upgrades to the building (electricity, plumbing, roof, windows and furnace). In addition, volunteer work groups from Trinity Presbyterian Church, New Castle

Presbyterian Church, Calvary Presbyterian Church, Trinity Episcopal Church, St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church and Prudential, Fox & Roach have cleaned and painted most of the interior, replaced the wooden front porch, upgraded the kitchen and made numerous minor home repairs to the house.



The Corner House Project will provide transitional housing (3 to 6 months) for elderly homeless men (55 – 65 yrs old) who have spent at least two month residency at *Andrew’s Place*, located at 720 N.

Orange St. in Wilmington. Founded in 1989, Andrew’s Place is Friendship House’s 22 bed full service emergency shelter for homeless elderly men that offers its guests both hospitality and empowerment. A hot supper is provided each night by volunteer teams from nearly thirty churches and community organizations. Guests are offered shelter and sanctuary in a safe, alcohol/drug free environment. Friendship House case managers are also on site each evening to work with those residents ready and willing to

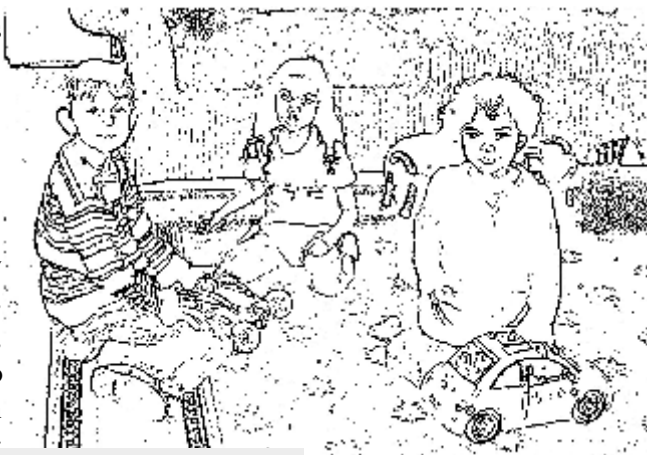
address the underlying causes of their homeless condition. Andrew's Place is co-sponsored by a coalition of local churches and Friendship House. *Andrew's Place residents who have maintained their sobriety, demonstrated good house-keeping skills, gotten along well with the other residents and showed a commitment to addressing the underlying causes of their current condition will be eligible to graduate into the Corner House transitional housing program.*

Besides working their program, Corner House residents

NEW SOUNDS: AND BABIES!

by Ashlin Bray, Board

The women's housing ministry of Friendship House is experiencing a baby boom, with five children and two mothers now filling Patterson House with joyful noises. Another



CHILDREN

Member

together to make mealtimes settled, to teach sharing, and to be patient with young children who have experienced lots of upheaval in their lives. Board member Joanne Kassees has been generous in providing weekly counseling and parenting



family at Palmer House has just brought home their newest addition, a tiny preemie who has been at Christiana Hospital since his birth in August.

Since Patterson House has always been intended for both women and children, cribs and baby furniture are all in place, but children have been a rarity—until recently. Referrals from Child, Inc., have led to acceptance of more families with children, and the kids are settling right into the Patterson House routine.

Yes, that's right--Patterson House will be home to two 2-year-olds, a baby, and two "older" children of 5 and 6. What's it like? Hectic, like any household with so many toddlers. But the women help each other, the kids play (and sometimes scrap) with each other, and all are excited to have a baby in their midst. The women are working

will be responsible for their own food, personal items and house-keeping. The house will be inspected by the Friendship House staff person at least three times weekly. Corner House residents will also be asked to commit one evening a week of volunteer service at Andrew's Place. It is hoped that this volunteer service will develop into a peer ministry to the Stage One residents and an incentive for them to move their relationship with Friendship House beyond nightly emergency shelter.



advice, which will be a long-term gift to mothers and children alike.

These families have particular needs for both hygiene items and clothing. Pampers or other disposable diapers are the biggest daily need, with both infants and 2-year-olds needing several changes each day. Cream for diaper rash, baby shampoo, and Ivory soap are also needed. Warm sleepers, "onesies" with long sleeves, and long pants or overalls are needed for one baby, two 2-year-olds, and two children in the 5/6 year range. All donations can be left at Jane Ashford House, 720 North Union Street. Perhaps you can clean out your own closet and find some

of these items, or you could work with your church to put together some special care packages to meet these needs.

Special needs have been a way of life for the preemie born in August. He needs clothing in preemie and infant sizes, receiving blankets, caps to keep his head warm, and the tiniest of Pampers. One Board member has made a baby blanket for him—a warming welcome to this world.

These young members of the Friendship House family stretch our resources, but they also stretch our hearts. We invite you to find your own way to welcome these young children to a safer and more secure world than they have known before.

Calvary Corner House Dedication

Maryland Ave. & Boxwood Rd.

Sunday, January 7, 2007

10:30 AM	Calvary Presbyterian Church Service (Bill Perkins to preach)
Noon – 2:30 PM	Open House
2:00 PM	House Blessing

Interested in learning more about Friendship House? TAKE A TOUR

You are invited to take a tour of Friendship House programs. Tours are scheduled on a regular basis and offer an overview of our ministries. At the end of an hour and a half, you'll have a good idea of all that we offer! Please call Lu Johnston at 302-652-8033 to set up a time convenient to your schedule.



STREET RETREATS

Participants gather at 6:00 AM at the Friendship House Women's Center in Wilmington for prayer, orientation and meeting their mentors. Typical street day is 7:30 to 3:30 PM when participants re-gather at the Center. Wear comfortable shoes! Please call Bill Perkins or Roxane Blake @ 652-8133 for details and scheduling.

Friendship House

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www.friendship-house.org

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