



Clothing Bank of Delaware

2008

Staff: Linda Harrison, Patricia Hunt-Burrows, Rosalba Grant, Karen Johnson
Location: 1603 N. Jessup St. Suite 3
Hours: 7:30 AM – 3:00 PM (Monday Thru Thursday)

Eleven years ago, Friendship House developed the Clothing Bank to fulfill three primary missions:

- to improve the free distribution of high quality donated clothing by coordinating the efforts of the businesses, churches, schools and community organizations of New Castle County
- to provide entry level employment and training to disenfranchised women
- to create entry level volunteer opportunities for churches, businesses and community organizations

In 2008, this vital ministry has continued to empower the Delaware community by

- connecting over 21 women with jobs
- developing a volunteer corps of nearly 800 members
- sponsoring over 70 clothing drives
- building a coalition of nearly 275 community partners
- serving over 12,000 people a year with the clothes they need

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:

Partnering in the community is one of the things that make the Clothing Bank unique among outlets for donated clothing. Over 275 human service agencies contact the Clothing Bank when a client needs clothing. By giving away clothing only with a referral, the Clothing Bank can trust that not only has a need been confirmed but that other issues might also be addressed. By being at the hub of a large network of service providers, more individuals are served with fewer falling through the cracks.

Over the past few years, this model has attracted the attention of several national organizations that look to the Clothing Bank to channel their donations to the people of New Castle County. Operation Warm, One Warm Coat, and retailer: Burlington Coat Factory forged noteworthy partnerships with us.

Operation Warm (www.operationwarm.org) is a PA based charity that raises funds and purchases new coats for children across the country. Operation Warm has seen the Clothing Bank's existing network of distribution partners as a key to getting thousands of coats to children in New Castle County and Southeastern Pennsylvania. In 2008, the Clothing Bank coordinated the distribution of more than 6000 Operation Warm coats for children .

Three years ago, the San Francisco based, One Warm Coat (www.onewarmcoat.org), asked the Clothing Bank to receive and distribute coats collected in this region under the One Warm Coat initiative. The organization advocates for grassroots groups to collect and donate gently worn coats, as a means to address critical needs in their own communities. Interested community groups receive

support materials from One Warm Coat, and then in Delaware and Southeastern Pennsylvania, One Warm Coat refers them to the Clothing Bank. This is very popular with Scout troops and area schools committed to community service. An increasing number of area businesses have collected among their employees and provided collection bins for their customers. In 2008, One Warm Coat also connected the Clothing Bank to Burlington Coat Factory which had a nationwide promotion for customers to donate used coats for area charities. The Clothing Bank received over a thousand used coats through the University Plaza store.

CLOTHING MINISTRY:

2008 Clothing Distribution Statistics:

<i>Clothing Sorted</i>	<i>Grade A Clothing Distributed</i>	<i>Grade A Orders Distributed</i>	<i>Agencies Served</i>	<i>Grade B & C Clothing</i>
171,850 lbs	154,693 lbs.	6,886 individual orders 230 group orders	888	94,847 lbs
3,300 lbs per week	3,000 lbs. per week	132 ind. orders per week 4 grp orders per week	17 per week	1,826 lbs per week

2008 Volunteer Involvement Statistics:

<i>Clothing Drives</i>	<i>Individuals</i>	<i>Monthly Volunteers</i>
71 new drives 40 ongoing drives	888	26

EMPLOYMENT/TRAINING MINISTRY:

Program Description:

The Friendship House Clothing Bank employs women entering the work force for the first time in their lives or after lengthy unemployment. In recent years, the majority of these women have also been recently incarcerated. Each woman receives a paycheck while relearning the skills necessary to find and maintain employment. About thirty women annually participate in the Clothing Bank Employment Program. 70% of these employee-trainees are also residents of the Friendship House transitional housing program where they engage in an intensive life-skills program that enables them to address and resolve other issues like budgeting, parenting, recovery from addictions, credit restoration and career planning. Every women who is accepted into the employment training program is motivated to work and committed to change. Because of their various life issues, however, nearly all begin the program professionally “out of shape”. The initial job skills to be mastered may simply be:

- Getting organized enough to show up for work on time each morning
- Having the energy to work hard for 40 hours a week
- Staying focused on the task at hand
- Being able to follow instructions and take corrections

Eight weeks of employment at the Clothing Bank have proven sufficient to make most trainees reliable, punctual, courteous and hard-working employees. Besides successfully fulfilling all the tasks typically associated with warehouse work, each woman receives some intensive customer service experience. Despite their success at the Clothing Bank, however, many trainees still struggle to find full-time work. Most are also dealing with major employment impediments like lack of private transportation, bad credit, felony convictions and being a single parent without reliable child care. Such women struggle to find another job and many have to settle for part-time or minimum-wage jobs that will not enable them to make it on their own. The current economic recession has only made a bad situation worse. In 2008, the Clothing Bank gave many trainees work extensions as part-time employees while they continued to search for their next job.

In 2008, Friendship House installed online technology centers at each of its major ministries, including the Clothing Bank. With the employment process going digital, Clothing Bank trainees need basic typing, computer and internet literacy simply to apply for a job. Pat Burrows, the CBD associate director and job coach, is actively recruiting volunteer mentors to assist women with the online job application process.

2008 Employment Training Program Statistics:

21 total employees

<i>Still In Training</i>	<i>Released</i>	<i>Graduated to Another Job</i>
2	8	11

Of the twenty-one CBD employees in 2008:

- Fifteen were involved with the criminal justice system
- Sixteen were in recovery from an addiction
- Seven lacked a high school diploma or GED
- Seven had a high school diploma or GED
- Seven had some college and voc tech training

Of the eleven women who found employment in 2008:

- One found temporary employment as a flagger (*good pay/irregular hours*)
- Ten are working at jobs that pay \$9.00 or less per hour
- Ten see their work hours fluctuate almost weekly
- Two have health benefits
- None were hired by the hotel industry (a primary employer in previous years)