



Clothing Bank of Delaware 2009

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)

Twelve 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 2009, this vital ministry has continued to empower the Delaware community by

- connecting over 23 women with jobs
- developing a volunteer corps of nearly 1,000 members
- sponsoring nearly 90 clothing drives
- building a coalition of nearly 275 community partners
- distributing more than 160,000 lbs of high quality used clothing to more than 12,000 households in New Castle County

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:

Over 275 human service agencies contact the Clothing Bank when one of their clients needs clothing. This network of community partners is one of the things that make the Clothing Bank unique among outlets for donated clothing. By distributing clothing only through referrals from vetted community partners, the Clothing Bank can guarantee that its donated clothing is going where it is most needed. As the central hub for clothing distribution in New Castle County, the Clothing Bank can also screen for duplicate orders and allocate resources more justly.

In the last four 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, Delaware and Southeastern Pennsylvania. Operation Warm, One Warm Coat, Burlington Coat Factory, Aeropostale and Old Navy have all forged noteworthy partnerships with the Clothing Bank to assure that their new and high quality used coats get to the people who need them the most. In 2009, these partnerships enabled the Clothing Bank to reach its goal of distributing 10,000 winter coats to individuals and families in need.

The Clothing Bank of Delaware also offers a broad spectrum of both individual and group volunteer opportunities to the churches, schools and businesses of the Friendship House coalition of corporate sponsors. In 2009, 995 individuals volunteered on site at the Clothing Bank. Thirty of these volunteers served on a monthly basis. The CBD staff excels at finding ways for small and large groups to involve themselves in this ministry in a hands-on way.

CLOTHING MINISTRY:

2009 Clothing Distribution Statistics:

<i>Clothing Sorted</i>	<i>Grade A Clothing Distributed</i>	<i>Grade A Orders Distributed</i>	<i>Agencies Served</i>
203,161 lbs	160,748 lbs.	5,548 individual orders 219 group orders	880
3,900 lbs per week	3,100 lbs. per week	107 ind. orders per week 4 grp orders per week	17 per week

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 ex-offenders. 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. 60% 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 woman 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 2009, the Clothing Bank gave many trainees work extensions as part-time employees while they continued to search for their next job. Remarkably,

of the 20 women who completed their training, 15 were employed and independently housed at year's end.

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. Kathy Graham, the Friendship House volunteer coordinator, is actively recruiting volunteer mentors to assist women with the online job application process.

2009 Employment Training Program Statistics:

25 total employees

<i>Released</i>	<i>Graduated Without Finding Employment</i>	<i>Graduated to Another Job</i>
5	5	15