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## Expanded Job Readiness Program 2009

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### **Introduction:**

With the deepening of the current economic recession in 2009, Friendship House found the unemployment rate among its clients at an all-time high. Even temporary jobs and day labor positions became hard to find. Compounding this problem were the other impediments common to a majority of Friendship House's employable homeless clients. These included:

- Dependence on the shelter/soup kitchen network for food and housing
- Lack of work-required documents (e.g., DE State ID, Social Security Card, Birth Certificate, etc.
- Proof of a high school diploma or GED certificate
- A Home Base for mail, phone calls and personal storage
- Limited computer literacy
- Access to online computers for job searches, online applications and email
- Limited and expensive public transportation

While its existing empowerment program services met some of these needs, Friendship House felt challenged to do more. For the last two years, it has been dedicating an increasing amount of its Day Center human and financial resources to an expanded Job Readiness Program for those motivated clients in need of a more strategic and holistic recovery programs. With help from the Wilmington Rotary and the Verizon Foundation, it established on-site technology centers at each of its day centers and housing programs through which clients could receive computer training and apply for jobs and housing on line with the assistance of Friendship House staff and volunteer mentors.

### **General Job-Readiness Services:**

In 2009, Friendship House worked with unduplicated 5,745 adult clients. Forty percent (more than one in three) were first time clients, new to homelessness in New Castle County. Nearly 35% are involved with the criminal justice system in some capacity. Twenty percent were at risk housed clients who had lost their jobs and were about to lose their homes. Nearly 75% of all employable homeless clients are unemployed or working less than fifteen hours per week.

As a result of these high clients numbers, more people accessed the various services of the Friendship House Empowerment/Job Readiness Program than ever before. In of 2009, Friendship House assisted:

- 1,578 clients with the funds (\$23,308) to acquired employment-mandated ID  
*48% increase more than 2008*
- 3,755 clients with bus passes and/or gas money (\$8,080)  
*15% increase more than 2008*

- 1,942 clients with work clothing from our Clothing Bank  
*20% increase more than 2008*
- 49 clients with work-required equipment (\$1,766)  
*89% increase more than 2008*
- 3,550 day center clients with Home Base services (mailing addresses, phone/fax service, lockers, etc.)  
*10% increase more than 2008*
- 85 housing program clients with subsidized food and shelter until they could find jobs and get their first pay check (\$8,670)  
*15% increase more than 2008*
- 25 Clothing Bank trainees with temporary employment and job training (\$46,332)
- 667 at risk housed families with emergency rental and/or energy assistance (\$90,349)  
*30% increase more than 2008*

Ironically, the high unemployment rate among our clients also resulted in more clients with the time and desire to access the computer labs and seek enhanced case management. Without even day labor available, many day center clients used this down time to improve their employability. Some signed up with Vocational Rehabilitation; others worked on their GED. Many took weekly or even daily use of the day center computer labs to improve their computer literacy, establish an email address, conduct online job searches and complete online job applications.

### **Enhanced Job-Readiness Services:**

#### *Staffing:*

To accommodate this greater demand, Friendship House recruited and trained more job coaches and computer mentors and steadily expanded the hours that the day center labs were available to clients. In August 2009, Kathy Graham, a Westminster Presbyterian Church parishioner, was hired as the Empowerment/Job Readiness Program volunteer coordinator. During her first five months on the job, Kathy in consultation with the day center staff developed a Job Readiness Program Volunteer Handbook, conducted numerous volunteer orientation sessions and doubled the number of volunteer mentors and job coaches. By year's end the Men's Day Center had eight volunteer mentors and had its computer lab open three mornings and four afternoons weekly. The Women's Day Center had eight volunteer mentors and its computer lab was open four mornings and three afternoons weekly. The Clothing Bank of Delaware also added two volunteer job coaches to work with the employee/trainees on computer literacy and online job searches and applications. The housing residents of both the men's and women's housing program had nightly access to wireless laptops with DSL for job searches and online applications. In addition, the Men's Housing Program had six volunteers who assist the residents with computer literacy, GED and budgeting. In the Women's Housing Program these same tasks were currently still being handled by the staff. In 2010, Friendship House will be opening its sixth transition house for women. The new house will host an six-bed entry-level shelter for homeless and unemployed women leaving prison. Kathy Graham has already started recruiting and training mentors and coaches to work with the residents of this new

shelter.

In addition to these dedicated volunteers, Friendship House is now committing sixty hours of Day Center staffing weekly to enhanced employment counseling and case management. This is handled principally by Christopher Franson-Wright at the Men's Center and Pam Ray at the Women's Center. Patricia Hunt Burrows, the primary employment counselor at the Clothing Bank, dedicates three hours weekly to each CBD employee trainee. Jeff Dandoy of Men's Housing and Marcy Perkins of Women's Housing report that an increasing amount of their time is spent in employment counseling and helping their residents acquire more than a minimum wage job.

*2009 Day Center Program Statistics:*

The enhanced Empowerment/Job Readiness Program has four levels (See Attachment), each with its specific objectives and tasks. These levels are:

- Level One:     Creating A Realistic Strategy  
                  *(Initial Intake, Issues Assessment, Strategic Plan)*
- Level Two:     Basic Training  
                  *(Resume, Email, Computer Literacy Classes, GED Tutoring)*
- Level Three:   Job Search Mode  
                  *(Online Job Searches and Applications)*
- Level Four:    Job Acquisition and Maintenance Mode

In 2009, 431 day center clients (313 men/118 women) accessed the Empowerment/Job Readiness Program's expanded services and case management. Of this number, 70% (299) completed their Level One tasks, while attending three or more counseling sessions and developing an employment strategy. Of the 299 clients who completed Level One, 95% (269) were assisted in setting up an email address, upgraded their resumes and put them online, and/or participated in computer literacy or GED tutoring. By year's end, 86% (230) had advanced to Level Three. Of these 230 clients, 70% (161) learned how to look and apply for jobs online. As more and more day center clients reached this level, the computer labs were in constant use. It was also at this level that the most peer ministry took place. Clients were constantly alerting other clients to online job posting and/or assisting one another in navigating the online job application process. Of the 161 clients actively involved in Job Search, 54% (86) found a permanent full or part-time job. At years' end, 91% (78) were still employed at the same job.

*2009 Clothing Bank Employment Program Statistics:*

Of the 25 Clothing Bank employee-trainees in 2009, 80% (20) completed their training, 8% (2) were fired and 12% (3) are still in training. Of the 20 who completed the program, 75% (15) found full-time jobs and were still employed at years' end.

*2009 Housing Program Statistics:*

Of the 45 men's housing residents in 2009, 63% (28) graduated from the program or are still in

residence. Of 17 men who did not complete the program, only 25% (4) had found jobs before they were asked to leave. Of the 28 men who graduated or are still in residence, 86% (24) were employed during their time in the program. Of these 24, 88% (21) were still employed at years' end.

Of the 35 women's housing residents in 2009, 71% (25) graduated from the program or are still in residence. Of the 10 women who did not complete the program, 60% (6) were unemployed or in the Clothing Bank Employment Training Program at the time of their eviction. Of the 20 women who graduated or are still in residence, 100% are either employed or CBD trainees. All 20 were still employed at years' end.

### **Program Projections:**

For 2010, Friendship House intends to continue to set a third computer lab at the Newark Empowerment Center and expand the availability of both Wilmington Day Center computer labs by an additional 15 hours per week. To do this, it will need to recruit at least another twenty job coaches and/or mentors who can make a weekly commitment of at least two hours. Kathy Graham feels that recruiting and training that many new volunteers should not be a problem. To accommodate the higher than anticipated client demand for the Empowerment/Job Readiness Program, Friendship House also needs to expand its day center staff to free up Chris Franson-Wright and Pam Ray to provide the necessary case management. To date, it has not been able to find the funding to make this possible.

With the expansion of the Women's Transitional Housing Program to include an entry level shelter, there will be a greater demand than ever before for volunteer job coaches and mentors in women's housing. Several churches have pledged both volunteers and funding to this new endeavor. To facilitate the work of the job coaches and mentors in both the housing programs and the Clothing Bank, Friendship House purchased additional Dell laptops so that each program has at least three available computers. If necessary, it will add more laptops to the housing program and Clothing Bank in 2010.