



Friendship House, Inc.

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Friendship House Seeking to Open Regional Empowerment Centers in New Castle County

In response to the continued demand for its services by suburban households in need and based upon the success of the Newark Empowerment Center, Friendship House is seeking to develop a network of empowerment centers throughout New Castle County. In 2016, it intends to initiate empowerment center pilot projects in regions of Middletown/Townsend, Millcreek/Pike Creek and Fairfax/Talleyville.

Recent demographic shifts in New Castle County have been accompanied by the rise of social problems not usually associated with suburban life:

- There are pockets of poverty in every region of New Castle County as severe as the poorest Wilmington neighborhoods.
- Epidemic drug use is a county-wide phenomenon from which no one is exempt.
- Panhandling and homeless camps are becoming part of the suburban landscape.

In addition, working class and middle class families feel economically vulnerable. The Recession of 2007 cost many home owners the equity in their houses and many wage-earners their better paying manufacturing jobs. Working part-time service economy jobs, they now struggle to maintain their hard-won standard of living.

Although it began in 1987 as primarily a ministry to the urban homeless and poor of Wilmington, Friendship House has always been open to serving any person that comes to its doors in need. As requests for its services from non-traditional clients increased, Friendship

House began re-engineering its principal empowerment and housing programs to accommodate the needs of a more diversified client base.

In response to the expanding needs of clients throughout New Castle County, sponsoring faith communities began referring households that contacted them for financial assistance to Friendship House for screening and consultation. In 2014, Friendship House worked with more than 600 households and distributed nearly \$70,000 in church-funded homeless prevention grants. As needs expanded beyond the two empowerment centers in Wilmington, Friendship House opened a new empowerment center in Newark in 2007. In eight years, the Newark Center has served 4,000 unduplicated households in need. It has developed a base of local support that enables it to be virtually self-sustaining.

The purpose of this document is to share Friendship House's vision to meet the suburban needs with its supporting faith community. It will describe the unmet needs, the implementation plan, and how regional empowerment centers will address these issues.

As a member of our faith community, we are seeking partners to be a part of our empowerment center expansion project. Either yourself, a small group, or your full congregation can invite the Friendship House Executive Director, Bill Perkins, to speak to you through presentations, group discussions, or adult forums. We will need volunteers to help in several ways. Please reach out to us either by calling our office at 302-652-8133 or email us at fhkime@gmail.com to find out more.

What is the Unmet Need in Suburban New Castle County?

Recent demographic shifts are being felt by local suburban churches who are seeing an increasing number of people in need who are mostly unable or unwilling to access traditional social services usually located in urban areas. This growing problem is linked to the following issues:

1. Caring for episodically homeless, low income households is no longer simply an urban issue. There are pockets of suburban poverty that are as severe as anything found in Wilmington's poorest neighborhoods, as seen by the spread of section 8 housing projects throughout the county. *(Source: 2015 NCC demographics by zip code compiled by Demographicsnow.com).*

2. Middle income households in crisis often are at a loss on where and how to get help. The 2007 Recession has put many middle income households in crisis. Having exhausted their savings and been reduced to working part-time service economy jobs, an increasing number of middle class families routinely spend more than fifty percent of their net-pay on rental housing alone *(Source: New Castle County statistics from 2015 National Low Income Housing Coalition Study "Out of Reach")*. Struggling to survive on fixed incomes, the elderly and disabled are even more vulnerable. Any unanticipated expense or reduction in income can produce a crisis that cascades into the breakup of one's family and the loss of possessions.

3. Young men and women under thirty are the fastest growing segment of the street-level homeless population in New Castle County. *(Source: Friendship House internal client data statistics confirmed Homeless Planning Council point-in-time surveys).* Of the 80,000,000 Americans between the age of eighteen and thirty-five, 67%

do not possess independent housing, looking to friends and family for shelter. *(Source: Pew Trust Millennial Study, July, 2015).* Possessing no legal status in their place of residence, they can become displaced persons at a moment's notice. In the last five years, homeless camps and suburban panhandling have grown exponentially throughout New Castle County.

4. The heroin epidemic devastating America transcends all social, economic and geographic boundaries. Heroin use increased 150% in the last three years. *(Source: Center for Disease Control Study, October, 2014).* Each month, fifteen Delawareans die of drug overdoses, mostly in New Castle County. *(Source: Delaware Dept. of Human Service report, June, 2015).* Addicts are not the only people affected by this horrible disease. Friendship House finds itself ministering not just to addicted clients, but also to their families, friends and victims.

Friendship House's own needs assessment of this situation was compelling enough for the Friendship House board at its August 1st meeting to approve three new Empowerment Center pilot projects to be located in the suburban regions of Middletown/Townsend, Millcreek /Pike Creek and Fairfax /Talleyville. These regions were chosen because of:

- Their high concentration of existing Friendship House ministry partners
- The willingness of several faith communities in each region to co-sponsor the pilot projects by providing donated space, volunteers and funding.
- The identification of several local client populations that would benefit from empowerment center services.

Who Is Friendship House?

Based in New Castle County, Delaware, Friendship House is a non-profit Christian 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. Primarily a coalition of local faith communities in direct ministry to the poor, Friendship House chooses not to accept state or federal funding. Although economically challenging, this choice has allowed Friendship House to maintain creative control over its programs. It also enables the Friendship House strategic planning process to be consumer driven. As such it has been able to develop timely programs that are practical solutions to social needs identified by its homeless clients and community partners.

Founded in 1987, Friendship House operates three Day Centers in Wilmington and Newark, a twenty-four bed entry-level empowerment shelter for motivated homeless men, a transitional housing program with eleven houses (5 for men/ 6 for women and children), a Job Readiness Program, an on-site employment training program for women, the Clothing Bank of Delaware, a winter sanctuary program and a Sunday Breakfast program. This is accomplished by a paid staff of 16 full-time and 14 part-time people and a network of over 1,500 volunteers.

In 2014, more than 5,000 homeless people were clients of our Day Centers and Housing Programs. Another 8,500 individuals or households received donated clothing through our Clothing Bank.

What is an Empowerment Center?

A Friendship House Empowerment Center is a church-based service center for people in need. Its programming is holistic, and not transactional but relational. Friendship House provides professional staff and programming. Sponsoring faith communities supply donated space, volunteers and a portion of the operating funds. An Empowerment Center serves three primary purposes. It will:

- Connect people in need with existing social services.
- Create emergency assistance services where gaps exist in the local human service survival network.
- Provide strategic planning services and program support required to empower clients to break the cycle of dependency and move toward self-sufficiency and self-determination.

This empowerment center model possesses numerous benefits including:

- Customization to fit the specific service needs of each community.
- Promoting local ownership and ecumenical collaboration.
- Challenging both clients and churches to focus their energies on long-term empowerment strategies rather than short-term emergency services.

- Excellent stewardship of each church's limited funding for financial assistance.
- Supplying churches with professional staffing and expertise necessary to address complex social and economic issues confronting their congregation and the local community.
- Consultation and referral services to provide clients with access the larger, more complex human service network.
- Supplying public and private human service agencies with a ministry partner in the local community to promote their services, improve access to clients and host their outreach programs.

An Empowerment Center is volunteer intensive by design. It provides training, supervision and a broad spectrum of service opportunities to parishioners, student community organizations and former clients. It is an excellent educational forum for exploring social issues impacting the local community.

Friendship House has successfully operated three Empowerment Centers—two in Wilmington and one in Newark —serving an average of two hundred fifty clients per day.

The Friendship House Empowerment Center Expansion Plan

The Friendship House Empowerment Center Expansion Project has a deliberative, inclusive implementation plan. The goals of phase one include *education, dialogue, recruitment* and *program design*. With support of its existing ministry collaborators in each region, Friendship House is initiating this plan with the communities of Middletown, Millcreek/Pike Creek and Fairfax/Talleyville. To learn how to best implement this plan, it is reaching out to local faith communities, state sponsored social services and other non-profit social outreach programs.

Education and Dialogue

During the project development, Friendship House staff and board members will be meeting with the local leadership of the church-based, private and public programs already in service to the community in each targeted area. When invited, we will make presentations and hold workshops on Friendship House, Empowerment Ministry in general and Empowerment Center Projects in particular. Most of all, we will listen – seeking the knowledge and wisdom of those who best know the strengths and needs of their own community.

Recruitment

After the initial education phase, Friendship House will develop a Mission Committee for each of the proposed empowerment center projects. Members will be recruited from Friendship House, the leadership of local social ministries as well as interested members of the sponsoring congregations. The Mission Committees will ensure local ownership of the projects, seamless collaboration with existing outreach ministries, and determine the program components to be included in the initial pilot project.

Program Design

The following Friendship House empowerment services already identified as needed include:

- Individual consultations and referrals
- Screening of church referrals for financial assistance
- Professional and financial assistance to acquire birth certificates, social security cards and State ID
- Financial assistance for medical prescriptions, glasses and physician co-pays
- Processing and delivering clothing orders for its Clothing Bank

Other Friendship House empowerment services are dependent on local needs and opportunities with existing area social ministries. Examples of such programs offered at other Friendship House Empowerment Centers include:

- Code Purple Winter Sanctuaries
- Feeding Programs
- Computer labs
- Job Readiness Programs
- On-site availability of other public and private service providers

Empowerment Centers will start small and grow as the demand for its services increase. Some will operate out of a single location; others will be mobile going to whichever church requires services. With the help of the Mission Committees, Friendship House will development the empowerment center type and size that best fits each region.

We invite you, small groups, or full congregations to learn more through formal or informal discussions and presentations led by Bill Perkins and his staff. We also invite you to take part with many of the volunteer needs, to move this project forward. Please email us at fhkime@gmail.com or call us at 302-652-8133 for more information.