

FALL 2016



Friends to friends

Friends Association for Care and Protection of Children

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Last fall you heard from some of the children with whom we work. Their stories are touching and the simplicity of their hopes and dreams inspire what we do every day. With this newsletter we thought you should hear from the parents whose hopes and dreams of a better life have led them to seek a hand up from Friends Association. They have experienced trauma and pain that boggles the mind and yet their will to keep going, to seek a better life is truly a testament to their dauntless spirit.

As you read their stories I hope that you will be moved to help by sharing your "time, treasure or talent" with us. And please consider becoming a **Sustainer of Hope** monthly donor. I get such a great feeling when my monthly donation is debited!

I hope you know that every time one of our parents mentions Friends Association they are talking about you, our donors and volunteers. You make their dreams come true. Without you the families we serve might still think that they are on their own. Instead they have a friend, Friends Association.



Catherine and Alexis reading a story

Catherine

Catherine Friedman, Executive Director

Working Together Brings Families Home



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| <p>17 BOARD MEMBERS;</p> <p>8 STAFF 6 Full Time & 2 Part Time</p> | <p>5,600+ volunteer hours</p> <p>83% of annual budget comes from donors like you</p> | <p>90 families with 175 children found homes</p> <p>94% Success Rate</p> |
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All data from FY2015-2016



Friends Association

Angela

I am now living my dream of living every day the best that I can. My husband and I have two autistic sons and we were living with his parents for ten years. It was not a good situation but it was a place to live. They were evicted and we found ourselves homeless with nowhere to go.

When we first reached out for help there was no space in the shelter system. After connecting with the Outreach to Homeless Families Program, we were able to enter Friends' Emergency Family Shelter where we lived for two and a half months getting the help we needed to get back on our feet. I am disabled and unable to work and my husband is still looking for work. Friends Association helped us identify resources for the boys' social security to get extra income. Both of the boys are in school and the youngest has a nurse at home to care for him.

We moved into our own apartment – the first time we've lived as a family in our own place in 10 years. I can't work but I volunteer because giving back gives me a purpose. It gets me out of the house and helps with occupational therapy.

Hannah

Before I came to Friends Association, I was pretty overwhelmed and lost. About five months before, my two daughters and I suddenly left an unsafe living situation. Having just gone back to work the day before after being a stay-at-home mom for seven years, I had no money saved. I had no family in the area. My only option was to crash on a friend's couch. I was working part-time and I had no idea how I was going to be able to afford a place of my own.

Local government officials referred me to Friends Association. Within a month, I was in my own two bedroom apartment in a safe area. For the first time since I left my home I felt hopeful that things were going to turn out all right.

I went from working part-time to full-time. I learned how to budget my money while ensuring that my daughters have everything they need to grow, such as healthy food to eat and clean clothes to wear.

I grew as a person, becoming more independent – not just financially, but emotionally and mentally. I learned that it is okay to ask for help when I need it and that I shouldn't feel ashamed of the situations I find myself in.

My year receiving rental assistance with Friends Association recently ended. The scariest part for me was writing my first rent check where I was responsible for the full amount. I had moments when I asked myself if I could really do this on my own. But we all face moments in life where we need to take a leap of faith that everything is going to turn out fine. For me, writing that first check was my leap. I know that I am ready to be solely responsible for my rent and need to keep budgeting, save where I can, and cut out things we really don't need.

Reflecting over this past year, I am grateful for the assistance I received from Friends Association. Because they relieved a lot of stress from my life, making a negative and scary situation easier for me to deal with. Without Friends Association, I could have easily become a statistic. Instead, I have managed to thrive, and though it isn't always easy, I know that things are going to be fine because I have already made it through the hardest part.

Jessica

A few years ago I found myself with no place to live for me and my son. I had no job. I was at the lowest point in my life. I was provided with a list of shelters in Chester County, and began calling each one. A day later I received a call back from the Friends Association to come in for an intake appointment.

I was nervous and scared. I never had to live in a shelter before. They helped me tweak my resume and apply for jobs. Wings for Success supplied me with clothes for my interview and for my new job. That new job? I just celebrated my two year anniversary there.

Friends Association is not just a shelter. It was a stepping stone for me and my family and taught me how I could be the best mother to my son. They helped me when I had nothing and changed my life by giving me the tools and confidence to make it on my own.



Rachel

I lived with my mom for nine years and then her house went into foreclosure. I had two weeks to pack up and find a place for me and my two toddlers ages one and two. My mother was losing her home and that meant we were losing ours too.



Our Families' Stories... In Their Own Words

I called looking for shelter but everything was full. I was referred to the Outreach to Homeless Families Case Manager. She helped us find an apartment we could afford. I work fulltime as a billing clerk at a local hospital and my boyfriend was working part-time detailing cars. We were doing okay and saving a little money but then my boyfriend was arrested and locked up. Without the second income I could not pay rent so Friends Association helped by paying a portion of the rent. Without their help my boys and I would be homeless again.

It felt so good paying for my first apartment on my own. With Friends' help and their programs to teach me budgeting skills, I know that I can do this by myself again. I feel grown up and responsible. Friends Association is giving me the confidence to do things on my own. I struggle with time management and getting bills paid on time, but I'm learning how to keep on top of that. My dream is to go to school to be an ultrasound technician and to support my kids without having to depend on someone else!

Nigel

My son, Kasen, lived with his mother at Friends Association's shelter when he was eight years old. They moved into their own apartment and found stability through a rental subsidy from the Housing Authority, which Friends Association helped to arrange.

Unfortunately, last winter Kasen's mother passed away. He was in danger of becoming homeless again since I was homeless and living in Phoenixville at the time. Friends Association's case worker helped me move into an apartment with my son. I am so happy not to be homeless anymore and that I can care for my son. If not for Friends Association, he would either be living on the streets with me or I would have lost custody. Kasen is now 11 years old and doing very well in sixth grade. He gets good grades. Friends Association arranged an overnight camp for him where he was able to experience white water rafting, listen to ghost stories and participate in other activities. Friends Association made it possible for him to be a kid for the first time in years and for me to be the parent to him that he deserves.





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*Yes, you can help
prevent and end
family homelessness
in our community*

By contributing online

- or -

Enclosing your gift

See our wish list
at www.friendsassoc.org



Glenda K. Brion Emergency Family Needs Fund



The families we work with face financial hurdles every day for which there are no public resources: application fees, car repairs, temporary childcare or the cost of replacing all identifying documentation for an entire family.

In honor of Glenda Brion's years of commitment and service to Friends Association, we created and maintain this special fund to help meet these needs. Please consider making a designated donation to the fund to help families get and stay on track on their journey to independence!

Parents shared just how much this fund means to them:

- Summer childcare support for her three children kept Becky working and the kids in a safe environment and the family on target.
- Julio's car was everything to him and his son. When his brakes failed, not long after moving out of the family shelter, he could have ended up back in the shelter. Instead the brakes were fixed and he could keep on trucking.
- Moving from place to place can make keeping track of important papers very difficult but getting a home or a job without them is impossible. Sarah and Andrew faced that dilemma when they came to us with no papers and no income. This Fund helped start them on the right path for as little as \$30.

Contact Robin Meixner, Director of Development, to learn more.
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