



COMMUNITY SERVICES

...to friends!

F R I E N D S R E A C H I N G I N E V E R Y N E E D E D D I R E C T I O N

Responding to a critical need in northeastern Berks

Where do you turn when you're out of work, or there's no money for heating oil, or you just can't seem to relate to your teenager? Started more than 35 years ago, Friend, Inc. has been a resource for serving the needs of the residents of northeastern Berks County.

Begun by area ministers and community members who realized there was a need for assistance to families and individuals living in poverty in rural northeastern Berks County (residents of Kutztown, Fleetwood, and Brandywine School Districts), Friend's services today include case management, a food pantry, emergency financial assistance, money management/budget counseling, parenting support groups (for parents of tots, parents of 5-to-12 year olds, and parents of teens), and referrals to other agencies for services not provided by Friend. In addition, we are the only Outreach Point for PA CareerLink-Berks County located in northeastern Berks County. Area residents can sign up for CareerLink, create and customize resumes, apply for jobs online, and conduct research through our career resources.

Here are some specific facts about how Friend, Inc. responds to the needs of the community: • Friend provides food annually for approximately 237 households comprised of 750 individuals. Our food pantry is client choice, which means that clients can "shop" and choose the food they know their family will eat. • During last year's Christmas Cheer program, 155 households comprised of 512 individuals received a holiday dinner with a turkey and all the trimmings. And, 238 children received gifts. • A total of 111 households received case management services in 2007. Services may have included emergency financial assistance, access to our food pantry, parenting support groups, job search assistance, and money management/budget counseling. • We provided emergency financial assistance to 25 households comprised of 72 individuals that were unable to pay rent, heating oil, or utility bills.

With today's economic difficulties, the need for Friend, Inc. is greater than ever. Many children and adults would face even more hardships were it not for the many services provided by Friend, Inc.

Staff intros: new as well as present

Four key staff people make Friend, Inc. effective at what it does on a day-to-day basis, and we'd like to tell you about each of them.

We will first introduce Erica Hesselson, our interim Executive Director through May, 2009.



She comes to us having just completed a Master of Social Work degree at Kutztown University with an internship as Off-Campus Student Life Coordinator where she fostered positive relationships between the University and the community.

In addition, Erica had a graduate internship during the previous academic year as Nursing Home Transition Specialist for Berks County Office of Aging where she discussed with families discharge planning and alternatives to nursing home care for their loved ones. Prior to her graduate studies, she was Family Based Mental Health Case Worker as well as Street Outreach Counselor for Valley Youth House, Bethlehem. In the latter position, she provided crisis counseling to homeless men, women, and children. During her undergraduate years at Kutztown University, while she was studying for a major in Social Work and a dual minor in Women's Studies and Crafts, Erica had an internship as Crisis Counselor for Kensington Welfare Rights Union in North Philadelphia. She was also an assistant at the KU's Women's Center and worked at Reading Berks Emergency

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The Inside Story on Friend's Food Pantry by Catherine Dill

I often get questions about how our Client Choice Food Pantry works. Years ago we used to give out a pre-packed box to each household, based on their family size. When I packed a box, I realized that I was putting in food that I liked, and maybe leaving out ones the family could really use. How could anyone pick out foods for other people? So, when the Greater Berks Food Bank suggested we switch to a "client choice" pantry, where the clients pick out their foods themselves, I visited another pantry that was using this system and was immediately convinced.

What we do now is assign each family a col-

ored sticker based on how many people are in their household. The family gets a shopping cart and follows the path around the pantry. In each food section (fruit, meat, soup, etc.), there is a chart with all the colored stickers showing how many items they are allowed to take. If it is the vegetable section, for example, they might be able to have five cans of vegetables. They can take five different vegetables or five cans of the same item, whatever they think they can use.

We get the food from different sources. The Greater Berks Food Bank provides most of the bulk food for a small handling fee. However, to have a successful client choice food pantry, we need a variety of items, and to do this, we need the support of the community to get the food we need. So, the donations that come in from area churches, schools, service organizations, and individuals are crucial to the success of our food pantry.

Our Board Members are always fundraising, but it's not enough. Can you help, too?

Friend, Inc. had several major fundraising events during 2008, and we'd like to tell you about them. Board Members spearheaded each fundraiser by chairing the event-planning committees, capably assisted by Office and Projects Manager Catherine Dill.

Starting off this year was "Strike Out Poverty," a bowling tournament at Berks Lanes in early March. Then, the 19th Annual Friend Community Services Auction, the biggest fundraiser of the year and the most profitable in the last five years, was chaired by Board Member Susan Mangold. We had contributions ranging from restaurant and weekend getaway gift certificates to a hot air balloon ride, as well as antiques, jewelry, services, and many unique items. Our dessert auction, always eagerly anticipated, took on a new twist this year by offering a trophy in

honor of the baker of the dessert that earned the highest bid. The trophy, this year honoring Shirley Dreibelbis for her rum cake, has already been on display at Mr. Food, Quality Shoppe, and Business Link. Also new this year was the "Artists' Corner," highlighting the talents of several artists who donated pieces to the auction. A special feature was a caricature artist who delighted patrons with her portraits. The Auction drew attendees from the local and surrounding areas, as well as some visitors from out-of-state.

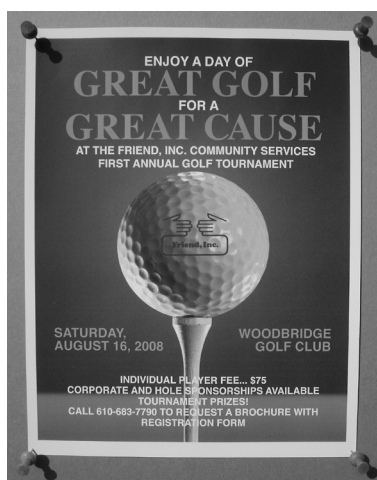
During the Kutztown Folk Festival, Board Members and volunteers sold Byers Choice handcrafted figures as well as various Festival souvenirs in the Quilt Barn. Then, co-chaired by Board Members Josee Vachon and Debbie Smith-Craine, the First Annual Friend, Inc. Community Services Golf Tournament was held in mid-August at the new Woodbridge Golf Club just outside Kutztown. There were many ways Friend raised money during this successful event. Overall sponsorship was provided by Kutztown University and KU Golden Bears Athletic Department. Area merchants as well as individuals sponsored each of the eighteen holes. Each player of the twelve foursomes paid a \$75 entry fee. One hole featured



BOTH PHOTOS: CATHERINE DILL

August 16th was a perfect golfing Saturday for The First Annual Friend, Inc. Community Services Golf Tournament. Forty-eight happy golfers played eighteen holes at the new Woodbridge Golf Club, then enjoyed a luncheon provided by Dori Martin Catering.

a “Pot of Gold” competition, permitting each player the opportunity to contribute \$5 toward the chance of getting his or her ball within a chalked twenty-foot diameter circle around the pin. The skillful winner received



An effective fundraising event needs advertising to bring in the participants. In addition to National Penn Bank graciously paying for the Auction's newspaper advertising, a Board Member designed and paid for the printing of these posters in order to save Friend expenses and gain the maximum income from these events. Perhaps you saw them on community bulletin boards all over Friend's service area, and maybe you even attended the events. If so, thanks!

half of the total contributed. Haldeman Ford Lincoln Mercury was ready to award a two-year lease on a brand new Lincoln for a hole-in-one; but, alas, no player won the car. Tournament prizes were awarded at a luncheon catered by Dori Martin that concluded the morning of golf. And, when golfers first arrived, many of them bought raffle tickets; during the luncheon, raffle numbers were called and winners received golf- and sports-related products.

Despite our efforts during the year, Friend, Inc. still needs to raise money to support our many community services. We will really appreciate your donation (use the form on page 5 and the envelope accompanying this newsletter).

And, we invite you to become a volunteer! There's great satisfaction in knowing that you've helped our Food Pantry provide much-needed nutrition for families in need or that your presence on a fundraising event committee helped finance our parenting support groups or helped a person who's out of work find a job through CareerLink. Please call 610-683-7790 to volunteer.

Yard Sale Promotes Positive Relationship between University and Community

*by Erica Hesselton, MSW
Interim Executive Director*

Ever hear that someone's trash is another one's treasure? Well, I believe that is absolutely true! Last year, as the Off-Campus Advisory Council (OCAC) Coordinator, and as a long-time social worker and advocate for social justice, I organized an event that was geared towards promoting well-being and enhancing the sometimes tenuous relationship between the University and the community. One of the needs that the Borough Council asked me to address early in September, 2007, was the exorbitant amount of trash during move out day at the end of each semester. Some of the Borough Council members reported that the amount of trash at the end of each semester was more than the Borough could handle, and a lot of the items were still good— “students just appeared to leave items on the sidewalk, not wanting to take them home.”

Well, as a community organizer, I wanted to right this wrong. I decided that the event to “solve this problem” would be two fold: 1) lower the amount of trash left by students at the end of each semester, and 2) assist low-income families with purchasing needed items cheaply or for free. Thus blossomed the Community Yard Sale. The theme was “put your junk in our trunk” as we rented a Penske truck and picked up unwanted items in the community (yes, I drove the Penske truck). The yard sale was located in the Fairgrounds Kitchen building and run by three members of the OCAC: myself, Tara Beretsky, and Sara Bitts, both undergraduate seniors. There were several other student volunteers that helped with collecting the items from the community and selling items. We were also able to use the room at no additional cost, thanks to Richard Dry, President of the Fairgrounds Association.

After discussing this event with staff at Friend, Inc., Cathy Dill made vouchers for clients to pick up at their office during Pantry night. “There was an overwhelming response, with Christmas around the corner,” she said. This was true— the sale was a huge success! On the last day of the sale, almost 50 Friend clients came with their vouchers and took items that they wanted, free of charge. One man reported that he was thankful because “...now they can have Christmas” at their house with the items they found. The Yard Sale not only benefited the community by lessening the amount of trash and assisting clients of Friend, Inc., but we were also able to provide Friend with a cash donation of over \$1200 from both events! I believe that OCAC and Friend, Inc. make great partners, and will continue to build the relationship between KU students and Friend clients.

It is my great hope that Friend, Inc. thrives this year. I believe our team of employees embodies the powerful quote from Margaret Mead: “*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever does!*” Welcome 2009!

Why give money or time to Friend, Inc.? Here are a few testimonials....

Sit right back and let me tell you about a family. A single struggling Mom trying to keep her family fed. And then one day she was at the end of her rope; then along came Linda from Trinity Lutheran Church, Zawaski, that is... the diaconal minister. Well, the next thing you know, Linda said to me, 'Wow, you've got a lot to handle there! I know just the place to find the help you need.' So she introduced me to Friend, Inc. in Kutztown, PA. Rita Leib that is, case manager... wonderful person. Rita worked with my church, and before I know it, help was on the way.

Please know that none of this was done without first asking me if I was comfortable with them sharing my needs with others.

Trinity has a pastoral care team. The minister, Pastor Keith Rohrbach, and Linda Zawaski head up the team and I was the recipient of the Fall Harvest Fund. It was not only from my church but other churches and people in Kutztown. They raised over \$4,000 to get me the help I needed with my bills and rent. But it did not stop there. They addressed all of my needs and struggles, provided emotional support, transportation, meals, and many prayers.

Through Rita I was connected with many programs to help:

The Talent Search Program... helped us find a college that was affordable for my daughter. The program helped with the cost of the college entrance and the transportation.

Money Manager volunteers... work with you on your finances. I met three terrific people and have been working with them for over a year. They are helping me take control of my finances.

Consumer Credit Counseling... through them I was put on a program to pay my credit card debt.

Next was Angel Food and Northeastern Food Bank. And, I was offered counseling through Family Life Services.

Rita taught an active parenting teen class that helped me learn how to communicate with my girls. Even with all that help, I was under a tremendous amount of stress and my health was not the best. Then I got the news that I had breast cancer. I was ready to give up on myself,

but Friend, Inc. and my church did not. Rita provided information about the American Cancer Society. They referred me to the Holly Heidman Foundation that helped with my electric bill. The ACE helped with my medication for cancer and paid for my transportation to and from the hospital for my chemo treatments. There was also money left over from the Fall Harvest Fund that the church used to help pay for my doctor

“I was ready to give up on myself, but Friend, Inc. and my church did not.”

visits and other medications. Even with all the wonderful help I was receiving, we knew my living expenses exceeded my income and had to find a new place to live. My stress level was high and I could not handle the chemo treatments.

Rita went to work on her day off to search the Internet hoping to find a place I could live. God was with her that day because she found a mission house called the Fritz House, sponsored by First UCC of Hamburg. It's a rent free house for a year, plus all your utility bills are paid. Rita called them and set up a meeting for all of us.

Next thing I knew I was moving to Hamburg. It was a scary time. I did not know the church, and my daughter would have to start over with a new school and friends. Well, that scare was short lived. The First UCC Church is awesome. I received emotional support, home cooked meals, car repair, transportation, and help to make Christmas a special time for my girls and me. Most of all I have made a great group of friends. Trinity Church in Kutztown now works with First UCC in Hamburg to make sure all of my needs are met. All this love and support for one family! How awesome is that!

I now am on the path to being the mother I know I can be. I am working on financial independence. None of it would have been possible without my case manager Rita and Trinity and First UCC Church. They never gave up on me even when I had.

My case manager Rita is wonderful. She stayed with me through hard times... always called or wrote to make sure I was fine and ask if there was anything she could do to help. At times I was frustrated and not very friendly, but she never gave up on me, believed in me and encouraged me.

With the financial burden being lifted and my life taking new direction, I am able to write this today and proudly say I have beaten breast cancer! I have survived not by myself but with the help of many loving and caring people. With so many others believing in me, how can I ever give up?! I love my life now and am excited about the time I will be in a position to help others as I have been helped. God bless Friend, Inc., Trinity Lutheran Church, First UCC Church, and all those that, with their help, have given me a new life.

God is awesome!

D O N A T I O N F O R M



Please fill in your name and address, amount contributed, and optional phone number and e-mail. Cut along the dotted line and enclose with your check in the accompanying envelope. *For more than 35 years, Friend, Inc. Community Services has been helping families and individuals in northeastern Berks County. Your tax-deductible contribution and/or volunteer assistance will help us continue our legacy of service. Thanks for your support!*

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Amount Contributed \$ _____

Please make checks payable to Friend, Inc. Community Services.

I would like to volunteer at Friend, Inc.

Please be sure to include your phone number and/or e-mail.

I'd like to wish each and every one of you [Steve, entire Friend staff, and volunteers] a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year 2005! I thank God because I feel so blessed because He has many angels here on Earth, such as yourselves. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your hard work and dedication in helping people such as myself. Your kindness, consideration, and warm smiles make me feel so thankful and blessed especially since I've come to a crossroad in my life and my family's, which has been really hard for me. May God bless each and every one of you and take good care of you as you do unto others. I can't thank you all enough for all the wonderful things you do for people. Thank you again and again.

God bless, take care, and you are in my prayers always.

Eternal love, —C

Thanks so much for the wonderful class. The book and videos were good, but your comments, questions and ideas were absolutely invaluable. We learned so much and really appreciate your caring, nonjudgmental, and fun way. You made the class something to look forward to, and we have made real progress in improving our parenting and communication skills. Thanks again!

—M & S

“Strike Out Poverty,” the annual Friend, Inc. Community Services Bowlathon, will be Sunday, March 1, 2009, 1–3 pm at Berks Lanes, 3190 Shillington Road, Sinking Spring. It's easy to organize a team and bowl! Teams can be 4–6 bowlers. Individuals are encouraged to sign up, too. \$50 minimum sponsorship per bowler. \$100 minimum to receive a tee shirt and be eligible for prizes. There'll be snacks and drinks for all, as well as other food for sale by Berks Lanes. Sponsorship forms are available by calling 610-683-7790 or on the Friend, Inc. website, www.friendinc.org. Enjoy a fun afternoon of bowling for a great cause!

The group “Parents of Teens and Preteens” will start in January, 2009. The group will meet for two hours for six weeks. It is open to anyone who wants to be a better parent and is willing to make a commitment to spend at least 2–3 hours each week reading and doing class assignments. The group is open to all regardless of income or geography. Participants have traveled from Philadelphia and Schuylkill County. There is a \$20 fee to cover the cost of the book. Financial assistance is available. To inquire, call 610-683-9012, or go to the Friend, Inc. website, www.friendinc.org.



COMMUNITY SERVICES

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610-683-7790
www.friendinc.org

Thank you to the anonymous donor
who printed our newsletter.



Friend, Inc. Community Services is a United Way – funded agency. Without this funding, Friend would not be able to provide the level of services currently available to assist those in need. Thank you for your support of United Way, and thanks to United Way of Berks County for its support of Friend, Inc.

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Shelter (now Opportunity House). A highlight of Erica's earlier life was participation in the Young Judea Year Course Study Abroad Program when she lived on a kibbutz in rural northern Israel.

Next, we want to reintroduce Catherine Dill. Prior to being offered a job at Friend, Cathy had heard the director of Friend speak at her church, and as the result, she had volunteered hundreds of hours at Friend's food pantry as well as delivering boxes of food to home-bound clients and computerizing files during her years as a music major at Kutztown University. Today, in her capacity as Office and Projects Manager, she organizes the food pantry (see article) and Christmas Cheer project as well as works with the Annual Benefit Auction, Dance, Bowlathon, and Golf Tournaments. She works for Friend at the Kutztown Folk Festival each year, and she coordinates the Salvation Army Kettle stand between Thanksgiving and Christmas. And, Cathy coordinated "Hands on Berks," a project to clean up yards for client families.

Steve Sadusky has a degree in Social Welfare from Penn State where he graduated with high honors. During his undergraduate years, he had

a practicum at a social setting detoxification unit which began almost two decades of specialized addictions recovery work. He became a certified addictions counselor and a therapist. Steve coordinated two rehab programs for adolescents and young adults, one in Pennsylvania and the other in Arizona. Returning to Pennsylvania in 1996, he became Case Manager/Intern Supervisor for Friend, where he sees many opportunities to assist individuals and families in their struggle to meet basic food, shelter, and stability needs. Steve was the primary interviewer for over sixty households seeking financial help in the aftermath of the 1998 tornado which touched down in Lyons and Fleetwood. Part of Steve's job at Friend is to instruct and supervise student interns from Kutztown University's Social Work program.

Rita Lieb has been Friend's Case Manager/Outreach Coordinator for fifteen years. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. In addition, Rita has certification in Family Therapy from Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic, Coping with Family and Work Stress from Yale University, and Intervention from Johnson Institute. She has worked in the human services field for 36 years in various capacities including individual and group therapist, supervisor, nurse, program developer, and volunteer coordinator at two psychiatric hospitals, a children's home, an MH/MR day treatment facility, and a partial hospitalization program. In addition to functioning as a case manager, Rita has established a reputation as a skilled leader of Friend's parenting classes. The groups have included new and older parents, nurses, grandparents, single moms and dads, teachers, and anyone struggling with numerous ongoing parenting issues or those just looking for reassurance and support to do the most important job they will ever do in their life... parenting their children.



... TO FRIENDS!