



KEEPING UP WITH Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center



FRIENDSOFAMHC@GMAIL.COM

ABOUT FRIENDS

OUR MISSION

Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center (AMHC) provides financial help and hope to Alexandrians receiving City services for mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and developmental disabilities.

OUR APPROACH

Friends is a non-profit organization founded in 1984 with the knowledge that community makes a significant difference for those living with a mental health condition, developmental disability, or substance use on their path to recovery.

Friends' primary goal is to provide a financial safety net for Alexandrians receiving mental health services from the City's Community Services Board (CSB). Friends uses donations to provide help and hope to these individuals and their families for special and emergency needs, such as housing, medicine, dental care, transportation, social and educational activities, and basic life necessities.

Additionally, Friends supports the City and other partners working to advance mental health throughout Alexandria— those who strengthen the safety net; improve mental health awareness and advocacy; reduce stigma; and enhance training for CSB staff.

FRIENDS TURNS 40: Help Celebrate Friends in 2024 by Springing to Action for Friends on April 24!

For 40 years, Friends has served Alexandrians in financial need. Historically, nearly 50% of the families Friends has helped had annual family incomes of less than \$15,000. In FY 2023 (7/1/22-6/30/23), we spent over \$118,126, to fill a record 300 requests for people faced with expenses that either outpaced their ability to pay or had no income at all. Housing needs accounted for 48% of last year's expenditures for client needs. Medical/dental and medication costs accounted for 14%.

In every instance, financial help is requested by Alexandria's Community Service Board professionals like Maricel Young and Tania Paiz who have evaluated numerous needs and identified where a Friends expenditure can have the greatest impact. By working in partnership with the CSB, all financial assistance provided by Friends is part of a managed plan to help a resident of Alexandria. Furthermore, since Friends is an all-volunteer organization, over 96 cents of every dollar you contribute goes directly to an Alexandrian identified as needing Friends' help.

For FY2024 (beginning 7/1/23), our current expenditures for community members total over \$76,000 and requests are rising.

On behalf of Alexandrians in need, thank you for supporting Friends. During Spring2Action please consider contributing to Friends and inviting others to do so as well.

Donate through GiveGab for Spring 2 Action

on April 24! For 24 hours, residents, families and even out-of-state supporters can donate to Friends. Please take this opportunity to support Friends. Early giving will begin on Wednesday, April 10, and run through Wednesday, April 24. Please consider giving early to Friends! Our goal is to raise \$25,000.00 for our Spring 2 Action campaign. **Donate online:** <https://www.spring2action.org/>



Spring2Action

Alexandria's Giving Day
Presented by ACT for Alexandria

Highlights of People Served

Fiscal Year 2024 is on track to surpass- FY 2023 in needs. In the first eight and a half months of FY2024, Friends has spent \$76,006.99 while receiving donations of \$39,165.05 to serve city residents. With cash on hand of approximately \$30,000.00, we will not be in a position to meet this need without your help. In the last two years in particular, the generosity of Friends donors has kept vulnerable Alexandrians in their homes, provided medications and necessary dental work, ensured that educational and job opportunities were available to residents and kept families from going hungry. Here are some highlights of the clients we served:

BOARD MEMBERS

Anna Dvorchik
Co-Chair

Mary C. Ray, LCSW
Co-Chair

Kedryn Berrian
Social Media

Adam Bloom-Paicopolis Social
Media and Web

Rebecca (Becky) Bradford
Online Fundraising and Grant
Writing

Elizabeth A. "Betty" Livingston
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Eric Lundberg
Fundraising

Angelica Medina
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Vladimir Reilly
Consumer Liaison

Ian Ring
CSB Liaison

Monica Rusk
Treasurer

Vera Sarkis
Outreach

Hon. Allison Silberberg
Outreach

Jeremy Thompson
Secretary

Ellen is a senior living with severe knee pain making it difficult to walk. Friends provided funds for a wheelchair to give her greater independence and improve her quality of life.

Cindy is a grandmother who unexpectedly gained custody of her four grandchildren. She lost her job due to her new caregiving responsibilities. Friends provided funds to pay Cindy's cell phone bill so she can continue her search for employment within the children's school hours.

Rent and housing-related assistance continue to be the majority of requests that are sent to Friends, followed by medical and dental assistance.

Bob started a new job after a time of unemployment. Because he would not be paid for two weeks, he could not afford his psychiatric medications. Friends stepped in to pay this time-sensitive request.

Sarah had a mental health crisis causing months of unemployment. She recently stabilized and regained part-time employment. However, she fell behind on her rent. Friends paid her rent so she could continue with the gains she has made in the community.

SPOTLIGHT ON TWO CITY EMPLOYEES

Friends could not function without the work and advocacy of the CSB case managers and therapists who serve city clients. This spring, we spotlight two wonderful workers:

Maricel Young

Where do you work in CSB?

I work in the Outpatient Mental Health/Substance Use Treatment Unit.

When did you start?

I began working with the City in May of 2011.

Tell us a little about yourself.

I have extensive experience working with suicide hotlines, CPS and APS in Prince George's County, and I also worked with a DC collaborative and Child and Family Services in different capacities.

What do you find most rewarding about what you do?

I enjoy helping clients reach stability and develop attainable goals. I strive to see them grow towards a healthy and stable life.

What is the hardest part of your job?

The lack of resources and housing are always barriers. Not all clients have income, and with that limitation we find ourselves at dead ends. There needs to be more accessible units throughout the city.

How do you use Friends in your job?

There are so many ways that Friends has helped our clients. They have helped our clients secure housing, secure employment, and get on their feet after COVID. They have also helped some of our clients finish school.

What effect has Friends had on the residents you serve?

Friends has given them a sense of empowerment and hope, knowing there are people on the other side willing to help them.



ABOUT THE CSB



The CSB oversees the City's publicly funded services for Alexandrians with mental health conditions.

In 2018, the CSB served 4,363 Alexandrians of all ages through mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services. Historically, of those for whom income is known, nearly half have had annual family incomes of \$15,000 or less. In 2018, 25% were under age 20. The CSB is part of the Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS).

Tania Paiz

Where do you work in CSB?

I currently work as a Human Service Specialist II/ Case Manager in Child and Family Behavioral Health Services

When did you start?

I joined the CSB in February 2023 and since then I have worked with families of all different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

What do you find most rewarding about what you do?

My primary role is to assist caregivers who have children with behavioral health challenges in accessing services to meet their treatment goals.

What is the hardest part of your job?

It is difficult to help families in need to face the many obstacles and challenges they encounter including an inability to pay for basic needs and afford quality care.

How do you use Friends in your job?

When no other funding source is available, Friends is invaluable in helping families. I have requested Friends funds to assist youth and families in paying for extracurricular activities such as art classes and athletic programs.

What effect has Friends had on the residents you serve?

For one youth who was actively using drugs and failing his classes, having an opportunity to engage in a healthy activity has had a positive impact on his life. After he enrolled in soccer, paid for by Friends, he became sober and an A-B student. I strongly believe that without the support of Friends of Alexandria Mental Health, we as an agency could not make the impact we do.



Friends Advocacy Goals for 2024

Friends' main goal for 2024 is to advocate for more psychiatric bed space and crisis beds in Northern Virginia. Write your legislator, call the City Council and Mayor Wilson and advocate for bed space here in the City.

A second issue is a dire need for affordable housing and rent relief. Friends has almost fully exhausted its coffers with requests for housing assistance. While we are glad to help, we are not a substitute for affordable housing. Please reach out to your legislator, council member and Mayor Wilson and let them know that more funding needs to be appropriated to housing issues in the City.

NEED HELP IN A CRISIS? Call 24 Hours a Day

- Adult Protective Services | 703.746.5778
- Adult Protective Services State Hotline | 1.888.832.3858
- Child Protective Services | 703.746.5800
- State of Virginia Child Protective Services | 1.800.552.7096
- Domestic Violence | 703.746.4911
- Emergency Mental Health Services | 703.746.3401
- Sexual Assault | 703.683.7273



IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Mental Health Insurance Information Enroll Virginia
703.364.9456

Intake for Adult Mental Health, Developmental Disability, and Substance Use Treatment Services

703.746.3535

24/7 Emergency Mental Health Services

703.746.3401

DONATE TO FRIENDS

Donors may send a check of any amount to:

Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center
4850 Mark Center Dr.
Floor 8, Room 8160
Alexandria, VA 22311

ONLINE DONATIONS

mightycause.com/organization/Friends-Of-The-Alexandria-Mental-Health-Center
or
givegab.com/nonprofits/friends-of-the-alexandria-mental-health-center/campaigns/FriendsOftheAMHC

SHARE FRIENDS!

Before you recycle this newsletter, please help us enlarge our circle of Friends. Pass it on to a friend, neighbor or family member who may wish to support Friends' mission.

HELP US BE GREEN!

Send us your email address at FRIENDSOFAMHC@GMAIL.COM



Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center
4850 Mark Center Dr.
Floor 8, Room 8160
Alexandria, VA 22311

Who are Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center?

Friends of the AMHC is a Board of volunteers who make sure that your donations go directly to the needs of Alexandrians in the form of direct financial assistance, education or training for community members.

A check of any amount may be sent to:

Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center
4850 Mark Center Drive
Floor 8, Room 8160
Alexandria, Virginia 22311

Consider choosing Friends of the AMHC through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Please visit friendsofamhc.org for more information.



**Be sure to update your address book
with our new address!**

GET HELP NOW: Suicide Prevention Resources

- **CrisisLink:** 703.527.4077 or text “CONNECT” to 85511
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text “HOME” to 741741
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 1.800.273.8255 · For deaf and hard of hearing, use your preferred relay service or dial 711, then 1.800.273.8255 or chat with someone 24/7 through **Lifeline Chat**¹
- **Red Nacional del Suicidio:** 1.888.628.9454
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Veterans Crisis Line:** 1.800.273.8255, Press 1 or text 838255, or chat confidentiality with someone online 24/7 through **Crisis Chat**²
- **Emergency Services, Alexandria Dept. of Community and Human Services:** 703.746.3401
- **The Trevor Project, LGBTQ Youth:** 1.866.488.7386 or **TrevorText**, a confidential and secure resource that provides live help for LGBTQ youth with a trained specialist, over text messages: Text **START** to 678678. Chat with someone online 24/7 through **Trevor Chat**³
- **Get FREE Confidential Mental Health Screening:** Visit screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/northern-virginia for more information

¹ **Lifeline Chat:** suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/

² **Crisis Chat:** veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/chat/

³ **Trevor Chat:** thetrevorproject.org/get-help/

Donors may give online for Spring2ACTion!

givegab.com/nonprofits/friends-of-the-alexandria-mental-health-center/campaigns/FriendsoftheAMHC

