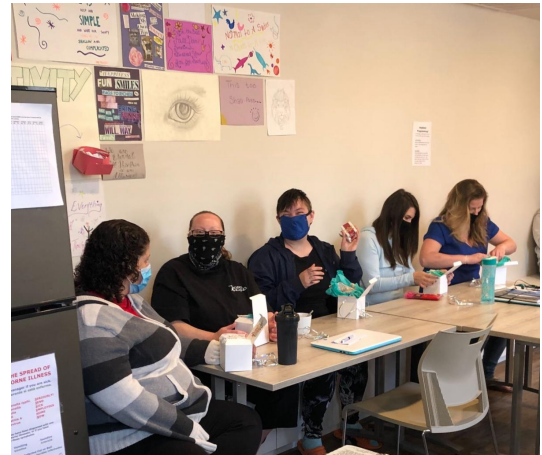


New Clients in the Age of COVID-19

As we have all experienced, Covid-19 has mercilessly changed our way of life, but it has not changed our commitment to our clients and our community. Guest House's goal is still to help reentering women gain their independence, sense of self-worth, familial connections, and dignity. And, thanks to your steadfast support, not even a pandemic will alter our course.

Now that Northern Virginia has reopened, we're thrilled to be able to welcome new clients again. We expect a total of 20 newly released women to arrive from jails and prisons by mid-July. They will quarantine for two weeks in a dedicated home and follow the guidelines and protocols already in place to maintain everyone's physical and mental health.

"Even with all the Covid regulations at Guest House, this is still better than my life was and it's getting better every day. This is all temporary and it's not going to stop me from using this transition to move my life forward" said Kelly, who arrived in June.



A Forever Home for Reentering Women

> Generous donors contributed more than \$700,000 so Guest House could purchase a home for Aftercare clients (who otherwise face rampant discrimination in the housing market).

> Long-time supporters Fred and Cathy Sachs share why they chose to make a significant contribution to the project.

We're thrilled to announce that in April, thanks to a group of dedicated donors like you, who contributed more than \$700,000, Friends of Guest House was able to purchase a home in the West End section of Alexandria. The house is home to women in the Aftercare program, who rent rooms there at an affordable rate.

Two of those generous donors are Fred and Cathy Sachs. The Sachs have been residents and business owners in Alexandria for over 40 years. Twenty five years ago, Fred Sachs was a building materials supplier, and he was approached by a board member asking him to consider providing the materials for a maintenance update of Guest House's headquarters. Agreeing to this arrangement provided much needed materials at a cost that a non-profit could afford and introduced him to Kari Galloway, Executive Director of Friends of Guest House. His conversations with Galloway informed him about the organization's mission of helping women successfully transition from incarceration to their new lives, and the essential role donors and volunteers play in the organization's success stories.

Fred and Cathy Sachs have remained loyal donors ever since.

Fred already knew the importance viable employment and financial security played in his family's life

and the lives of his employees. He recognized the impact a second chance employer can have on the lives of people re-entering society. Over the years, he has hired many Guest House women and can say with certainty that he has always been impressed with the quality of their work.

For Cathy, the connection to Guest House came from relating to the residents as women and mothers. When she heard their stories, their backgrounds, their circumstances, "I realized the long distance these women have to travel to simply regain their place in society and oftentimes with their families" said Cathy. "When you successfully reintegrate a woman into a stable, secure life, you positively impact not only her, but the many lives she touches."

Thanks to Fred, Cathy and many generous donors, reentering women will always have a safe home as they work to reenter the community.

Two AMAZING Women We are Proud to Know and Love



Donjette L. Gilmore **Secretary, Board of Directors**

It shouldn't be a surprise that Donjette believes her most important legacy to be one of service, excellence, and integrity. Her great grandmother, Mrs. Fannie Mae Curtis, marched with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and participated in the yearlong Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Donjette has worked for the Department of Defense her entire career, she started as an Air Force intern and became the first African American and female to serve as the Acting Auditor General and first African American female ever to serve as the Deputy Auditor General of the Navy. She served dual-hatted in both positions for more than two years.

Last year she assumed the duties of Executive Director for the Office of Public/Private Partnership Reviews, a new organization to address military family housing for the Navy and Marine Corps.

Along the way, she has served on two boards that provided minority access to education and to low-income housing. When one board disbanded, her Pastor at Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria suggested she consider joining the Guest House Board. (Alfred Street has supported Guest House for many years through fundraising, Metro card donation, and volunteer work on the East Luray house).

Since joining the Board 10 years ago, Donjette has served as Treasurer and Secretary. She attributes her longevity on the Board to Guest House's mission, her desire to serve others, and to Executive Director Kari Galloway and another longtime Board member, Peter Lunt.

During her tenure, she has worked to raise funds in support of several special projects, including the Payne Street housing acquisition, the refurbishing of the East Luray house, Mission Day at Alfred Street, and the annual Spring2ACTion community fundraiser.

Donjette's greatest contribution to the Board, says Kari Galloway, "is her quiet but steady counsel and her deep belief in our mission." Donjette's great grandmother would be proud.

Chasidy Deskins **Aftercare Client**

"I picture an Avatar. A blank person that you create piece by piece. First I try different hairstyles, clothes, and then I eventually move on to thoughts and ideas," is how Chasidy Deskins describes her journey of recovery and self actualization.

Chasidy grew up in a small, homogenous, working-class town. She remembers knowing at a young age that following in the footsteps of her family and working

at a local industrial job would be limiting. As she got older, her internal conflict grew more pronounced and more destructive, often leading to run-ins with the police and time in the juvenile justice system.

"I felt like I was leading a double life. On the one hand, I was married and had a child and living according to the rules. And on the other, the feeling that I could do more or be more was making me so angry and frustrated and leading me to bad choices."

For Chasidy, there were limited examples of self advocacy, few options for employment outside of factories, and a devastating domestic violence incident that left her permanently scarred. "Selling and using drugs provided what seemed to be an upwardly mobile, albeit illegal career option, and a foolproof method of self medication to deal with inner conflict and emotional trauma," she said. This choice alienated her from her family and eventually landed her in prison.

"When your head gets clear in prison, all the problems surface that you didn't want to realize or deal with. The counselor I met in prison helped me sort through my issues. She never told me what to do. She was there to help me figure it out." Chasidy learned better critical thinking skills and how to leave destructive behavior patterns and toxic relationships behind.

This counselor told Chasidy about Guest House, and she agreed to go. She values the case workers, counselors and staff at Guest House, made possible thanks to supporters like you, who are ready to listen and offer advice. Chasidy made her strongest connection through the Friends of Guest House Mentoring program.

"When I moved to Alexandria, I knew nothing and nobody. My mentor helped me find my way around. Drove me to job interviews. Made sure I was prepared and on time for appointments. I couldn't have done it without her. And she is still a big part of my life."

Through counseling and support Chasidy has shifted the focus from looking outside herself to mastery of her own choices and their consequences for herself and her son. She has a new sense of compassion for her family, understands their past choices, and is able to accept their love, which has led to a reconciliation.

Chasidy's journey highlights the tremendous amount of support and infrastructure necessary to change the course of someone's life. But thanks to supporters like you, there are new opportunities for women like Chasidy at Guest House. Counselors, mentors and second-chance employers all play a vital role in providing resources and opportunities for successful reentry into society. A return to her community after prison would have potentially landed her right back into old habits and patterns.

Massage Envy recognized Chasidy's commitment and eagerness to learn when the company hired her in 2018. Here she received on the job clerical and sales training. One year later, in March of 2019, she was named Massage Envy's Highest Earning Salesperson for her region and is training for her new role as Assistant General Manager.

"Every day my life is becoming more of my own. And I couldn't have done that without help. I'm grateful and I'm proud of myself, and I'm continuing to learn, get better and be more compassionate with each new experience."

Providing life-changing opportunities for women like Chasidy at Guest House are possible thanks to loyal supporters like you.



Friends of Guest House and Issues of Racial Inequity

Nationwide, a conversation on racial equity is intensifying. You may already know or be learning more about ways in which racial inequity has been perpetuated in America—the funding of public schools through property taxes, red lining, mass incarceration, the list goes

on.

Here at Friends of Guest House, we work in the space of mass incarceration. In the last 40 years in our home state of Virginia, the women's prison population has increased by more than 900%. We see that, too. Every year we get more than 400 applications for just 60 spots in our Residential Program.

And we see the role race plays. Our clients come from all over the state of Virginia. Though nearly half of our clients are white (49%) a disproportionate number are Black (40%). Black people make up just 19% of Virginia's total population, yet 40% of the justice-involved women in our program are Black. Friends, it doesn't add up. Want to learn more about why? (HINT: Black people don't commit crimes at a higher rate than others). Read Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*.

Our mission is simple: to provide formerly incarcerated women the structure, supervision, support, and assistance they need to move beyond who they were to become who they want to be. Each year, thanks to supporters like you, we invest in formerly incarcerated women to give them the opportunity to achieve freedom, true freedom. Freedom from repeat incarcerations, community supervision, onerous fines and fees.

To the Black women we serve: we see you, we hear you, we will continue to invest in you, we love you. We promise to educate ourselves on how to serve you better.

To the Black women who work with us: we see you, we hear you, we love you. We promise to educate ourselves on how to be better co-workers.

Invest in the women we serve

[DONATE](#)

Friends of Guest House
www.friendsofquesthouse.org

