



Friends of  
GUEST HOUSE

## SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER

### April 27: Join Guest House and Our Community for Spring2ACTion!

Mark your calendar for Wednesday, April 27: this year's Spring2ACTion, Alexandria's Giving Day, hosted by ACT for Alexandria! Through Spring2ACTion, you can help Friends of Guest House reach our \$100,000 goal—to help formerly incarcerated Northern Virginia women successfully reenter our community, also helping women still behind bars. This year, your Spring2ACTion donation to Guest House will focus on the areas of mental health and substance-use treatment—both desperately needed, as more than 90% of our women identify as substance abusers and most have histories of trauma, abuse and emotional disorders. Matching grants from generous donors will be announced soon on our website ([www.friendsofguesthouse.org](http://www.friendsofguesthouse.org)). So please, help us raise \$100,000 to address the critical needs of Northern Virginia's reentering women!

**How to give:** This is a virtual fundraiser. Give anytime until midnight on April 27. Or give early, starting on April 13. To donate, go to [www.spring2action.org/organizations/friends-of-guest-house](http://www.spring2action.org/organizations/friends-of-guest-house). Thank you!

### Jane Hess Collins & Heard: Telling the “Silent Stories”



Jane Hess Collins

Every week, Monday through Friday 9–5, Guest House Residential clients participate in our Workforce & Life Development (WLD) Program. There, they take high-immersion courses ranging from job hunting to on-the-job conduct, from healthy relationships to financial management.

But for one hour twice a week, the women get to let loose—in art class.

“They love it! They find ways to express themselves,” says WLD Coordinator Melanie Brumfield. Unlike art therapy, Melanie explains, “which is more about unpacking things, these classes are really about exploring and having fun.”

And on a deeper level, explains Jane Hess Collins, founder of the Alexandria-based nonprofit offering the classes, “the Guest House women want to be heard. They want people to know they are resilient and they’re going to make it, no matter what happened before. They have stories to tell. These show up in their art.”

Art as a platform for the otherwise “silent stories” of marginalized adults was Jane's inspiration in founding (and naming) her nonprofit, Heard, in 2017. “Because,” as she says, “everyone deserves to be heard.”

Doing good and making art are in Jane's DNA. Her mother is an award-winning painter in Ohio. Her late father, a small business owner, annually gave 1% of his  
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#### More Spring2ACTion Events ...

Wednesday, April 13

**Art Exhibit & Reception**

6–8 p.m.

**Principle Gallery**

208 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314

Come meet the artists and view the art of the women of Friends of Guest House—learning more about our arts programs, too. No admission charge, but in honor of this first day of Spring2ACTion you might want to make a donation while you're there.

**R.S.V.P.** to Melanie Brumfield, [melanie@friendsofguesthouse.org](mailto:melanie@friendsofguesthouse.org), 571-482-0098. Or just drop in!

Saturday, April 23

Join us at fibre space on Saturday, April 23: 11 am–2 pm. Shop their sample sale of hand-knit and crocheted items. Proceeds will benefit the Friends of Guest House Spring2ACTion campaign. See you there! 1319 Prince St., Alexandria, VA 22314.





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company's earnings to a poor village in Haiti; over the years, those relatively modest donations fed hungry children, built a well, installed electricity and more. "What I learned from him and what guides me," Jane says now, "is it doesn't take an incredible amount of resources sometimes to have a tremendous impact."

So it was that, starting in 2009, when she retired with the rank of colonel after 20 years in the Air Force, Jane "wanted to write about nonprofits and doing good." One thing led to another—charity writing and reporting, a graduate communications degree from Georgetown—and eventually she decided to start Heard.

For its classes at Guest House, Heard provides the art instructors and materials and tailors the format to our program. Similarly, it fields art instruction to about 15 other local partners. Heard contracts 12 instructors. Classes span visual arts, creative writing, public speaking, singing, improvisation, dance—and even etiquette. All are expressive; all are packed with life skills, too.

Heard has been a valued Guest House partner since 2017, and Jane personally has been a generous donor. "When Jane came to us with this idea about classes, it was like, *how soon* can we start? And her classes have been the most consistent and creative over time of any of our Workforce classes! She's an enormously important partner in so many ways," says Guest House Executive Director Kari Galloway.

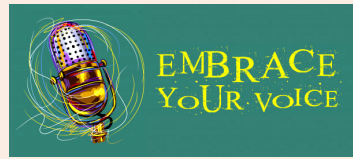
"Guest House has a certain draw for me," Jane concludes. "I know these women are really committed to succeeding, so I want to give them every resource I can to help."

Learn more at [heardnova.org](http://heardnova.org).



Heard clients have fun! Here, a group basks in the success of their spoken word performance.

### Help Commemorate National Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Month



#### Poetry Slam • April 25

April is the National Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Month. And on Monday evening, April 25, Friends of Guest House will join the City of Alexandria's Sexual Assault Center and Doorways for Women and Families in hosting "Embrace Your Voice": a poetry share by survivors, including Guest House women. Most incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women have experienced sexual assault.

"Embrace Your Voice" will take place 6:30–8:00 p.m. on the 25th. You can attend virtually. Or join the group at the Lee Center, 1108 Jefferson St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Admission is free, but donations will be accepted. Register at [www.eventbrite.com/e/embrace-your-voice-2022-poetry-share-tickets-277773838027](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/embrace-your-voice-2022-poetry-share-tickets-277773838027)



At an exhibit of Guest House clients' work, everyone felt proud to wear the badge, "Artist": a sign of talent and hard work.

# Aleyda: "I Was Able to Finally Be a Parent"

Aleyda's story is one of survival, surmounting enormous (sometimes Kafka-esque) barriers and—above all—persistent motherhood. It was for her newborn and toddler that she "first got into trouble," as she says, stealing small sums of money and basics like clothing: the most common crimes of poverty among women. Through multiple incarcerations and custody losses, it was also love for her children that propelled her to stability and consistent involvement in the life of her older son (adopted out) and the day, in December 2016, when her younger son came home for good.

"That was a big 360 for me," Aleyda recounts. "I was able to finally be a parent. That's been my motivation: working and saving as much as I can to make sure my son doesn't go through things that I went through."



**"My motivation: working and saving as much as I can to make sure my son doesn't go through things that I went through."**

Aleyda and her sons, younger (top) and more recent (bottom).



Now 33, Aleyda grew up in Alexandria. "When I was four years old," she says, "I got removed from my parents because I was abused—then I went into foster care, where the same thing happened." At 18, her first opportunity, she signed herself out of the

system. She had survived.

Without support, life skills or a high school diploma, she nevertheless found a job at the then-\$7.25 minimum wage. At 19 and 21, she gave birth to her sons. Eventually, need and opportunity collided and "I started taking money from the company where I worked. Also, I started stealing clothes and stuff like that." She was arrested a number of times, with sentences escalating to the longest incarceration: three years. When that latter began, in 2010, her older son was placed in foster care and her younger son went to his father's family.

Thereafter, as Aleyda worked mightily to build a stable life, barrier after barrier arose. In 2010, for example, the court had told her she could have her sons back when she was released and resettled; but in 2013, that same court gave her just four months post-release to find a job and housing—an impossible timeframe for someone with a criminal record—so she lost her eldest to adoption. Those same four months overlapped with the Guest House Residential Program, which she'd entered trying to better her life; but she couldn't both stay at Guest House and fulfill the court's requirements (like housing for her sons), so she prioritized her quest for her children and left the Guest House ... but lost her children anyway. She returned to our program a year later. Fortunately, and unusually, Aleyda's older son's adoptive family has kept Aleyda in his life. As to her younger son, "it took me four years to get him back." Four years with way too much struggle, not to mention absurdity. Housing for kids was required for custody; but when she applied for such housing, she was told her *current* lack of custody disqualified her. On a home visit, a social worker cited Aleyda for insufficient furnishings—furnishings already on order, to be delivered in two weeks, in time for her son's arrival. Aleyda persisted and "finally, a new judge saw *me*—my progress, my change—and granted me custody." Ever since, Aleyda says, she and her sons have done well.

Soon, Guest House looks forward to welcoming Aleyda to our staff as a Residential Specialist. Who better? "Like I tell other women: I was there, I know what you all are going through."



**Essie Marble joined the Guest House team in 2013 and was a loyal and dedicated employee for nearly a decade. Unfortunately, she passed away in February and we miss her—her smile, wit, kindness and compassion for the women we serve. Essie was Mississippi born and an educator and someone we could always rely on to come in and stay until the work was done. And she was always one for a good conversation and provided lots of laughter! Rest in peace, dear and kind friend.**

### Volunteer Mentors Needed!

Many of our volunteers have dedicated themselves to serving as mentors for our residents (like Patsy: with Hollye, below). Mentors share knowledge, provide essential social support and help their mentees identify goals; and together, they explore the resources and the enjoyment Alexandria offers. Residents have been eager to match with mentors. Just since February, we've made 20 mentor/mentee matches—thanks to these amazing volunteers! We'd love to welcome more mentors. If you're interested, contact Katie Shapiro, Volunteer Coordinator at (703) 473-5804 or [katherine@friendsofguesthouse.org](mailto:katherine@friendsofguesthouse.org).



What makes Friends of Guest House so special in Northern Virginia? Many things. We focus on pre- and post-release assistance to women—which must include help with ...

### The 5 Pillars of Liveability For Reentering Women



Housing



Employment

Healthcare



Education



Reconnection



Learn more about Friends of Guest House and how to help at [www.friendsofguesthouse.org](http://www.friendsofguesthouse.org)



# Please Support Friends of Guest House!

Guest House is Virginia's largest incarceration-to-community reentry program for women. In Northern Virginia, we are the only such program offering services that are both comprehensive and tailored to women's unique needs. We address "the five pillars of liveability" for reentering women: housing, employment, healthcare, education and reconnection. Since our founding in 1974, Guest House has helped more than 4,000 women—indirectly benefiting their 6,500 children, too, as some 80% of incarcerated women are mothers.

And the Guest House program works! Nationally, just 30% of formerly incarcerated people stay out of jail; compared to the 85% of Guest House graduates who never reoffend again. We offer many donation options (at right). Please help!



**DONATE BY MAIL:** Return the enclosed remittance envelope with your check, payable to "Friends of Guest House."

**DONATE ONLINE:** [bit.ly/foghdonate](https://bit.ly/foghdonate)

**DONATE MONTHLY:** Monthly donors reliably ensure that every client receives the help, the supportive community and, as a result, the second chance she deserves. Go to [bit.ly/foghdonate](https://bit.ly/foghdonate) and select "Make this a monthly donation."

**WORKPLACE GIVING:** Through workplace giving, you can designate a portion of your paycheck to Friends of Guest House. Guest House is a member of the United Way (UW #8583) and Combined Federal Campaign (CFC #69155). Also check your employer's matching gift program to double or even triple your gift: usually, you submit a Matching Gift Request to the HR or Benefits Department.

**STOCK AND IRA:** Friends of Guest House welcomes gifts in the form of stock, mutual funds and IRA Qualified Charitable Distributions. To make a stock/IRA gift, notify your broker/financial advisor as well as Kari Galloway, executive director of Guest House, at [director@friendsofguesthouse.org](mailto:director@friendsofguesthouse.org) or 703-549-8072.

**BEQUESTS BY WILL:** Many people choose to leave a legacy gift to Friends of Guest House to support second chances for women committed to change. All it takes is a quick phone call to your lawyer to add Friends of Guest House as a charitable designation in your will. If you include Guest House in your plans, please use our legal name, Friends of Guest House, Inc., and Federal Tax ID: 51-0201327.



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