



# KEEPING UP WITH Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center

SPRING 2019  
NEWSLETTER

FRIENDSOFAMHC@GMAIL.COM



## What is Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center?

Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center (AMHC) is a non-profit organization founded in 1984 on the knowledge that community makes a significant difference for those living with a mental health condition on their path to recovery.

Friends offers a safety net for low-income 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. Donations also enable Friends to support social activities at the West End Wellness Center and to engage the broader community through anti-stigma events.



## What is the Community Services Board?

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 the age of 20. The CSB is part of the Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS).

[www.alexandria.gov/DCHS](http://www.alexandria.gov/DCHS)

## INSIDER VIEW SERIES

# City Leaders Value Friends' Support

An interview with Carol Layer, Executive Director of the Alexandria Community Services Board and Director of the DCHS Center for Adult Services



BACKGROUND MASTHEAD GRAPHIC DESIGNED BY TIRACHARD / FREEPK

### Q: Why are Friends and its donors so critical to the work of the City's mental health professionals?

The City does so much to treat low-income residents with mental health conditions, but there are basic life necessities—things that are critical to recovery or a sense of well-being—that we just can't cover. So when a client can't afford, for example, dental work or transportation to the doctor or even educational activities, we turn to Friends to help fill the gap. Not only does Friends' support help us keep clients on track health-wise,

it lets some of Alexandria's most vulnerable individuals and families know there is a community out there that cares.

### Q: What are some examples of Friends' support making a real impact?

There are so many. In fact, when I asked staff to give me some examples, I was deluged with stories as well as gratitude for Friends. I'll just give you a couple that I think represent why Friends support is so singularly valued.

We had a client who had been sleeping on an air mattress with no

linens or pillows. The City had no budget per se to buy this woman a bed or other basic items, so we turned to Friends. And they came through. Better sleep has greatly improved this woman's quality of life. She told us that she "feels like a human being now."

We also had a young man released from jail to a homeless shelter and then to a group home, where he finally built enough skills to move to his own apartment. But due to a bureaucratic error with his disability income, he was unable to pay the \$100 security deposit and almost missed his opportunity. Friends, which amazingly can respond to requests within 24 hours, covered the deposit and he was able to move. This in turn freed up a bed in the group home for someone else.

### Q: What else do you want Friends' donors to know?

I'd like to reiterate how valuable their support is beyond the financial aspect. Social support has been proven to be a key part of recovery from mental illness. Friends donations give clients who have no one else to turn to a sense that they are cared for and that there is hope. That makes a huge difference in people's lives. ♥



Spring2ACTION

Alexandria's Giving Day

Presented by ACT for Alexandria

## Spring to Action for Friends on April 10!

It's that time of year! Alexandria's annual day of giving, Spring2ACTION, is set for April 10. For 24 hours, residents, families and even out-of-state supporters can donate to local non-profits that make Alexandria a healthier, safer more generous community. Please take this opportunity to support Friends and show some of Alexandria's most vulnerable residents that their community cares! ♥

**DONATE ONLINE!**

**DONATE ONLINE STARTING MARCH 27!**

**GVGB.CO/FRIENDSOFTEAMHC**

Or visit [Spring2ACTION.org](http://Spring2ACTION.org) and search for "Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center"

**TO CONTRIBUTE BY CHECK: Make payable to "Friends of the AMHC," note "Spring2ACTION" and mail to 720 N. Saint Asaph St, Alexandria, VA 22314**

## FRIENDS BOARD MEMBERS

Rebecca Grueneberger,  
Co-Chair  
Mary C. Ray, LCSW, Co-Chair  
Marian Wiggins, Treasurer  
Rebecca Bradford  
Susan Drachsler  
Margee Eife, Med., ATBC  
Libby-Eife Johnson  
Afewerk Eshetu  
Lacey Graham  
Elizabeth Livingston  
Val Reilly  
Katherine Richards,  
LCSW, LCSW-C  
Daniel L. Sweeney, Jr.  
Laurie Wilkison

## RECOGNITION GIFTS

### Friends received recent donations in memory of:

Bruce Thompson

### Friends received recent donations in honor of:

Nancy Kincaid

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

**Mental Health Insurance Information**  
Enroll Virginia  
703.364.9456

**Intake for Adult Mental Health, Developmental Disability, and Substance Use Disorders Services**  
703.746.3535

**24/7 Emergency Mental Health Services**  
703.746.3401

## THANK YOU

We are pleased to thank the following bakeries and grocery stores for generously donating refreshments to our holiday shopping event (see story at right):

Best Buns Bread Company,  
Village at Shirlington

Buzz Bakeshop, Slaters Lane  
Safeway, King Street

Shoppers Market, Potomac Yard Center

The Happy Tart, Falls Church

**HELP US BE GREEN!**  
Send us your email address!  
FRIENDSOFAMHC@GMAIL.COM



## Survey Says Mental Health Matters Most

**“What do your fellow Alexandrians think are the most important health issues for our community?”**

More than 1,600 residents answered the above question as part of an extensive survey conducted by the Health Department in Fall 2018.

The most frequent answer? Mental health problems.

Like most experts, Alexandrians believe that mental health is critical to a person’s general health.

When breaking the responses out by segment, the result is nearly the same. Mental health (depression, anxiety, stress, suicide) was, with few exceptions, the most common answer among all demographic groups and across all but two of the city’s zip codes. In the instances for

which it was not the number one response, it ranked either second or third.

The third ranked answer—differences in health outcomes for different groups of people—also aligns with Friends’ mission of supporting low-income Alexandrians with mental health issues.

The City’s therapists and case managers continue to emphasize to Friends the importance of financial stability to successful treatment and recovery.

The generosity of Friends’ donors allows us to reduce some of the stress that individuals and families at the lower end of the economic

spectrum face when they encounter emergency or extraordinary financial needs.

As part of its ongoing Community Health Assessment project, the Health Department has done an exceptional job of designing and administering the survey (in nine languages). They are also reviewing data and working with local stakeholders to develop a complete picture of health in Alexandria. The full results of the Assessment will be available in June.

To view the survey results in more detail, visit [www.healthmattersalexandria.org](http://www.healthmattersalexandria.org), and click on Community Health Survey Results. ♥

## Friends in the Community

### Holiday Shoppers Support Friends

On December 6, 2018, Ten Thousand Villages in Old Town held a shopping event to benefit Friends. We were thrilled with the turnout and grateful to the many community members who purchased gifts knowing a portion of the proceeds would benefit low-income Alexandrians with mental health conditions. ♥



Former Alexandria Mayor Allison Silberberg (right) joined the holiday event to show her support for mental health.



### 100 Women Care About Friends

100 Women Who Care Northern Virginia is a giving circle for women who want to pool their philanthropic resources to support worthy local non-profits. The group meets four times a year to choose an organization to support, and then each member contributes toward a combined gift that makes a powerful impact. At its February meeting, 100 Women chose Friends as its newest beneficiary! We are so grateful for their generosity, as well as their unique approach to making a meaningful difference in the lives of Northern Virginians. ♥

## 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.