



Summer Newsletter 2021

From the Board President

Dear Friend,

Having just passed the halfway point of 2021, I have seen the Friends In Deed programs, services, and staff members as busy as ever. This critical work is made possible due to the generosity of thousands of supporters each year.

One way we hope you will get involved is with [Jazz on the Screen](#), our annual fundraising event coming up August 24th-28th. A virtual version of Jazz on the Green, usually held in person at Castle Green, this is a time for us to celebrate together, honor local FID supporters and volunteers, and raise much-needed funding for a worthy cause. Keep an eye out in the coming weeks for all of the exciting event details.

I am happy to share with you our Summer Newsletter, which is full of stories and inspiration. Read on and enjoy your summer!

Bret Schaefer
Board President, Friends In Deed



Stories from Our Programs **Trust**

Help That Lasts - Rosemary's Story

Back in January 2021 we told the FID community about Ms. Rosemary, a lady in her 80s who had been homeless for 14

years, and who had begun to come to The Women's Room. At first she would only shower and then sit in a corner and read, but eventually she began to come out of her shell and join in with more of the activities. We worked with her to get her into housing, and she said she didn't care what the place was like as long as she had a corner where she could put a rocking chair and a bookcase for her books!



Just before the pandemic hit, The Women's Room found Rosemary a place in a shared townhouse in Pasadena. Since living there she has had a stroke, but has made a full recovery - something that would have been very unlikely had she still been living on the streets.

Just recently Marlene received a thank-you card from Ms. Rosemary, with a lovely picture of a sunflower. In the card, Ms. Rosemary wrote:

*"Why did it take so long to write this?
Because I didn't believe it would last."*

So many of our clients are terribly damaged by years of trauma. It is a great privilege to bring them to a good place they can trust to last.



Sweet Treats - Elle's Story

Elle has worked with Friends In Deed before. Mostly she gets by pretty well, but her work tends to be seasonal and occasionally she is blindsided by life. When she does need a helping hand, Friends In Deed is ready to keep her on her feet!

On this occasion, Elle had an unexpected benefits cut and then some much-needed dental work that left her unable to make rent.

Fortunately, Ryan, Director of Eviction Prevention and Rental Assistance, was able to step in and tide her over.

Elle is a baker by trade, and she was so grateful for the assistance that she baked us a cake (pictured above with Ryan). The staff at our Lake Avenue office reports that it was absolutely delicious!

Taking Stock - The Women's Room and COVID-19

As The Women's Room cautiously begins to bring back some of the activities our guests love so much - the crafts, the meditation, and the games of bingo - the

TWR staff is taking stock of the experience of serving guests during the pandemic. Were we right to remain open? Or did our open-door policy expose our guests and staff to unnecessary risk?

Aside from a short period early on, The Women's Room has remained open throughout the pandemic, albeit with reduced capacity and extra safety precautions in place. But the brief closure was an eye-opening experience.

Sometimes it feels like the amount we are able to do to help our clients is negligible compared to the enormous amount of need they have. But, upon reopening, TWR staff members Marlene and Jane discovered just how much their services had been missed. Guests spoke of how much more complicated their lives had become when the services they relied on were unavailable and even the libraries and Starbucks restrooms were closed. The mental health of some of our guests deteriorated sharply and they reverted to risk-taking behaviors that they are normally able to avoid.

Marlene and Jane say that their relationships with their guests have really grown and deepened during the pandemic. Despite the risk and the stress involved with staying open, the joy that the guests bring, their excitement in resuming activities, and the way in which the mental health of some of our regulars has stabilized, leaves no doubt at all that it is very much worth it.



A Relationship of Trust - Dana's Story

Dana is one of those clients who illustrates just how important it is to build up a relationship. Sometimes a client gets a reputation for being "difficult" - but often it is simply trauma from the past that makes it hard for them to believe that they are not going to be let down again.

One of the necessary first steps to housing is to get the client's documentation in order, and this was a big sticking point because Dana really did not want anyone to know her personal information. Fortunately, Jane, The Women's Room Associate, patiently spent many months building a relationship with Dana, which brought her to a place where she was able to trust us with that information. Jane says that when a relationship like this happens, it is "transformative for both parties." A journey like this is incredibly difficult for a client no matter how much support they get, and Jane is very proud of Dana for the hard work she did to get to this place.

Dana moved into a motel as a temporary solution. Jane, along with Housing Specialist Najwa, then worked to get her into housing. As

you see from the picture above, Jane took Dana to sign her lease and get her keys this week, and at the time of writing she is moving into her new apartment!

It is through your generosity that we are able to provide these programs and services.

[Donate today](#)



To sponsor, donate, or learn more, please visit our [Jazz on the Screen website!](#)

Stories from Our Volunteers

Veteran and Newbie Volunteers

66 Years Ago - Jean's Story

We met Jean on her 97th birthday last week, and she told us about volunteering with Friends In Deed back in 1955! Rabbi Joshua chats with Jean about her experiences in this lovely short video.



Holiday Queen - Celia's Story

Celia has been volunteering in The Women's Room (TWR) for an impressive ten years, ever since she retired from teaching. At first she wasn't certain, and drove past the building several times trying to decide whether or not to commit her time and talents. We are very grateful that she did!

Her love of holidays is especially well known. It is Celia (pictured in Halloween costume, right, with TWR Associate, Jane) who decorates TWR for every possible holiday. If you visit Friends In Deed House at Halloween, be prepared to see Celia's car in the parking lot with a full-size skeleton in the passenger seat!



Celia also hones her baking skills preparing treats for the ladies, and her favorite times in TWR are the big Thanksgiving and Christmas parties we have every year. She also says it is a "deep joy" when guests return after an extended absence and share the stories of how they have been doing.

Celia says that her enforced absence during the pandemic was "horrible" - she worried about our guests constantly - and she is very, very happy and grateful to be back.

Meeting Needs - Niall's Story

An Irishman who has been living in the States for 29 years, Niall found himself noticing the Friends In Deed building, FID House, every time he drove past. Then he started dropping off food donations, and got to know Director of The Food Pantry, Tim. He wanted to join our volunteers, but at the time we had all the help we needed. But now,



finally, he has reached the top of the waiting list and has been volunteering in the Food Pantry for a month!

Niall feels he brings a kind of naivety to his work in the Food Pantry - not yet understanding the needs of the people we work with, but willing to learn and to be involved in a part of the community he didn't previously know much about.

He is getting a lot of satisfaction from figuring out how he can serve our clients - from the older gentleman who has to eat a gluten-

free diet (Niall now makes sure he keeps aside some suitable food) to the parents of young children who ask for candy. The first time this happened Niall thought we had no candy available, and the children's disappointment is still with him. Now he makes sure he always knows where the candy is so he won't be caught out again.

PROGRAMS

Bad Weather Shelter (BWS)

Providing cold-weather support for our neighbors experiencing homelessness

Eviction Prevention and Rental Assistance (EPRA)

Short- and medium-term rental support to prevent eviction

Food Pantry

Dignified grocery shopping experience for 350+ households weekly

Street Outreach & Housing

Team of workers on the streets engaging with our neighbors experiencing homelessness and connecting them to services

The Women's Room (TWR)

Daytime shelter for homeless and at-risk women

STAFF

Rabbi Joshua Levine Grater, Executive Director
 Marty Campolo, Deputy Director & Grants Officer
 Merria Velasco, Director of Development
 Helen Angove, Operations Manager
 Marlene Martinez, Director of TWR
 Tim Nistler, Director of The Food Pantry
 William Shelby, Director of Street Outreach and Housing
 Ryan Greer, Director of EPRA
 Stacey Cutshaw, Food Pantry Manager
 Najwa Payton Jones, Housing Navigator and Outreach Specialist
 Jane Ambruster, TWR Program Associate
 Angel Maxwell, Street Outreach Worker
 Michael Jaimes, Street Outreach Worker

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Friends In Deed

is committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion. We embrace and celebrate the spectrum of our employees', volunteers', and clients' ages, color, ability or disability, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender identity or expression, language, national origin, physical and mental ability, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, neurodiversity, and other characteristics that make our employees, volunteers, and clients unique.