

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.

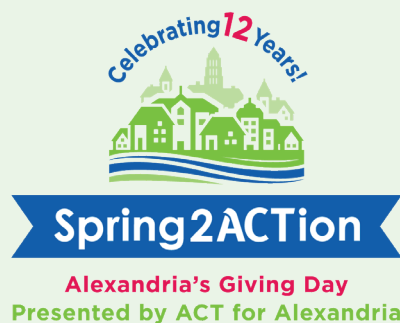
ABOUT THE CSB



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).

Spring2ACTion for Friends on April 27!



It's that time of year!

Alexandria's annual day of giving, Spring2ACTion, is set for **April 27**. For 24 hours, residents, families and even out-of-state supporters will donate to local non-profits that make Alexandria a healthier, safer, more generous community.

Please take this opportunity to support Friends. **Early giving period starts April 13!**



spring2action.org/organizations/friends-of-the-alexandria-mental-health-center

To donate by check, make it payable to Friends of AMHC and mail to:
2525 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria, VA 22301

Highlighting your Donations' Impact in the Last Year

"JADA"

— a CSB client in mental health outpatient treatment was approved for housing. Friends provided the security deposit which allowed her to secure the apartment.

"BETTY"

— a CSB client in her sixties, was unable to afford the full amount of her rent for January and February. She had to spend more money on food due to soup kitchens and other regular sources of donated food initially closing at the start of the pandemic. Friends was able to meet this need, preserving housing stability for Betty.

ANTHONY

“Thank you for buying my bed. Not only do I get an occasional good night's sleep, but with my knee, it makes it easier to go to bed and to get up. Thanks again.”

Anthony had fallen and injured his knee while walking to work.

"LAILA"

— CSB client with children, lost work hours due to the need to homeschool her kids during the pandemic. She was faced with her electricity being disconnected. She requested assistance the day before disconnection. Friends was able to assist and prevent the emergency.

A staff member at the West End Wellness Center wrote, “Today, I took five members to the movies. They were so grateful to have a social outing. One remarked that she hadn't been to a movie in 20+ years. With your support, we provided socialization for individuals who don't always feel included in what others may consider 'normal' life.”

Friends paid for swim lessons for a child with developmental disabilities. His therapist said he needed more activities outside the home, but his mother's income only covers living expenses. Because of caring donors like you, Friends was able to give this child an enriching and potentially lifesaving experience.

FRIENDS BOARD MEMBERS

Anna Dvorchik,
Co-Chair

Mary C. Ray, LCSW,
Co-Chair

Marian Wiggins, Treasurer

Kedryn Berrian

Adam Bloom-Paicopolos

Rebecca Bradford

Libby-Eife Johnson

Afewerk Eshetu

Elizabeth Livingston

Val Reilly

Hon. Allison Silberberg

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

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

Mental Health Services Need Your Support

Friends, you may have come across a recent Washington Post article discussing the lack of beds for children and adults experiencing mental health crises. The pandemic has taxed mental health resources to a breaking point. State hospitals are losing employees, and private hospitals at times refuse to admit challenging cases. Patients languish in emergency rooms waiting for beds, accompanied by police officers. This taxes our emergency services system and takes police officers off the street. One Fairfax County officer remarked that the parking lot at INOVA Fairfax Hospital looks like a police precinct lot due to the number of mental health calls the police respond to.

This is not a new issue, but it has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Virtually all Alexandrians know and love individuals who have a mental illness and often find themselves at a loss when they call for service and their loved ones cannot receive help despite the best efforts of first responders and the Mental Health Center. Alexandria does not have psychiatric hospital beds and relies on private hospitals and state facilities, so all hospitalizations are out of the City. Once a patient is stable, there are not enough



outpatient and residential options for them after discharge. This leads to cyclical rehospitalization.

The current situation has led to staff attrition at the state hospitals and many of the local mental health centers are short-staffed, too.

Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center is calling on you for action. Please contact your local, state and federal representatives and make it known that funding must be provided to support families and individuals affected by mental illness. The Commonwealth of Virginia must invest in the system and support communities. Recent regional initiatives include two new crises centers in Prince William and Loudoun Counties. Both will add beds to our region, and we should encourage our state representatives to fully fund these projects.

Thank you for being a Friends supporter!

Alexandria is represented by the following individuals:

United States Congressman and Senators
Don Beyer, United States Congressman Virginia’s 8th District; Mark Warner, United States Senator; Tim Kaine, United States Senator

State Executive Branch
Glenn Youngkin, Governor; Winsome Sears, Lieutenant Governor; Jason Miyares, Virginia Attorney General

State Senator and Delegates
Adam Ebbin, Virginia State Senator; Richard Saslaw, Virginia State Senator; Charniele Herring, Virginia State Delegate; Elizabeth Bennet-Parker, Virginia State Delegate

Mayor and City Council
Justin Wilson, Mayor; Amy Jackson, Vice Mayor; Canek Aguire, Councilman; Sarah Bagley, Councilmember; John Chapman, Councilman; Alyia Gaskins, Councilwoman; and Kirk McPike, Councilman

Call for Donations and Volunteers



To make a difference with Friends, Anna Dvorchik and Mary Ray, current co chairs of Friends invite you who feel the calling to volunteer with us. We especially need a treasurer as ours is retiring.

A check of any amount may be sent to:
Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center
2525 Mount Vernon Avenue
Alexandria, Virginia 22301
Donors may also donate online through Spring2ACTion on April 27, 2022.

West End Wellness Center Reopened

With the easing of the pandemic, resources are becoming available again through traditional access points. We are glad to announce that the West End Wellness Center (WEWC) has reopened. COVID-19 physical distancing brought into the public eye the negative effects of social isolation on mental and physical health. When socially isolated people lack friends or close coworkers, they often feel lonely or depressed.

They can suffer from low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. The WEWC welcomes back its members to a place where individuals participating in behavioral health programs can gather again for a variety of social, educational, vocational, recreational and recovery purposes.

