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Nonprofit: Freedom House helps moms overcome addictions

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By Ruth D. Anderson Nonprofits



Courtesy of Houston Core

Ann Thomsson, founder of Freedom House, with a child from one of the families served.



After a chaotic upbringing and then the death of her beloved grandfather, Heather Webb turned to drugs to ease the pain.

“For 12 years, I rode the crazy train of addiction,” she said. “Finally, I reached my bottom when my destructive lifestyle led me to jail for my third DUI.”

She was 8 months pregnant with her second child, and Social Services had removed her 15-month-old from her care.

“In jail, I realized how lost I was — without anyone or anything to help me,” Webb said. “I cried out to God from the depths of my despair, and he delivered me and led me to Freedom House.”

Freedom House, a nonprofit, provides a home where women and their children live together in a supportive, structured, Christian environment as the mothers work on their recovery from drug and alcohol

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Freedom House offers a 9- to 12-month program where women overcome their addictions and reunite with their families.

“After completing the Freedom House program, our mothers return to mainstream society as productive citizens, free from the addictions that once threatened their lives and able to provide an environment where their children can flourish,” Houston said.

At Freedom House, the women and children receive shelter, food, clothing, transportation, case management and employment training, along with a Christian 12-Step Program with substance abuse counseling.

Life skills education in parenting, employment, and money management is also provided for each participant.

“I have personally witnessed changed lives in both mothers and children and am very passionate about my work at Freedom House and encourage others to learn more about this life-saving organization,” said Misty Waldroup, volunteer and member of the board of directors.

Many rehab centers don’t allow children to go with their mothers.

“We house more children than mothers at Freedom House,” said Ann Thomsson, founder and member of the Freedom House Board. “An important part of our work is teaching basic parenting skills.”

“We believe it is invaluable to have a safe place for the children,” said Dr. Kenneth Crawford, a donor and board member. “These children have seen the carnage that drugs have on their moms. It is important for them to see how hard their mothers will work to fight this addiction so they can be better parents.”

Another thing that sets Freedom House apart is the cost, he said.

Other than a \$500 admission fee, which is refunded upon completion of the program as a down payment on housing, Freedom House is free to residents.

“A lot of facilities are over \$100 a day,” Crawford said.

And Freedom House also has a spiritual focus, Crawford said.

addiction.

The women complete an educational program that helps them understand addiction and how to break free from behaviors and beliefs that contributed to their destructive lifestyles.

“Freedom House is able to provide young children who are in danger of losing their mothers to addiction with an opportunity to grow up in a fully restored environment where they can thrive,” said Houston Core, executive director of Freedom House.

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"We do not get any government money," he said. "We believe, at the very least, if these ladies are exposed to Christ, who loves them unconditionally, they will be better off than when they entered. Most of the ladies have never heard of this kind of love and have never seen it in action. It is life-changing."

The three Freedom House Thrift Stores — at 3724 Battleground Ave., 4639 W. Market St. and 1312 Bridford Parkway in Greensboro — support the work of Freedom House financially and as a place for work-skills training, Waldroup said.

"Most of the mothers that enter our program have never had a job," Core said. "When they leave Freedom House, they have the skills they need to obtain a good job and are capable of providing for their families."

Webb is excited about her future.

"I am the mother of two of the most awesome children ever, and I get to take part in their life every day," she said. "I just got married to a wonderful, godly man who loves us unconditionally."

She's in school part time to receive a degree in substance-abuse counseling and recently received state certification as a peer-support specialist.

She looks forward to helping help "others struggling with addiction to reach their own recovery and find their own healing," Webb said.

Volunteers are involved in every aspect of Freedom House.

Needs include child care, transportation, general office work, assisting at the thrift stores, and maintenance and general upkeep of the two homes.

Volunteer training is offered the last Wednesday of each month.

Also, donations of goods to the thrift stores are always welcome, Waldroup said.

"I feel blessed to have the opportunity to work for an organization that rescues, restores and redeems lives every day," Core said.

Ruth D. Anderson is executive director of the Servant Leadership School of Greensboro and member of the Program Committee of the Guilford Nonprofit Consortium.

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