

# Program transforms young mothers

By Ogi Overman / Special to the News & Record | Posted: Wednesday, July 8, 2015 10:23 am

Since 2006, Freedom House has been giving young, unwed Greensboro-area mothers a chance to overcome their drug and alcohol addictions and become responsible parents.

This transformation is accomplished in a residential, structured and, most of all, Christian environment.

“When we get them they have no life skills, no job, no money, no future, no hope — and on top of that have a young child (or two) and are fighting a drug addiction,” says director Houston Core.

“And a year later, when they graduate from our program, they have a job, a car, parenting skills, a healthy and happy child, and are clean and sober. You literally would not recognize many of them from the time they came here.”

Freedom House combines faith-based and 12-step models. It also accepts the mother’s children (up to age 10) so the family stays together.

Each of its two residences houses three families. After a year’s stay, it also offers an aftercare program that may last up to four years.

“All our programs are tailored to fit the individual,” Core says. “We have a general curriculum with homework, we have 12-step meetings in-house, life-skills training, one-on-one counseling, and we pile in the vans and attend Daystar Church on Westover Terrace.”

Residents don’t have to be Christians, she says.

“We’re not trying to convert anybody,” she says. “But they do have to understand coming in that that’s what we believe.”

A key component in the success of the mothers and the prosperity of the whole operation is the three Freedom House thrift stores on W. Market Street, Battleground Avenue and Bridford Parkway in Greensboro.

The stores provide a money for the program and full-time jobs for participants.

“For most of these girls, this is the first job they’ve ever had,” Core says. “Our hope is that the stores will provide all the funding we need for day-to-day operations of our program, so that when we go to our donors and supporters, all those funds will go toward growing the program and providing more services to more mothers and children.”

Freedom House, whose annual budget is just over \$600,000, is set to embark on an ambitious growth trajectory that will propel it from a two-house, three-store operation into a whole “campus of recovery.”



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Freedom House allows children (up to age 10) to stay with their mothers during their time in the recovery program.

“Our vision is a campus-style environment, with the office and a thrift store in front, four or five houses in back, possibly an aftercare house, and a play area and commons in the middle,” says Core, who holds a law degree from Samford University.

“Then, we would also like to open more single houses scattered around the Triad and more stores,” she says.

“We would like to saturate the area and be able to serve as many as 30 or 40 mothers at once, as opposed to six.”

In June, Freedom House hired Murphy Sullivan to be its director of development. She was most recently the associate director of the Greensboro Mental Health Association and before that the development director at Fellowship Hall, a residential substance abuse facility in Guilford County. She also worked in the White House as an aide to President Bill Clinton.

“This is an exciting opportunity for me,” she says. “I had gotten to know (founder) Ann Thomsson while at the mental health association and saw the necessary and beneficial work they were doing here. The need for this type of program is huge, and their results speak for themselves. I am honored to be a part of it and am anxious to get this capital campaign underway.”

In addition to the thrift stores, Sullivan says, Freedom House is supported by individuals, businesses, foundations and churches. It also holds an annual golf tournament, this year on Aug. 10, at Greensboro Country Club. It receives no government funding.

“This place of hope gives these young women all the tools they need to become the mothers they always wanted to be but didn’t know how,” says Sullivan. “Their mission statement says it all: ‘A long-term addiction recovery program that rescues, restores and redeems mothers and their children in a Christ-centered, family environment.’”

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