



Annual Report 2019



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Proud partner of the

LIVE UNITED



United Way of Lincoln
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FROM THE BOARD

Resiliency

As I'm writing this letter, it's almost hard to believe that 2019 was just a few months ago. In spite of the challenges and uncertainties we – along with so many others – are facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I take comfort in Fresh Start's solid foundation and the amazing group of individuals rallying around our mission.



Heading into 2020, Fresh Start focused on setting a vision for where we wanted Fresh Start to go in the future. What could the agency and program look like 10 or 15 years from now, and what would we need to do to get there?

To ensure the growth and sustainability of Fresh Start, we:

- Had active participation among staff members and the board of directors in two vision setting sessions.
- Formed a Sustainability Task Force to start implementing initial activities identified through the vision setting sessions.
- Paid off a building loan from the City of Lincoln.

Through the visioning process, we identified four core areas that would help Fresh Start thrive: debt elimination, capital improvements fund, program expansion fund, and fiscal growth and stability. Generous supporters added to our sustainability efforts by starting an endowed fund for Fresh Start at the Lincoln Community Foundation.

We were also busy adding to the foundation and structure of the board. We developed a comprehensive board manual, revised our bylaws, and solidified board member and committee job descriptions.

At the core of these efforts, was our drive to continue supporting the staff and residents at Fresh Start. Our staff provide essential services round-the-clock at the shelter. I'm always awestruck that 13 staff members (8 Full Time Equivalents) ensure we're able to have staffing available at Fresh Start 24/7.

The need for our program remains constant. In 2019, we helped 77 residents. We continue to have a waitlist, full of women waiting 3-6 months to join our program. Our hope is we'll continue to grow and enhance our services in years to come to reduce this wait, and offer the best program possible for every woman who comes through our doors.

No one is quite sure what the future will bring, but we continue to be thankful and humble for all the support we receive. Please contact us if you would like to become more involved in any of these efforts.

With appreciation,

ELIZABETH GEBHART-MORGAN

President of the 2019 Board of Directors

ALUMNA SPOTLIGHT

Hitting Rock Bottom

Before arriving at Fresh Start, I went through the 8 week addiction treatment program at St. Monica's. I had been struggling with alcohol addiction for the past 6 years. In July 2018 I finally hit Rock Bottom. I lost everything I owned over the past 49 years. I was homeless and slept under trees; I dug in restaurant and park dumpsters for food. I'm a woman that once had a career and made \$50,000 a year.



April is all smiles

On November 22, 2018 I was greeted at Fresh Start by (Fresh Start Program Coordinator) Meg. From that day forward, the atmosphere, case managers and staff were genuine and cared about each and every woman there. I was given encouragement, hope and motivation to turn my life around. Through donations from the community I received quality clothes, jewelry, purses, make-up, everything a lady needs to regain her dignity and self-worth. I considered it HOME for 13 months and saw many girls graduate and become successful in their lives. I firmly believe if it weren't for the staff's support, honestly caring, empathy, believing in my inner strength and True Agape Love I would have died out there under a tree.

APRIL

Fresh Start Alumna

After Rock Bottom

April is one of the 77 women who called Fresh Start their home in 2019. While at Fresh Start, April conquered homelessness by continuing her sobriety and managing her mental health. She built a positive support network of friends and colleagues, found employment, fixed her car, and received a homeless voucher from Lincoln Housing Authority. April tells people, "I'm in recovery and have over a year of sobriety. I'm in a much better place now." April has reconnected with her family through phone contact and looks forward to the day she can see her grandchildren in person.

When asked about her experience, April smiled and said "The name 'Fresh Start' is exactly right. It's what you can achieve if you are willing to put the effort in and make positive changes in your life. At Fresh Start, staff desire for every woman to make good choices and become successful members of society."

Fresh Start Core Values

Respect Accountability Individuality Stability Empowerment

2019 Statistics

79 residential stays

77 women in residence
unduplicated

82% yearly occupancy rate

7,196 nights of lodging

21,588 meals provided

1,161 case management
meetings

1,248 offerings of clothing and
personal care items

64% had an income at exit
compared to 16% at entry

52% saved money in a
Self Sufficiency Fund

43% moved into permanent
housing

413 days longest stay

2 days shortest stay

118 days average stay of
those who exited

39 average age

21 years youngest resident

59 years oldest resident

12th grade average education

94% report substance abuse

69% report mental health issues

43% report domestic violence

71% were involved with or
referred by legal system

9% report a disability

58% mothers

23% report belonging to a
racial or ethnic group

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Meg Damme Receives Award



Fresh Start staff member Meg Damme was honored with the 2019 Human Services Individual of the Year Award from the Lincoln Homeless Coalition. Meg has worked at Fresh Start since 2005, and has held a variety of positions. In her current role as Program Coordinator, she is in charge of program management and development, mentoring and coaching staff, direct service as needed, and more.

Meg constantly seeks out trainings and professional development for herself, as well as others. She has a passion for helping others that is evident in her work. In addition to her work at Fresh Start, Meg is on the Governor's Joint Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse, the local Emergency Food and Shelter Program Board, and the Family and Consumer Advisory Board, and has volunteered for projects to serve those escaping domestic violence or experiencing sexual abuse. A community partner described Meg as someone who is "kind and compassionate and never ceases to see the good in people. Her authenticity and passion make her someone people can turn to without fear of judgement." Congratulations, Meg, on this much deserved recognition.

Our Program

Fresh Start's mission is to provide a transitional shelter that empowers women experiencing homelessness to change their lives by recognizing and using their strengths to overcome barriers to self-sufficiency. This is done by providing a residential program with 24/7 staff support. Residents develop an individualized goal plan with a case manager who then advocates for them, holds them accountable, and celebrates successes with them.

Thoughts from our Alumna

"Whatever I needed, be it a material, emotional, or physical need, was met and taken care of. I was never made to feel less than. It was always a positive environment."

"This place saved my life and gave me a reason to live."

"I was comfortable and treated well. I loved the staff and the environment, and it's a great stepping stone. "

"The staff have helped so many at their lowest, come back."

"I appreciate this program helping me become more responsible and giving me the tools I need to be more successful."

"I felt safe and at home."

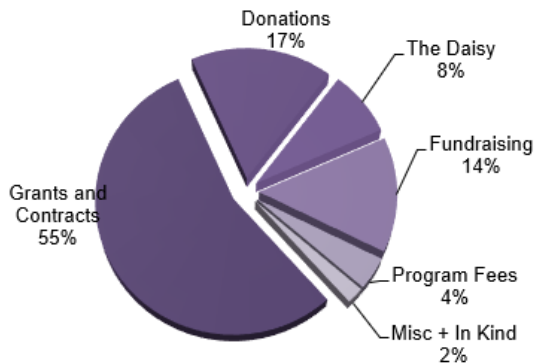
"You are amazing, I'm truly thankful for every one of you all. You truly were and are a blessing. Thank you for being a part of my life when I really felt I had nothing to live for."

Vision statement

Fresh Start is a proactive agency focused on eradicating homelessness for women through quality services and expanded partnerships.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Revenue \$563,382



Expenses: \$542,772



The graph numbers do not include capital expenditures. In 2019, those were a total of \$68,342 and included mortgage principal and equipment.



Events like mini golf and Project Funway raised awareness and funds.

During calendar year 2019, Fresh Start received grants or contracts from:

- Abel Foundation
- City of Lincoln Urban Development
- Donlan Foundation
- Great Western Bank Foundation
- Emergency Food and Shelter Program
- Hampton Family Foundation
- Imperial Foundation
- Joint Budget Committee of Lincoln & Lancaster Cty
- Lancaster County Community Corrections
- Lincoln Community Foundation
- Lincoln Housing Authority
- Lincoln/Lancaster Mental Health Foundation
- Nebraska Presbytery Foundation
- Nebraska State Probation
- Rogers Foundation
- U.S. Dept of Justice Office on Violence Against Women
- United Way of Lincoln and Lancaster County
- Wells Fargo Foundation
- Woods Charitable Fund



In 2019, The Daisy Thrift Shop raised \$47,233 for Fresh Start's essential services.



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Volunteer Highlights

Volunteers served on the Board and committees, provided ongoing office assistance, led activities for residents, provided Sunday night suppers, did one day projects, completed internships, helped at events, and ran The Daisy.

Volunteers provided approximately 6,027 hours of service to Fresh Start in 2019! Per the independentsector.org, this is the equivalent of \$153,273.

