



2010 ANNUAL REPORT  
**ALTERNATIVE HOUSE**  
THE ABUSED AND HOMELESS CHILDREN'S REFUGE

## 2010 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alternative House is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors who in 2010 included:

Kevin Davis, *President*  
Rick Holzheimer, *Treasurer*

Lisa Moffett, *Vice President*  
Beth Yingling, *Secretary*

Kathy Barnes, Jim Cotton, Kimberly Dize, Mary Lou Dunford, Melissa Fernlund, Richard Gergely, Robert Gillispie, Burt Heacock, Nicole Leona, Amy Owen, Richard M. Pollak, Debijo Wheatley

## EMERGENCY SHELTER FOR TEENAGERS

It was a busy year at the Emergency Shelter for Teenagers in 2010. We averaged 19 young people each month at the Shelter. That's an increase of almost 30% over the number of youth who sought safety with us just three years ago. While economic stress continues to be a factor in our increasing numbers, we also see teens whose crisis could happen at any time.

*"Jenna" found Alternative House after she had been on the run for five days.*

She got into a fight at school and was worried her mother would send her out of the country. While she was here, Jenna not only had a safe place to stay and good food to eat, we were able to provide both her and her mother with counseling. The counseling helped them find new ways of being together as a family, and Jenna was able to return home and resume her education.

Each young person at the Shelter has a different story and a different reason why they sought help. We are glad Alternative House was here for them. When a young person comes to the Emergency Shelter, they receive much more than a roof over their heads. Our trained counselors provide individual counseling to help them resolve the crisis that brought them to the Shelter and tools to help them reach their goals. We also provide family counseling to help young people and their families discover ways they can work together to reunite. In 2010, 90% of the young people who came from a family situation returned home. For those young people who couldn't return home, we found safe alternative living arrangements. No young person is ever put out on the streets.

## COMMUNITY-BASED YOUTH SERVICES

Our Community-based programs reached more than 1,400 vulnerable young people this past year in a variety of ways.



### CULMORE TEEN CENTER

The Culmore Teen Center opens after school Monday through Friday and doesn't close until 9 pm. When school is not in session, the doors open earlier to give young people a safe place to be, away from neighborhood gangs and violence. The economic downturn has had a huge effect on these young people and their families. Where we used to serve after-school snacks and sometimes dinner, we now serve dinner every evening to an increasing number of youth. Almost 300 teens came to the

Center to receive homework help, supervised recreation, work-



shops, help with drafting resumes and filling out college applications. The Teen Center places a large emphasis on finishing high school and aspiring to college. On one of our field trips to George Mason University, our young people bumped into a former Teen Center youth.

*"Maria" was in the Culmore Safe Youth Project in elementary school, then began going to the Teen Center in Middle School.*

Her senior year in High School, she was one of our Youth Workers who help at the Teen Center and gain work experience. After graduating in June 2010, Maria was accepted at George Mason University. The young people were inspired to see Maria working in the University Library as part of her work-study program. She told them she was living at home and going to school full time to get her Bachelors Degree.

The young people on that field trip were inspired to see one of their friends and neighbors going to University.

### ANNANDALE AND CULMORE SAFE YOUTH PROJECTS

Our Safe Youth Projects are designed to help at-risk young people in 4th, 5th, and 6th grades do well in school and avoid neighborhood gangs. The Culmore Safe Youth Project is located in the Culmore Family Resource Center and served 51 children in 2010. Of those, 98% improved their grades over the course of the school year and not one joined a gang. The Annandale Safe Youth Project is located at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church and served 40 children. This program also helped 98% of the students improve their grades. In addition to homework help, children participate in activities designed to increase their self-esteem, take field trips and do community service. The challenges faced by some of the children in these programs are huge.

"Brian" was one of our graduating students from the Annandale Safe Youth Project in 2010. He was excited and a little scared to be going on to Poe Middle School. Then everything in his world seemed to fall apart. His mother lost her job. The first thing to go was their car, then their housing. Brian's mom found a friend who can take them in, but getting to the Poe Middle School for the 6th grade orientation was not possible. With everything else that was

happening in his life, Brian was terrified of the additional change of starting middle school. The Safe Youth Project staff were able to help by contacting Poe, which arranged for a special orientation, and providing transportation for Brian and his mother. Brian is now doing well in middle school and he and his mother are back in a place of their own.

### ANNANDALE TARGETED YOUTH INITIATIVE

Students who need a little extra help to avoid making poor choices find it at Alternative House's Annandale Targeted Youth Initiative. The program is a pilot project to help 9th and 10th graders who are in danger of failing at school. It works with not just the students but also with their families to create an environment where the young person can succeed. The Initiative also provides after-school workshops twice each week where an average of 30 students gather at Annandale High School.

### MOBILE OUTREACH

The Alternative House van is a common site on the streets of Culmore, Annandale and East Springfield. Our counselors visit these neighborhoods in our van to distribute "survival supplies" to young people who need help. We provide coats in winter, water in summer and referrals to medical care year round. Our counselors let young people know that if they don't have a safe place to stay, our Emergency Shelter for Teenagers can help them. They also tell teens about the Culmore Teen Center and other safe areas to gather. In 2010 our Counselors provided assistance to youth almost 6,000 times.

## ASSISTING YOUNG MOTHERS (AYM)



There is no greater indicator of life-long poverty than to be a single, teenage mother. Our Assisting Young Mothers Program helps to break that cycle by providing housing, counseling and training to homeless young women who are pregnant or have young children. With an emphasis on parenting, education, job readiness and self-sufficiency, our AYM graduates are able to support themselves and their children when they leave the program.

### AYM I

In AYM I, young women 16 to 21 years old may stay for up to 18 months, work or go to school at least 30 hours a week, and 45% of their earnings are placed into savings/debt reduction. Last year 11 young women and their children were part of our AYM I program. All of them progressed in being able to support themselves and their children in the community, and all of them increased their ability to be a nurturing parent.

*"Jennifer" was one of our AYM moms who made big changes in her life.*

She was 20 years old and living at the Kate Hanley Homeless Shelter with her 2-year-old daughter and newborn child. As a teen, she had been physically abused by her father. Child Protective Services removed her from his home, and she went to live with her mother. Her mom had recently remarried, and when she and her step-

### WHERE OUR FUNDING COMES FROM\*

24.5% (\$463,827)

community support

1% (\$19,611)

service fees

.01% (\$2,109)

interest

30.6% (\$580,066)

Fairfax Co. grants & contracts

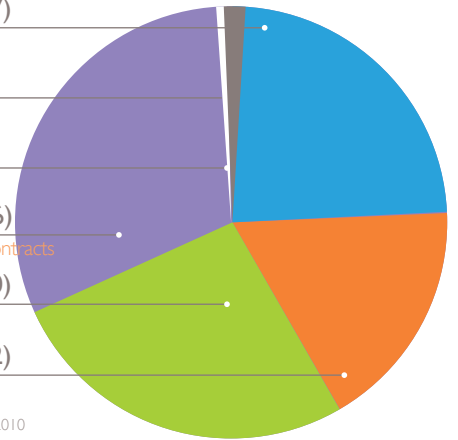
26.4% (\$500,000)

federal grants

17.2% (\$326,982)

in-kind support

\* JULY 1, 2009 – JUNE 30, 2010



### WHERE OUR FUNDING GOES\*

5.6% (\$109,075)

management and general

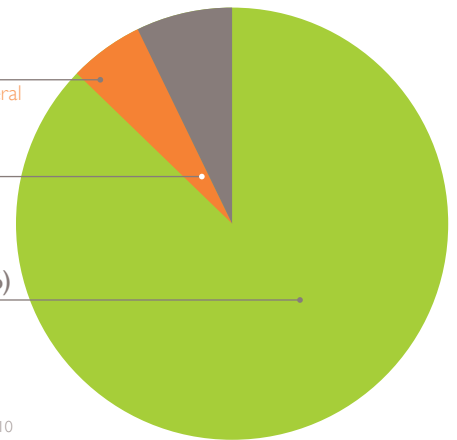
7.1% (\$137,392)

development

87.1% (\$1,674,286)

program services

\* JULY 1, 2009 – JUNE 30, 2010



father moved to Woodbridge, they wouldn't let Jennifer join them. When she came to the AYM program, Jennifer knew it was time to turn her life around. She did not want to be on public assistance. She wanted to be able to support herself and her children. She received her high school diploma and studied to be a dental hygienist through the Fairfax County ACE program. After she found a job, she moved into an apartment with a girlfriend who also has a small child. The two young mothers share expenses and help with the care of each other's children. One mother works days and the other nights so they can save on their child care expenses and provide a loving home.

### AYM II

At AYM II, the young mothers are a little further on the road to self-sufficiency, so they don't receive the intensity of case management and other services provided to the young women in AYM I. Last year three young women and their children participated in AYM II. Living in condos owned by the nonprofit CRS, the moms paid 30% of their adjusted net income in rent (average of \$200). They continue to receive help from Alternative House with things such as budgeting, parenting and time management.

## HOMELESS YOUTH INITIATIVE

Alternative House's newest program helps homeless high school students -- who don't have the support of a parent or guardian -- with housing so that they can obtain their diploma. Using a combination of host homes, rental assistance and a house in Vienna, we helped 65 students in 2010. In 2009, before the program started, there were 100 homeless high school students in Fairfax County without family support. Almost 10% of them ended up in adult homeless shelters, and there were numerous school drop outs. Last year the number of unaccompanied homeless students doubled to 200. None went to an adult homeless shelter and only one dropped out of school. Of graduating seniors, 77% went on to some form of college.



*"Nancy" is one of those who graduated in June.*

She was brought to the United States by her father, but instead of living as a member of the family she was forced to serve as an indentured servant to her father's new family. School counselors referred her to Alternative House after they learned that she was living in an unfinished basement without food or privacy. Nancy went to live with a host family where she was nurtured and valued. After she graduated, Nancy's host family asked her to continue to live with them while she attends college.

## VOLUNTEERS

Alternative House has a very active volunteer program. Volunteers help us cook dinner, tutor young people, do yard work, answer our hotline and act as mentors. In fact, volunteers play so many roles at Alternative House, it would be impossible to list them all. In 2010 1,200 volunteers provided almost 10,000 hours of community service. By using Fairfax County's valuation of volunteer hours, that equates to almost \$200,000 of time and talent given to the young people served by Alternative House.

## HOTLINE

Often the first point of contact for a young person in crisis is the Alternative House Hotline, 1-800-SAY-TEEN (1-800-729-8336). The hotline is answered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, by trained counselors and volunteers. In addition to serving young people in crisis, it is also a resource to parents who need advice or referrals. It is also linked to the National Runaway Switchboard, so if a young person doesn't know about the safe haven our shelter offers, they can reach us through this channel as well. The hotline is promoted through posters and wallet cards. Last year more than 2,000 cards were distributed throughout the community. In 2010, the hotline received almost 1,500 calls.



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

It's always challenging and rewarding being at Alternative House – The Abused and Homeless Children's Refuge. Our programs work to keep young people safe and provide them with the opportunity to grow and achieve their full potential. We see young people facing challenges that they shouldn't have to face but we also see them surmounting those challenges and gaining in strength and self-sufficiency. This year our economy has once again played a role at Alternative House. The number of young people seeking help at the Emergency Shelter for Teenagers is up 30% over pre-recession numbers. We've opened a new program to help young people who are homeless while still in high school and who don't have the support of a parent or guardian. Requests for food and clothing are up more than 50% in our community based programs. Your support has helped us meet these increasing needs. As you will see from the charts in this annual report, more than half of the resources we need to help young people come directly from the community. In addition to financial support, the help we receive from volunteers and the food, clothing and other supplies that are donated keep us going. Thank you joining with us to help our young people this past year and into the future.

*- Judith Dittman*

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