



Building Families, Preventing Harm: The Role of Men and Children's Oxford Houses

In 1975, amid the hum of recovery and resilience in Silver Spring, Maryland, a group of individuals in a closing halfway house decided to defy circumstance. Rather than face homelessness and possible relapses, they pooled their resources, rented a home together, and governed themselves—thus creating the first Oxford House under the leadership of J. Paul Molloy. This self-governing, self-supported model rests on three core principles: democratic operations, shared expenses, and a strict policy of sobriety. Over time, this simple yet powerful formula has blossomed into a nationwide network of recovery homes offering enduring support and hope.



Oxford House-Buchanan House

have found that parents in Oxford Houses are more likely to regain or retain custody of their children compared to those in traditional after-care settings. Residents also report stronger outcomes in employment, sobriety, and reduced criminal involvement.

My own journey reflects this reality. Early in my recovery, I faced a painful barrier: there was nowhere I could have my daughter stay with me overnight. Without that vital connection, I struggled and eventually relapsed. It was not until three years later, with the guidance of my sponsor, that I was encouraged to be of service not just to myself, but to my community. That opportunity led me to open the first two Men and Children's Oxford Houses in Shawnee County Kansas. A third home in Topeka was opened in early 2025.

These homes changed everything. They provided a safe environment where I could work my recovery program while also raising my daughter full-time, as her mother continued to face challenges in her own journey of recovery. For the first time, I could be present, responsible, and rebuilding the most important bond I had—

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Within this broader network, Men and Children's Oxford Houses hold a uniquely vital role. During a study in 2013, there were nearly 100 family-style homes nationwide, including 14 for men with children and 84 for women with children. These numbers have drastically increased since then. These houses provide safe, sober living spaces where parents can continue their recovery while raising their kids. Evaluations

Visit the PAC on the FRIENDS website at www.friendsnrc.org



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To translate or read this issue aloud in alternative languages, click on



in the top right corner of the FRIENDS website.

The Lovelady Center: A National Model for Long-Term Recovery

The Lovelady Center in Birmingham, Alabama, is the nation's largest long-term Christ-centered recovery program dedicated to women and their children. Recognized as a national model, the Center delivers comprehensive, evidence-based wraparound services—at no cost to clients—serving women displaced by addiction, incarceration, domestic violence, and homelessness.

Rooted in community, the Center thrives because Birmingham shows up. Clients have come from five countries and forty-seven states, with most of Alabama's sixty-seven counties represented at any given time. More than 100 active community partners—spanning state agencies, universities, health centers, churches, and businesses—extend the Center's impact. Each year, upward of 1,500 volunteers teach various trauma-informed classes, mentor residents, and help in house staff serve meals, forming a network of care that makes sustained recovery possible.

At the heart of Lovelady's success is a rigorous, five-phase program. Developed over two decades under the visionary leadership of the late Dr. Brenda Lovelady Spahn, the curriculum requires clients to earn 34 credit hours across multiple pillars before graduation. The fastest path to completion is nine months, reflecting a belief that transformation takes time, structure, accountability, and hope. Besides having to earn class credits, health credits, education credits and parenting credits when applicable each client is also expected to attend regular devotion and Church services as well as a hold own a job readiness position and attend regular counseling sessions.

Recovery at Lovelady extends beyond campus. In Birmingham's East Lake neighborhood, more than 130 program graduates and their children live in apartments and homes rented exclusively to them as part of the Center's robust aftercare strategy. Graduates continue to



The Lovelady Center

receive case management, drug testing, and access to services while overcoming the three biggest barriers to employment—affordable housing, childcare, and transportation—through supports intentionally designed to remove those hurdles. With housing costs at historic highs, the organization is actively pursuing the purchase of additional apartment complexes in East Lake to expand its "Next Steps" transitional housing and deepen post-graduation stability.

Being a good neighbor also means meeting daily needs. The Lovelady Manna Food Bank feeds more than 40 unhoused men and women three meals per day and provides food boxes to over 200 families every Wednesday—an expression of the Center's conviction that dignity begins with consistent, practical care and love of our neighbors.

Guided by Board Chairman John McNeil and Executive Director Melinda MeGahee, The Lovelady Center supports more than 950 women, children, aftercare clients, and staff. Their mission is clear: to empower women through Christ-centered initiatives so they can return to society well equipped women of God. In Birmingham and beyond, Lovelady's story demonstrates that when evidence-based

care is wrapped in community, recovery isn't just possible—but probable, breaking cycles and restoring hope.

*By Frank Long
Director of Development
The Lovelady Center*

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Building Families, Preventing Harm...

my relationship with my children. The Men and Children's Oxford House model demonstrates that recovery is not only about staying sober; it is also about breaking cycles. By supporting parents in sobriety while strengthening family bonds, these homes reduce risks of child abuse and neglect. Children grow up in safe, stable, drug-free environments, while parents gain the tools and support to stay engaged in their children's lives. In this way, Oxford House is more than recovery housing—it is prevention. It is the opportunity to rewrite family stories, heal generational wounds, and give children the future they deserve.

*by Nathan Voss
FRIENDS PAC Member*



Teen Corps: Developing Youth and Adult Leaders to Strengthen Communities

Teaching youth how to share power and that their voice has value is something that is important to ensure that future generations can lead with wisdom, passed on to them by those who preceded them. Creating opportunities and programs that allow young people to work in partnership with adults is one purpose of the 4-H Teen Corps program. It was developed by Manami Brown, the Director of the University of Maryland, Baltimore City Extension. At the time, my children were members of 4-H and I was an adult volunteer. We participated in this curriculum as it was being developed, piloted and peer reviewed.

Teen Corps began in 1998 as a city-wide collaborative between 4-H youth and adult leaders, agencies, and community stakeholders. It was designed to strengthen communities and increase leadership opportunities for youth 12-18. Teen Corps is a train-the-trainer program where youth and adults come together to learn leadership and facilitation skills in three major areas: (1) Service Learning, (2) Entrepreneurship & Workforce Readiness, and (3) Environmental Science. The curriculum, *Developing Youth & Adult Leaders to Strengthen Communities*, was developed by the University of Maryland Extension and contains eleven lessons. Note: You do not have to be a 4-H Club to use this Curriculum.

Through service-learning, youth and adults use Community Mapping to assess community needs and assets. The information collected is then shared with community members who develop projects that meet local needs. Youth also learn leadership skills as they reach out to community stakeholders to gain support for the projects.

In addition to the service-learning component, the curriculum focuses on entrepreneurship, preparing

youth to own their own business or contribute to the workforce. For example, some of my clubs have made bath salts to sell, crocheted hats, flowers and other items and sold produce grown in our youth community gardening clubs.

The environmental science component provides youth with the knowledge and skills to make informed environmental decisions through engaging in outdoor activities designed to increase environmental literacy, explore environmental career opportunities and better understand environmental issues and solutions. It provides youth with the knowledge and skills to make informed environmental decisions.

The youth who participate in Teen Corps learn about their neighborhood and gain knowledge that extends beyond where they live, socialize or receive their education. The skills learned can be tak-

en back and taught at their local club.

One of the most important things to me about Teen Corps is the youth Adult Partnership which supports youth learning about themselves, their strengths and weaknesses and the value of working well with others. Youth become secure and confident in who they are, learning how to give and receive constructive criticism. Finally, both youth and adults value each other's perspectives and skill set that each brings to the table. As a result of Teen Corps, we became a pool of people with a variety of talents that worked together in harmony to make our communities better.

by Eliza Cooper
FRIENDS PAC Alumni Member

Reference: University of Maryland Extension. *Teen Corps Facilitator Guide: Developing Youth and Adult Leaders to Strengthen Communities*. [2017 Teen Corps Facilitator Guide – Shop 4-H](#)

Resources

Information on the Casey Community Opportunity Map.

February 26, 2025

The Community Opportunity Map: A Workshop on Using Data to Engage Communities and Write Grants <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AztzAvtb2Ak>

[Materials Link](#)

Housing

The Corporation for Supportive Housing <https://www.csh.org/>

<https://www.csh.org/csh-solutions/families-and-youth/>

<https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/Hennepin-County-Housing-Stability-Estimator.pdf>

Texas Housing Authority in Austin
[I-DADS – Housing Authority City Of Austin](#)

Compiled by Cynthia Smith,
FRIENDS TTA Coordinator



Meet the New Faces of the 2026 FRIENDS Parent Advisory Council!



Nimpsi Dorville

Nimpsi Dorville (Pennsylvania) is a dedicated advocate for family strengthening and child abuse prevention, with lived experience and hands-on involvement in programs that support children and caregivers during times of stress, transition, and recovery. Her work is rooted in the belief that safe, supported families are the foundation of healthy communities.

As both a participant and a leader in family-centered initiatives, Nimpsi has engaged in prevention-focused education, peer support, and system navigation efforts designed to reduce risk factors for abuse and neglect while strengthening protective factors such as parental resilience, social connection, and access to resources. She utilizes a strength-based perspective to collaborate with service providers, educators, and community organizations and promote trauma-informed practices and responsive support for families.

Nimpsi is passionate about prevention and amplifying the voices of families in shaping policies and programs that impact their lives. Her goals include advancing community-driven solutions that protect children, strengthen families, and promote long-term healing and stability.



Kayla Williams

Kayla Williams (Ohio) is a married mother of three, parent leader, and advocate serving as a Lucas County Early Head Start Policy Committee Parent Representative and an Ohio Children's Trust Fund Parent and Family Advisory Representative. Through various parent leadership trainings, she has learned the power of the parent voice and how to actively and effectively engage as a parent leader across diverse settings, including government, schools, and community-based spaces.

Kayla is pursuing a degree in social work and plans to become a therapist specializing in perinatal mental health. She is deeply passionate about mental health equity and is committed to reducing stigma surrounding mental health, particularly during pregnancy and the postpartum period.

Grounded in lived experience, Kayla approaches her advocacy with a positive, uplifting spirit, striving to encourage, empower, and support families while promoting compassionate, accessible, and inclusive support systems.



Elyse Harvey

Elyse Harvey (Wisconsin) is a Certified Peer Support Specialist and Community Health Care Worker and parent with extensive lived and professional experience supporting individuals and families navigating child welfare, recovery, and complex life systems. She brings a trauma-informed, strengths-based approach to her work, grounded in empathy, accountability, and advocacy.

Elyse has worked closely with parents involved in child welfare, treatment court, and community-based services, helping them build stability, confidence, and sustainable support networks.

Elyse is currently attending school for substance abuse counseling, continuing to build her clinical knowledge while strengthening her ability to bridge lived experience with evidence-based practice. She remains dedicated to advancing systems that value collaboration, dignity, and long-term family well-being.

The FRIENDS PAC holds an annual call for nominations in the Fall of each calendar year. The three new individuals fill the seats previously held by Elizabeth Reddick and Eileen Graham who, after fulfilling their terms, have joined the FRIENDS PAC Alumni. Please join FRIENDS in welcoming Nimpsi, Kayla, and Elyse!



From the 1960s to Today: Why Multigenerational Homes Are Making a Comeback

When times are uncertain, families tighten their circles, and that's not just a saying; it's history in motion. In the 1960s, when jobs wavered and costs crept higher, families did what many are doing again today: they moved in together. Parents, grandparents, and kids, all under one roof. It wasn't a step backward; it was an act of resilience.

Looking Back at the 60s: Proof that "moving back in" isn't just a millennial thing, it's been happening for decades.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (1960), the average household had more than three people in it. Over half of men and more than a third of women ages 18–24 still lived at home (Fry, Passel, & Cohn, 2020). For many Black and Latino families, practices like redlining meant multigenerational living wasn't a choice; it was essential (Aaronson, Hartley, & Mazumder, 2021). And plenty of White families doubled up too, because rent and bills have never cared about skin color.

Here's how **Carolyn Abdullah, PAC Liaison/Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator with the FRIENDS National Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP)**, remembers her family's experience during that time:

"My family began migrating from Virginia to New York City in the 1940s and 1950s. Affordable housing was scarce, especially for Black families. As relatives found jobs, they would take in sisters, brothers, nieces, and nephews until they could settle. At times, multiple families shared apartments on the same block with the same landlord. It was crowded, but it was safe, and it gave us hope. There were big family dinners, lots of kids to play with, and a sense that even in a small space, we belonged and were protected."

Her words remind us that multigenerational living in the 1960s wasn't

just about economics; it was also about safety, connection, and building resilience.

Fast Forward to Today: The bills are bigger, the Wi-Fi is faster, and once again, families are finding strength under one roof.

According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University (2024), more than 22 million renter households, half of all renters, were paying over 30 percent of their income on rent in 2023. With mortgage rates high, homeownership is slipping further out of reach. For young adults, the picture is even clearer: nearly 6 in 10 ages 18–24 now live with their parents, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2025). Not because they want to pause adulthood, but because rent alone can swallow an entry-level paycheck.

Families aren't doubling up because they've failed; they're doing it because housing costs and wages no longer match. When the math doesn't add up, families adapt. They pool rent, groceries, and childcare costs. But beyond dollars, multigenerational homes build bonds. Grandparents pitch in with childcare. Grown kids support aging parents. Families share meals, chores, and encouragement. Pew Research Center (2022) found that people in multigenerational homes are less likely to fall into poverty compared to families living separately.

What This Means for Families, and Protection: It's not just about stretching a paycheck, it's about stretching patience, fridge space, and who gets the bathroom first.

From a prevention perspective, these households also build protective factors: parental resilience, concrete support, and stronger social connections, key buffers in keeping children safe and families strong (FRIENDS National Center [NC] for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention [CBCAP], n.d.).

This is how safe and nurturing homes are built, even when money is tight. Families share strength and look out for one another, creating a safety net where children can grow with love and stability.

Parallels, and What's New: The '60s gave us shared bedrooms; today adds shared calendars, shared passwords, and a group chat no one can escape.

We're seeing clear echoes of the 1960s: economic hardship, young adults in the home, intergenerational caretaking. But today, there's remote work, student debt, and a shift in mindset. Multigenerational living is not a fallback; it's increasingly viewed as intentional, resourceful, and strength-building.

As Carolyn reflected when comparing her family's experience then to what she sees now:

"In the 1950s and 1960s my family was moving away from a place where it was very hard for them to succeed. Moving to the Bronx offered opportunities for education, employment, and culture. Families worked hard because they believed in a better tomorrow. Today, sometimes it feels like families move in together because they've run out of options. The sense of hope isn't always there in the same way."

Her reflection reminds us that hope matters. When families feel trapped, stress rises. But when families feel supported, connected, and able to plan for the future, even tight quarters can become safe havens.

Moving Forward Together: Families may not agree on what's for dinner, but they can agree that leaning on each other makes the road ahead safer and stronger.

For fathers, this can feel crowded, but it can also be life-giving. I've seen dads take night shifts knowing grandma had bedtime covered. I've seen grandfathers become

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Navigating Mental Health and Addiction: Not a One Stop Fits All Solution

Over the past few years, Oregon has become a battle ground over how efforts and resources are being allocated to substance use disorder (SUD) and mental health (MH) treatment services. The demand for and availability of treatment continues to be the biggest hurdle for those who need it most. Oregon has been rife with barriers that make these complex systems of services difficult to manage. There are usually long waitlists and often shifts in insurance coverage that impact available services for those who need it at critical moments. The limited supply of providers can create pressure on those seeking help. Individuals with SUD and co-occurring disorders tend to face housing instability, be involved with the justice system and are more likely to be hospitalized due to symptoms (SAMHSA, 2025).

It sometimes seems as if there needs to be an absolute crisis to get the attention individuals need and options may still fall short. Even for those getting SUD treatment, the mental health aspect can fly under the radar; the complications include detoxing from different substances, stabilizing the person's condition, and addressing long-standing mental health issues.

There is a lack of available providers to offer assistance and no one-size fits all remedy; there are many issues to consider. An estimated 69 percent of people receiving SUD treatment are also facing some form of co-occurring disorder. People with SUD and co-occurring disorders tend to struggle with housing, socioeconomic hardships, and usually cannot afford the services they need (SAMHSA, 2025). Recent data notes that almost half of those providing SUD treatment were utilizing a combination of mental health (MH) and SUD treatment approaches.

A promising trend is the "no wrong door approach" when it comes to

treatment. This strategy is designed to use a more integrated lens to support people by recognizing the unique needs of each individual, which contributes to more successful service delivery (Rainer & Waddell, 2023).

I found myself needing to get a better understanding of the complexities of those who are struggling with mental health while getting SUD treatment and sat down with Gail Porter, a clinician who has been in the SUD field for 10 years. Here is a summary of our conversation.

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From the 1960s to Today...

mentors. These bonds are where real resilience is built, not just with budgets, but with hearts.

Multigenerational renting isn't regression, it's adaptation. Just like in the 1960s, families today are proving that the best way through a storm is together. **Prevention programs and community networks can help these homes stay strong and safe for children and parents alike.** And even in hard times, families can still hold on to the belief in a better tomorrow.

Homes like these aren't just about saving money. They're about saving connection, culture, and hope.

*by Michael Cupeles
FRIENDS PAC Member*

References

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Approximately how many people are struggling with a co-occurring diagnosis?

"Most people that seek treatment have a co-occurring disorder. It is very rare that we don't have a person who isn't struggling with a co-occurring disorder and the complications associated with them. What is common for people is they might not be as aware because they look at everyday life circumstances as everyday life. They don't always understand that their symptoms may be a sign of a co-occurring disorder. Many people have been taught to believe that

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Navigating Mental Health and Addiction...

this is how family or community members operate and are not aware that they can be treated. We see issues with clients self-diagnosing because they have multiple providers or as a result of their own research in effort to get support. Counselors have to sort through the weeds with them and have a mental health professional evaluate them. People can come in with a history of treatment and still have to sort through many mental health symptoms such as anxiety, depression, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, and

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Co-occurring might be something that's more related to SU and trauma and there isn't always a clear baseline.

Everyone is capable of having positive treatment outcomes if we as clinicians and providers remember that recovery, SUD treatment, and MH treatment are not one size fits all. Our clients are unique individuals, with unique life experiences, whose brains all work differently, and we need to provide them with treatment options that reflect that. If an approach is not

working, we need to manage our expectations and try new things. This can be difficult as it often demands that we as clinicians and providers manage our own bias and ways of doing things. The SU and MH fields are constantly evolving as we continue to study and understand addiction, MH and its impacts on the mind and body. We too owe it to our current and future clients to evolve with it."

by Matthew Porter
FRIENDS PAC Member



FRIENDS Parent Advisory Council members (from l to r, top row): David Armstrong, Paula Bibbs-Samuels, Ashley Cox, Michael Cupeles, Nimpsi Dorville, Kayla Etie, Dana Gardner, Elyse Harvey, (from l to r, bottom row) Anntoinette Johnson, Jo Modeste, Matthew Porter, Ashley Schmit, Nathan Voss, Joe Whitmore, and Kayla Williams.

About the PAC

FRIENDS has established a Parent Advisory Council to provide useful overall program direction and guidance to the activities of the National Center. Council members share their experience and expertise in child abuse prevention and family strengthening through their active participation in FRIENDS workgroups and the annual Grantee's meeting, development/review of FRIENDS written materials, and by providing resource center staff with consultation and advice.

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