



News from Breakthrough House, Inc. August 28, 2009

2008: A Year of Accomplishments, with Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

Addressing Community Needs

The population of persons served by Breakthrough House, Inc. comes to us with diverse needs. All of these individuals have mental illness. Most have a serious mental illness; and most, if not all, have little or no income except for disability benefit payments and/or some form of public assistance. Many are at risk of homelessness. In 2008, the BTH Clubhouse provided support services to 346 individuals who attended the clubhouse for a total of 51,714 hours, participating in meetings and work/social activities; six hundred ninety three (693 unduplicated) individuals were served through the Consumer Assistance Program; the Residential Services Program had 106 individuals living in our 56 residential “beds”; one hundred eight (108) Compeer volunteers provided 3,950 hours of service to 115 individuals, including 53 children and youth in 2008; and the BTH transitional employment specialist provided one or more employment services to forty-three (43) unduplicated individuals. To date in 2009, we are experiencing increased participation at the BTH Clubhouse, with a greater number of referrals from other agencies, as well as an increase in new applications for membership. We are also seeing an increase in applications for emergency aid and housing, as well as an increase in the number of referrals for representative payee services.

Accomplishments—2008

- A study conducted by researchers at Boston University’s Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation and reported in the *Community Mental Health Journal* in May 2008 found that individuals being treated for serious mental illness (SMI) experience a significant increase in social support and personal well-being as a result of being matched in a Compeer mentoring relationship. Consumers matched with a volunteer in the Breakthrough House, Inc. Compeer program achieved the following outcomes in 2008: 80% improved or maintained their school attendance, improved or maintained their social skills, increased their participation in community activities, and improved or maintained independent living status; 85% improved or maintained a sense of security and belonging; 90% improved or maintained their self esteem; 90% increased community tenure; and 70% improved or maintained good decision-making skills.
- In 2008, the number of Compeer volunteers increased by 16%, the number of volunteer hours increased by 26%, and the number of individuals with mental illness served grew by 21%—without increasing staff.
- The number of beneficiaries enrolled in the BTH Representative Payee program was increased by 22% over the previous year—again, without increasing staff.
- Under its cooperative agreement with the Baker University School of Nursing, Breakthrough House, Inc. continued to offer health screening services to members and other program participants through monthly BTH Clubhouse visits by the school’s mobile van. A similar cooperative agreement with the

Washburn University School of Nursing provided weekly BTH Clubhouse visits by supervised nursing students offering general wellness checks, including blood pressure monitoring.

- Several internship opportunities were provided throughout the year to local students, including an 84-hour internship at the BTH Clubhouse for a student enrolled in the medical assistant curriculum at WTI, as well as short-term volunteer experiences in the Breakthrough Compeer program for several Washburn University students.
- Breakthrough House, Inc. celebrated its 30th anniversary in May 2008 with the grand opening of its relocated and newly remodeled Clubhouse at 1201 Van Buren.
- The agency's old contract with the VA to provide transitional housing for veterans with mental illness was replaced by a new one that provides higher reimbursement rates and certifies a third residence as suitable for housing veterans.
- Following an annual inspection, the BTH residential program group homes licenses were renewed.
- Breakthrough House, Inc. was recertified as a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) by the City of Topeka. The agency also is certified by the State of Kansas Housing Resources Corporation.
- A grant of \$10,000 from the Topeka Credit Union Foundation enabled BTH to acquire a newer van for the VA transitional living facility—one large enough to accommodate all residents in a single trip.
- Strategic planning was completed. A plan has been drafted, and implementation has begun.

Challenges and Opportunities—2009 and Beyond

- One of the most critical challenges to be faced by the agency, and certainly the most immediate, is the need to respond to the current economic downturn proactively by developing new funding sources and operational strategies designed to accomplish more with less, as well as planning operational contingencies that can be implemented when funding shortfalls can't be avoided or otherwise coped with.
- A major opportunity for the agency has come in the form of its Systems Modernization Project. Using a \$20,000 grant from the Sunflower Foundation awarded earlier this year, the agency is upgrading its technology and infrastructure to support an agency-wide integrated application process and common database which, among other benefits, will provide the capability and capacity for online banking and bill-paying in the Payee program. This latter enhancement will enable further expansion of the Payee program with existing staff, thereby increasing net revenues.
- The agency will continue to pursue the development of new community partnerships and volunteer opportunities to expand BTH Clubhouse programming.
- Fundraising will be strengthened through enhancement of Monopoly Tournament and development of an annual campaign.