

A New Life, A Fresh Start

An Our House Success Story

Recently, Annette Sanders, a 1996 graduate of Our House's education and job training program stopped by the Our House campus to offer her help as a volunteer. She reflected on the impact that Our House has made on her life. When Annette first came to Our House, she was, in her own words, "unemployable". She says, "I was not equipped to have a sustainable life. I had been married for 19 years and had recently gotten divorced. I couldn't support myself. I had entered a drug recovery program. I was searching for a new life, and Our House gave it to me. Our House gave me a start—the start that I needed.

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Through The Learning Center, Our House provides homeless and low-income adults with the education, skills and resources to find meaningful employment and to be successful members of the workforce, the community and their families.



Photo courtesy of Ben Krain 2007

The computer skills, job training and literacy programs are all free to the homeless parents and individuals living in our shelters. As a result, Our House relies 100% on grants and individual donations to provide scholarships for the students to participate. Financial contributions enable us to continue providing essential educational resources to the people in our community who need these skills the most. The people taking the Microsoft Office certification course or the parents learning to read have enrolled in the program because they realize this is their only way out of homelessness. They are committed to changing their lives for the better.

Annette's lack of education and job skills and bouts with addiction had led her to Our House. While at Our House, she took courses in human relations and English for the workplace. She learned the full Microsoft Office Suite of tools. Over the course of the program, she says, "I realized that I could be successful. I gained both skills and confidence. After I graduated, I went to Pulaski Tech. Then, at Philander Smith, I got my Bachelor's in Social Work. I wanted to help people understand that they could make a change in their life—that their life could be as good as they wanted it to be. I've spent the last several years working in the field of social work and just this summer started the Masters program in Social Work at UALR. I just don't think I could have made it here had it not been for the program at Our House. Our House gave me the drive, desire and will to do what I'm doing today." Annette, who was jobless a decade ago, today counsels people in a smoking session program at UAMS's College of Public Health. Financial contributions and corporate sponsorship are used to guide more people like Annette down a path that, as Annette says, "Leads to a whole new world. A world of freedom and independence."

In the early 1990's, Our House offered the first computer training programs for homeless people in the nation. Our House continues to pioneer innovative ways to equip homeless people with the tools to be self-sufficient. Our House provides homeless individuals and families with shelter, food, job training, education, and free childcare.