

## Light House: A Homeless Prevention Support Center

by: Janice F. Booth in: Community  
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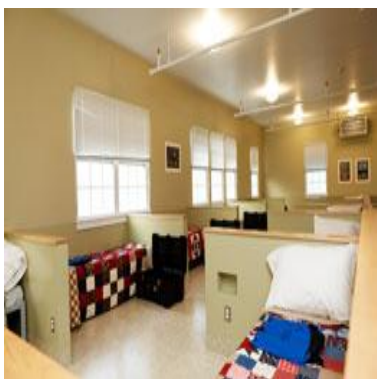


In 1989, six local churches formed Annapolis Area Ministries, Inc. (AAMI) to support and fill the needs of the homeless. The Light House Shelter was founded. Today, 15 congregations and six community leaders are on the AAMI board of directors and the shelter recently opened a six million dollar facility on Hudson Street that provides emergency shelter for men and women as well as two apartments for families with children.

Elizabeth Kinney, chair of the board, devoted five years of her life to make it [the new Light House facility] happen... She was a key champion," asserts volunteer coordinator Michelle Marshall. Initially Kinney made a three-year commitment to work towards expanding the Light House Shelter's facilities and services, but to date she hasn't stopped. She continues to devote her time and energy, along with the scores of other volunteers in the community, toward creating what she terms "a national model" for how a city cares for its homeless.



"At the Light House Shelter you meet people with compelling stories," says Kinney. "People are brought together who normally wouldn't be brought together—parolees, veterans, single parents. Did you know that the average age of a homeless person is nine years old?" According to the Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services, more than 2,000 county citizens were homeless in 2010—including more than 600 school-age children.



In the new facility, social workers, mental health workers, career counselors and other volunteers advise and train folks in the new Employment Resource Room. The Chesapeake Regional Tech Council's members donated and installed a state-of-the-art computer center, where relevant skill—building and job counseling take place. Additionally, there are classrooms, art and therapy comrooms, a library, a



children's playground, and vegetable garden.

Under the AAMI's guidance, the Light House, which has helped the homeless for 22 years, is also trying to stem the tide of homelessness. They've added a transitional-housing program, Anchor House, for families with young children, and Willow House, a housing program for women, which helps them transition from homeless to self-sufficient.

Preventing homelessness is a major thrust of the Light House. Yet no one forgets those critical, immediate needs; approximately 5,000 hot meals, 35,000 bag lunches, and 4,600 bags of groceries went to needy families through the food pantry program last year.

There are many helping hands (and open wallets). Volunteers help propel the organization; among them are Andrew Petit's great work in the kitchen, Jackie and Allan Pulsifer's dinner menu calendars, Barbara Crosby's management of the Clothes Closet, and David Mullaly's "can-do" approach to anything that needs doing. The fundraising responsibility for Light House is shouldered now by Friends of the Light House Shelter (FLHS). Events such as a golf tournament and bicycle tour bring the community together in a variety of ways. For more information, visit [www.annapolislighthouse.org](http://www.annapolislighthouse.org) or call 410-349-5060.