

Annual Report on Quaker House to CHFM First Month; January 20, 2019

Address: Kindra Bradley, Executive Director, 223 Hillside Ave., Fayetteville, NC 28301
910-323-3912; www.quakerhouse.org; email: qpr@quaker.org

Mission Statement: Quaker House is a manifestation of the Religious Society of Friends' Peace Testimony. Based in Fayetteville, NC, the home of Fort Bragg, Quaker House provides counseling and support to service members who are questioning their role in the military; educates them, their families, and the public about military issues; and advocates for a more peaceful world.

Background: Chapel Hill Friends Meeting is a founding member, legacy, of Quaker House since 1969 when Dean Holland, a Vietnam era soldier who wanted to be a CO (conscientious objector) came to our meeting requesting help. The meeting concluded that "Quakers need to be in Fayetteville" and, with the help of Bob Gwyn and local meetings, it established Quaker House. Since then, Chapel Hill Friends Meeting has been a "legacy" contributor and helped the survival of Quaker House for 50 years as a peace organization, despite the demise of so many others.

Evolving Program: Since its inception 50 years ago, Quaker House is a witness for peace prophetically and pastorally. The peace testimony is manifested in our never-ending stance against war but also in our ministry to those victimized by war. How we carry that out continues to change over the years depending upon conditions of war, the nature of our country's deployment of troops, and subsequent casualties to conscience and family that result from that. At the beginning, Quaker House met the plea from Dean Holland as a CO and addressed the growing anti-war movement within the military and in the country as a whole. After Vietnam and the end to the draft, Quaker House supported the community in its outbreaks of racial violence and military family murders and suicides. Immediately after 9/11, numbers of CO and AWOL (Absent without Leave) cases grew. Our ministry to individuals suffering from moral injury, suicidal thoughts, and domestic violence is a result of our endless wars and repeated deployments since 9/11. Our work against torture, weaponized drones, and secret wars sign a light on U.S. policy. Most recently, less-than-honorable discharges are increasing, a result of service members who suffer PTSD, depression, and moral injury and a command structure that wants to discard them.

GI Rights Hotline: Begun in 1994, the Hotline answers thousands of calls yearly from active duty military, veterans, and their families. These numbers gradually increase. This year our Hotline counselors answered an average of 300 calls per month. The counselors' most rewarding yet most time-consuming work is helping service members obtain conscientious objector status: they guide and provide moral support as service members move through regulations, delays, and at times deliberate roadblocks from the command structure. The counselors also have been busier than ever with service members who are being threatened with other-than-honorable discharges. Service members who fall short of command expectations are being accused of "misconduct" or "personality disorder" when they actually suffer from PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury, Moral Injury, and/or Military Sexual Trauma. Quaker House helps prove their medical condition (sometimes

obtaining documentation through an independent or outside medical evaluation that we provide) so that they can receive an honorable discharge and their deserved medical benefits, essential for ongoing treatment. Quaker House helped bring national attention to this problem. December and January have especially high call volume for AWOL cases (Absent Without Leave). Many recruits return home for vacation after completing basic training and realize the military is not for them, and they won't go back. The Hotline counselors help these service members maneuver through regulations and get administrative discharges minimizing other severe consequences.

Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Moral Injury: Quaker House continues the important work of providing free, confidential counseling and support to the victims of military domestic violence, sexual assault, and moral injury and of promoting public awareness of this. Long and repeated deployments wreak havoc on both service members and their families. When a significant family member (usually a dad) is gone for many months, the other parent (often the mother) is forced to fulfill roles both as a nurturer and as the dominant figure. When the service member returns, the family structure changes significantly. The service member returns with the expectation that rules (by him) will be obeyed; but he is not the respected figure. This causes confusion in the parent and child. Our work is recognition that domestic violence is a real and too often neglected consequence of war-preparedness and lengthy deployments. Many of our clients have no insurance, so we literally save lives and at no cost to them.

Our therapist is a support to our Hotline counselors, who refer suicidal service members to her knowing they will be in good care. Not only does she provide regular hours to about ten counseling clients per week, but she is part of the CMRN (Civilian Medical Resource Network) helping the Hotline with psychological evaluations when service members face wrongful discharges. She sees clients on days not part of her usually scheduled time slots and will consult over the phone as needed, especially on client emergencies. She represents Quaker House at state, local, and on-base programs. She promotes Quaker House at the Behavioral Health Professionals Association conferences. Each year, she participates in the two major conferences at Ft. Bragg, does tabling at other Fayetteville events, and markets the program throughout the region. She and Kindra were plenary speakers on moral injury to a statewide conference of social workers and represented Quaker House at the Cumberland County Domestic Violence Vigil. She contributes articles to the Quaker House quarterly newsletter, submits reports regularly for Quaker House board meetings, and posts blogs. She supervises and mentors program interns assigned to her.

The reputation of the program has grown in the community and on base at Fort Bragg. Since its inception in 2013, our program has logged over 2000 counseling hours to over 65 clients, many of whom were desperate and had no place else to turn. Relying on the generosity of our donors, this and the GI Rights Hotline programs are free and without obligation to callers and clients.

Publications: Over a year ago, Quaker House published two books: *Help for Moral Injury: Strategies and Interventions* and *Conscientious Objection: Is This for You? Discerning a Claim and Documenting It with Selective Service*. Both continue to reach a wide and appreciative audience and bring in a small amount of regular income.

While looking at the present, we are also preserving history. The board is working with Gwen Gosney Erickson, current Guilford College archivist and daughter of early Quaker House Director Bob Gosney, on reviewing and digitalizing the Quaker House history and ensuring a balance between confidentiality and a thorough documentation of our work. An intern reviewed materials and helped organize these records.

50th Anniversary: 2019 will mark the 50th Anniversary of Quaker House. This is a remarkable milestone given the demise of so many peace organizations over that same span. We attribute our success to many variables: the devotion and expertise of our staff and board, the support of our Quaker meetings and donors, and the importance and relevance of our mission and work. As an organization, this event provides two important opportunities: a time to reflect and document what we accomplished AND the occasion to let a wider audience know about our work and, hopefully, support us both spiritually and financially. This is an investment, spending resources to make it happen. All our board members sought special contributions from their member meetings. In true Quaker frugality, we are tapping on volunteers, and we are SO blessed that Lynn Newsom, despite her retirement, is clerking our 50th Anniversary Committee. We will celebrate the 50th Anniversary in 2019 by producing two videos (*Conscientious Peacemaking since 1969* and *Personal Stories of Gratitude*); by hosting an event in Fayetteville on Sept. 21, 2019, featuring past directors and key people who Quaker House helped; and by sponsoring other local and regional events.

Outreach: Other outreach includes expanded internet and social media presence; contact with new yearly and monthly meetings. We need referrals and additional contact on our mailing list and online resources. Supporters are asked to “friend” Quaker House news on social media, forward messages to others, set up a Quaker House fundraiser account, post in Instagram (tag @quakerhouse), or set up an option for a portion of purchases to go to Amazon Smile

Finances: We are compensating from the loss of the yearly \$35K donation (~20% of income) from our biggest donor, who passed away FYE’ 17, resulting in a net -\$6,990 loss for that fiscal year. Fortunately, FYE ’18 yielded a slight gain of \$5,266 but from unique factors, i.e., differences in health benefit expenses and an unexpected, large, one-time gift of over \$20K.

Additional Detail: On the *expense* side, health benefit expenses were less due to the transition from Steve and Lynn Newsom’s retirement to the hiring of Kindra Bradley, which essentially reduced payment from two policies to one. In addition, employees purchased their own less expensive policies (which Quaker House reimbursed) vs Quaker House supplying expensive employer group policies. Given changes in the ACA, this cost will go up this fiscal year. We had to create a (QSE-HRA) Qualified Small Employer: Health Reimbursement Arrangement. On the *income* side, we were blessed to receive an unexpected one-time gift of \$20K+ from a donor who inherited unanticipated income. Despite our faith and the benevolence of a higher power, these miracle gifts won’t happen each year, so we depend both sustained and additional support from all our donors—individuals, organizations, and especially member meetings.

Salaries: We have three FTEs (full time equivalent staff): Kindra Bradey as Executive Director, Roderick Lewis our Office Assistant, and Steve Woolford and Lenore Yarger sharing one FTE as our GI Rights Hotline counselors. The total payroll expense was \$104,808, which included salary, health and dental benefits, payroll service, and employer tax expense. Our Domestic Violence counselor, a contracted employee, draws an additional amount, but we do not pay her income tax or other costs related to her business.

These salaries are quite low given the effective and efficient work of our five. Steve, Lenore, and Lewis do not receive a living wage. As Catholic Workers, Steve and Lenore choose to stay below the limit where they would pay federal income tax and fund our nation's wars. Lewis makes a little over \$11/hour. We want to raise these levels to a livable wage, and we've been gradually them being mindful of a balanced budget. For all three, as well as our Executive Director, we look for other ways to support them through non-taxable benefits, budget permitting.

One call to our GI Rights Hotline counselor costs Quaker House \$9.28, including salary and all overhead, with calls averaging about 11 minutes and some calls lasting 40 minutes. The cost of a one-hour long session with our Domestic Violence is about \$31, about one third the typical rates in the area. Many times our clients in both services are desperate, having no other recourse; some are suicidal. Our services are free and available to anyone. Quaker House saves lives.

Transition: In August 2017, we successfully made the transition from retiring Co-Directors Steve and Lynn Newsom to our new Executive Director Kindra Bradley. Steve and Lynn shared one full-time position, yet, admittedly, they both worked 40+ hours per week. Kindra cannot fill that gap, and we do not expect her to do so. Yet, Kindra has maintained program and activities. She brings to the position a new set of skills and expertise, particularly in social media and making broader connections with the Quaker community and beyond.

Meeting Involvement: Kindra Bradley presented a forum at CHFM on December 10, 2017 and will do another on Feb. 24, 2019. Quaker House board members make regular announcements at Meeting for Worship and post information in the newsletter and listserv. Teens are supported, counseled, and often present Conscientious Objector letters to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. Members and attenders participate in Quaker House events and vigils both in Fayetteville and across the state. Many in our meeting receive our newsletter. CHFM presently has two representatives on the Quaker House board: John Hite and Curt Torell, who also serves as board treasurer and supports QH staff in many other ways. In the past, CHFM has had up to five members on the board. It would be helpful to have more. Members of our meeting, particularly Deborah Gibbs and Richard Miller, continue to lend their time and expertise to Quaker House projects. At the same time, Quaker House board involvement, across member meeting participation, is better than ever. Board members are finding specific and personal ways to contribute to the organization's work. Having a "working board" is essential.

Highlights from Kindra's 2018 Work:

Outreach:

- Kindra coordinated a production March 16 at Guilford College of *This Evil Thing*, a play about a British World War I conscientious objection which was touring the East Coast.
- Conscientious Objection presentation at Spring Friends Meeting, May 28.
- Presentations at SAYMA, June 14-17.
- Counter-Recruitment Summit, Chicago, June 22-24.
- FGC, Toledo, Ohio, July 2-6, sampler workshops that were well attended.
- North Carolina Yearly Meeting, Conservative, Greensboro, July 12-15, interest session.
- Forum with NC Peace Action and Highland United Methodist Church Raleigh, July 21.

- North Pacific Yearly Meeting, Tacoma, WA, July 25-29, tabled and led workshop.
- NC Foundation for Alcohol and Drug Studies Summer School, Wilmington, NC, Aug. 23 on Moral Injury and included Joanna, our Domestic Violence counselor.
- Friends Church of NC (FCNC) Quaker Lake, Aug. 3-5, tabled and got to know people.
- Western Friends Online Conversations on Friends & the Military, Aug. 9. Online forum.
- NC Fellowship of Friends (NCF), Quaker Lake, Aug. 18, building relationships/bridges.
- Special Victims Summit, Ft. Bragg, Aug. 29, tabled, significant connections with others.
- VA Mental Health Summit, Methodist Univ., Sept. 6, tabled, attended sessions, contacts.
- Piedmont Friends Fellowship and Yearly Meeting (PFF/PFYM) fall retreat, Sept. 8-9.
- Fayetteville relationships, continuing many local contacts nurtured by previous Directors.
- The Poor People's Campaign rally in Raleigh, May 29, attended by Kindra and a fellow board member.
- Monitored National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service Hearings.
- Attended Cumberland County Domestic Violence Vigil with DV counselor.
- Attended service on Vigils for Tree of Life Shootings, Fayetteville Beth Israel Synagogue and community vigil at the City Council Chambers.
- Continued involvement with Coffee with the Mayor; Fayetteville Police Department Faith Forum; Cumberland County Veterans Council; Governor's Working Group on Veterans, Service Members, and Their Families; and Fayetteville Chapter of the National Organization of Women (enthusiastic and significant supporter of Quaker House).
- Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church.
- Continuing legal education on nonprofits conference.
- FCNL conference on lobbying and work to build collaborations.
- Encourage Alternative Christmas events in member meetings (CHFM, New Garden, etc.)
- Upcoming forum at CHFM, Feb. 24.

Expand Social Media and Electronic Communications:

- One of the most important tasks that Kindra accomplished is with the Quaker House website. First, she moved oversight and the server of our website from two people who originally set it up but who became limited and not very responsive to our needs, despite their ultimate control over it. This was a HUGE step; we've been trying to do this for years.
- Updated content and also the site's security, which was much needed.
- Kindra increased Quaker House social media posts and is tracking them. More can be done on this by requesting all of our member meetings and individual supporters to "share" our posts on their various social media platforms.
- Lynn Newsom was featured on Ft. Bragg stories on NPR. Highlighting work with incarcerated veterans and need for better mental health services to them.

House Maintenance:

- Completed successful termite inspection.
- Completed replacement of kitchen floor and buckling from water damage, mostly through additional donations derived from social media and personal contacts.
- Completed new dishwasher and refrigerator installation, which may have caused the water damage.
- Re-negotiated Homeowner's Worker's Comp Insurance renewal at a more competitive cost.

- Obtained insurance reimbursement for Hurricane Florence damage to porch swing and deck.

New Programs:

- A sacred texts study group started in October that involves local Fayetteville Christian, Jewish, and Muslim leaders. This provides an unanticipated benefit that gets the Quaker House name out to a new demographic in Fayetteville.
- A military writing group linking with local Warrior Writers groups started Jan. 2019.

Kindra's Future Goals Include:

- Understand more the world events and peacebuilding methods.
- Increase skill using Word Press (for our website) and other social media tools and expand Quaker House use of them.
- Increase pastoral skills and spiritual counseling.
- Increase our fundraising results and reach with Quaker circles and beyond.
- Get conscientious objection as a self-designation option on Selective Service form.
- Develop a relationship with elected representatives to keep dialogue on peace issues.

Connection, Support, and Overlap of Time/Energy between Quaker House and CHFM: The work of Quaker House and CHFM is complementary. The third “leg” of the Quaker House mission is that we advocate for a more peaceful world. The U.S. is a “war country.” We have Special Forces in over 137 countries and over 800 bases in countries throughout the world. Our wars are becoming more secret, seemingly antiseptic, technical, and relying on “Artificial Intelligence.” As a religious denomination where the peace testimony is central, we are, in military terms, losing the battle. So, in the overlapping roles with both CHFM and Quaker House, how can we collaborate more closely and work in tandem to bring about a more peaceable kingdom? This concern was raised at a recent P&J Committee meeting, and we hope additional strategies will emerge. As a subsequent action, Tom Munk and Curt are forming a local FCNL Advocacy Team which will focus on the repeal of the AUMF Act (Authorization of Use for Military Force).

Closing Remark: All of us at Quaker House appreciate the generosity from CHFM—its legacy, its members and attenders who support Quaker House both financially and through their volunteer service and sharing of expertise, AND especially the meeting’s yearly benevolence. That gratitude is expressed continuously and overwhelmingly by the people we help. In a recent interview of our Hotline Counselors for one of our 50th Anniversary videos, they said:

Every shift I work, people tell us how appreciative they are that we are there and that this service exists. In fact, there is often disbelief on their part that someone would be out there and care enough about them to be helping in this way. The callers that we help are so grateful that people are providing this support. At times, they can’t believe this is true. ... Quaker House is a place where the peace movement comes together with these particular victims of war, and that doesn’t happen anywhere else.