

## **Annual Report on Quaker House to CHFM (March, 2021)**

**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 and families, who are questioning their role in the military; educates them, their families and the larger public about military issues; and advocates for a more peaceful world.

**Background:** Chapel Hill Friends Meeting is a founding member of Quaker House since 1969 when Dean Holland, a Vietnam era soldier, who wanted to be a conscientious objector, came to our meeting requesting help for himself but also for others like himself in the Fort Bragg area. CHFM offered financial support to establish a physical space where soldiers could come for information, support and community. When the first house burned mysteriously in the middle of the night, CHFM arranged for a second home on Hillside Avenue, which is where QH has since resided.

**COVID-19:** The 2020 pandemic has directly impacted the life and program of Quaker House operations. The **Family Counseling Program** continued in person until one client volunteered that she was infected. While the staff had been careful to wipe down all relevant surfaces since the beginning, it became clear that in person meetings for client counseling was no longer a good idea. In spite of COVID, Joanna has been able to offer counseling services to 74 individuals in 2020. These clients include active duty soldiers as well as military veterans, partners of military personnel and even several children, ages 6-14, of military families. Counseling continues to be offered through teletherapy with plans to return to in person counseling again this spring after staff vaccination is complete.

Other outside groups that usually meet at Quaker House, including Fayetteville Friends Meeting, have met in the back yard where an outside fireplace provides some heat, or by zoom or not at all. No decision has been made yet as to when to re-open the building to these groups.

The **GI Rights Counseling Program**, which has always been primarily by telephone hotline, has continued as always. It was necessary to strengthen the internet connections with new equipment to better meet the demand of inquiries by email. Total number of contacts, averaging 266 calls each month, has increased as have requests to help with conscientious objection applications. COVID has affected numerous military issues. Soldiers affected by the military travel ban, isolation before or during boot camp, and disease from unprotected exposure to other incoming recruits caused many callers to question their desire to be in the military. Our counselors were able to help them explore avenues to get out. An accessible information website was improved upon this year. In addition, comprehensive counselor training for 10 new volunteer counselors was conducted during this year.

With the pandemic, travel for education and outreach has been cancelled for all functions: administrative and staff meetings, board of directors and committee meetings, educational forums, development visits to monthly meetings, Friends General Conference, Congressional monitoring and more. Zoom has become a primary communication too. Chapel Hill Friends Meeting benefitted in spring, 2020 from a new educational forum on the "Military and the Environment" with speakers Steve Woolford in one location, and Kindra Bradley zooming from Quaker House. While we are ready to get back to normal, Quaker House has continued to function well even in difficult times.

**Board of Directors:** The board consists of 22 members representing monthly meetings in NC, VA, and SC along with representatives from Baltimore Yearly Meeting and SAYMA (Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting). Many are new members. A number of longtime members are stepping down after lengthy service and new leadership is being groomed. A strategic planning process is underway.

**Financial Development:** Several staff and board members have attended training of Friends Fiduciary with the goal of establishing a legacy program. Quaker House has been the recipient of very few bequests over the years. Our membership consists of donors who could be interested in remembering Quaker House in their will.

Lapsed individual donors were contacted in the fall, resulting in increased donations. A virtual 5k run is being planned for 2021. Birthday fundraisers on Face Book by several board members have contributed monies. Since these fundraisers seem to generate gifts from younger donors, who use social media more, we will explore their value more. The Outreach Committee has assisted in expanding social media and electronic communications with Face Book, Twitter, and Instagram. ( December stats show that Face Book received 941 contacts, Twitter 505 contacts, and Instagram 393 contacts.)

Quaker House applied and received PPP funds available from the federal government for business and non-profits under COVID regulations. \$18,000 was awarded to cover payroll. Technically this is a loan but indications from the government are that these loans will be forgiven. We have also applied for a second application in the amount of \$16,000 again to cover staff salaries, which have changed with some re-organization this last year.

Outside services like accounting, printing and USPS were all affected by COVID with staff furloughs and delays, affecting QH development. As a result the end of year newsletter, which normally generates significant financial gifts, was delayed and was not always received by donors in time to give 2020 gifts. Fortunately these gifts seem to be coming in with the 2021 calendar year.

**Current Staff:** The staff currently consists of Kindra Bradley (fulltime); Steve Woolford and Lenore Yarger, who share one fulltime position; Joanna, a licensed counselor who is a contract employee; and an administrative assistant who works 11 hours per week.

**Financial:** A comprehensive financial review but not an official audit was conducted. The review committee comprised knowledgeable finance committee members with an additional outside accountant. While Quaker House has no endowment, we currently hold \$50,773.38 with Friends' Fiduciary in Philadelphia. (This will gain interest and can be withdrawn at any time.) There is also \$26,937.97 in money market certificates at the Self-Help Credit Union. The current treasurer's account balance is \$63,094. While 2020 expenses were less than anticipated with the pandemic, we are watching gifts from individual donors and meetings very carefully.

**Chapel Hill Meeting Representation to QH Board:** Betsy Brinson is the current CHFM representative to the Quaker House Board. QH by-laws allow for 5 members and CHFM Nominations Committee is looking to make additional appointments. (Betsy will be leaving the board July 1 after 17 years service as a Quaker House leader representing the Richmond, VA Friends Meeting and more recently CHFM.)

For questions and/or more information about this report, please contact Betsy Brinson.

March 15, 2021