



*A home where women can grow*

**Annual  
Report  
2020**



# 2020 Board of Directors

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UNL

**Elizabeth Gebhart- Morgan,**  
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**Cynthia Peterson**

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Please remember Fresh Start in your charitable giving and estate planning. Fresh Start is a 501(c)(3) organization and contributions are tax deductible to the extent of the law.

Proud partner of the

**LIVE UNITED**



United Way of Lincoln  
and Lancaster County

# FROM THE BOARD

## Resiliency

It is impossible to look back on 2020 without addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it has had. Like the rest of the world, Fresh Start had to make adjustments in several areas of operation, including changing programming, enforcing directed health measures and the cancellation of in-person fundraising events.



However, in a year filled with challenges, Fresh Start was still able to concentrate on its mission of empowering women to overcome barriers to self-sufficiency. Though the day-to-day may have looked a little different, I am proud of what the organization was able to accomplish. We helped over 70 women and continued to have a waitlist. Because Fresh Start staff members are needed in the shelter 24-7 to provide support to the residents, the majority of the staff did not have the opportunity to work remotely. Their commitment to the organization and the residents is inspiring. The strong leadership provided by the Executive Director and the Program Coordinator ensured the residents and the staff stayed healthy and safe.

Coming into 2020, Fresh Start started focusing on setting a vision for where we wanted the organization to go in the future. Throughout the year, we were able to make progress in solidifying those goals and making plans on what it will take to meet them.

In spite of having to cancel the major fundraising events in 2020, overall fundraising was not at a total loss! Board members and staff members came together to plan different types of fundraising opportunities such as coffee sales and virtual trivia. Additionally, Fresh Start has some of the best supporters we could ask for and they proved this with their continued support in 2020. We are truly thankful for each of them.

As we reflect on the past year, I am so proud of what Fresh Start was able to accomplish, and I am excited to put 2020 behind us and look forward to better days. I am beyond impressed by the ways in which the organization navigated this unprecedented time, and I am excited to continue efforts to reach our goals. I cannot wait to connect with our supporters again during in-person events!

## NICOLE GOHRING

President of the 2020 Board of Directors

### Mission Statement

Fresh Start is a transitional shelter that empowers women experiencing homelessness to change their lives by recognizing and using their strengths to overcome barriers to self-sufficiency.

# ALUMNA SPOTLIGHT

## Rebuilding

My journey led me to Fresh Start after incarceration and a short stay in an inpatient treatment center. Fresh Start was absolutely essential to my recovery. It gave me a safe place to call home and start rebuilding my life. That was the biggest challenge for me. At the time I felt I had no way out of my lifestyle. Being at Fresh Start enabled me to get a job, my driver's license, buy a car, and save money for my deposit and first month's rent.



***"It's an empowering environment that provided me the support and confidence to rebuild my life."***

The nonjudgmental caring staff gave me advice and resources, they listened and encouraged me. The staff became my family. I honestly don't think I would be where I am today had I not had the opportunity to go to Fresh Start. I now have my own house, but also continued support from the women at Fresh Start which means the world to me. No words describe the appreciation I feel for Fresh Start and the amazing women that made my success possible!

### CHERI

Fresh Start Alumna

## Our Program

Fresh Start is more than a shelter; it's a safe and positive home environment where women can change their lives. Fresh Start offers a holistic goals based program. Residents develop an individualized goal plan with a case manager who then advocates for them, holds them accountable, and celebrates successes with them. Staff is one site 24 hours a day 7 days a week to provide assistance and support.

### Vision Statement

Fresh Start is a proactive agency focused on eradicating homelessness for women through quality services and expanded partnerships.

## 2020 Statistics

64 residential stays

7 women participated in community support services

72% yearly occupancy rate

6,330 nights of lodging

18,990 meals provided

904 case management meetings

9% employed at time of entry

71% employed at exit  
(increase of 62%)

72% saved money in a Self Sufficiency Fund

65% progressed towards goals

44% moved into permanent housing

529 days longest stay

1 day shortest stay

129 days average stay of those who exited

38 average age

19 years youngest resident

59 years oldest resident

12th grade average education

83% report substance abuse

66% report mental health issues

39% report domestic violence

45% were involved with or referred by legal system

9% report a disability

59% mothers

19% report belonging to a racial or ethnic group

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## COVID-19 Pandemic Hits Home

One cannot reflect on 2020 without thinking about the COVID-19 pandemic. The global health crisis affected every aspect of our lives, and Fresh Start was no different. Fresh Start worked diligently to ensure that our home continued to be a safe and healthy one for our residents and staff.

Program changes included reducing our occupancy. This was due to both a recommendation from HUD to "decongregate" communal living environments, and in order to have quarantine rooms available, should they be needed. The normal occupancy is 24; during the pandemic occupancy ranged from 14-18 residents. The program activities also changed. Fresh Start typically has a number of group activities, from house supper and informal gatherings to meetings and educational groups. These were adjusted to ensure social distancing and other health measures were practiced. It was a challenge to build rapport and assist residents with goals while wearing masks and maintaining distance from one another. New health protocols were implemented and constantly reviewed and revised. Our protocols are structured around the levels on the local risk dial and based on guidance from the CDC and Lincoln/ Lancaster County Health Department.

Fresh Start program participants experienced difficulties such as reduced hours at work, increased struggles finding employment, and reduced availability of supportive services in the community. The stress of the pandemic affected residents' and staff members' mental health.

Fresh Start is thankful for the many individuals and groups that helped us, and others, weather the storm that was 2020. We look forward to a brighter and healthier 2021.

## Thoughts from our Alumna

"I felt safe and at home."

"Each and everyone one of you (staff) has touched my heart and life in a way that words can't describe. You turn lives around, and some of them you save from demise. I adore and admire you."

"Fresh Start is an amazing gift."

"The staff fanned the flames of my hope."

"I got the job! Now I won't have to worry about bills. Now I can be in the store, and if my son wants a piece of candy, I can afford it. I don't have to worry if I can afford it."

"You gave me the opportunity and the ability to believe in myself and build a foundation for my future."

"This place saved my life."

"Fresh Start is an amazing asset to the Lincoln community. I am overwhelmingly grateful for the home, the staff, and the community that supports it all."

### Fresh Start Core Values

Respect Accountability Individuality Stability Empowerment

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

## Revenue \$594,802



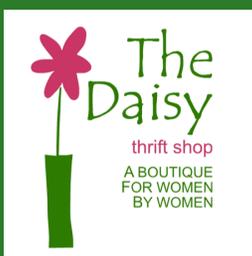
## Expenses \$582,831



The pandemic affected revenue and expenses during 2020. Events like Mini Golf, Project Funway and our Open Houses were canceled. The Daisy was closed for nearly 8 months of the year, and was open in a reduced capacity for another 2 months. Reduced occupancy meant a higher cost per person to offer services. The expenditures for food and supplies did not reduce significantly, since residents were home more, and because Fresh Start was not able to shop at the Food Bank for most of 2020. Some funding sources understandably shifted giving towards pandemic and social justice issues. This affected revenue for general operating. Fresh Start did receive funding from three specific COVID-19 related sources: PPP funds, CARES Act through DHHS, and a grant from the Lincoln COVID-19 Response Fund administered by the Lincoln Community Foundation. While grant and event revenue was lower, support from individuals, clubs, churches and others increased.

## During calendar year 2020, Fresh Start received grants or contracts from:

- City of Lincoln Urban Development
- Cooper Foundation
- DHHS/CARES Act
- Great Western Bank Foundation
- Emergency Food and Shelter Program
- Joint Budget Committee of Lincoln & Lancaster Cty
- KENO funds
- Lancaster County Community Corrections
- Lincoln Community Foundation
- Lincoln COVID-19 Response Fund
- Lincoln Housing Authority
- Lincoln/Lancaster Mental Health Foundation
- Nebraska Presbyterian Foundation
- Nebraska State Probation
- United Way of Lincoln and Lancaster County
- Walmart Foundation
- Wells Fargo Foundation
- Woods Charitable Fund



In 2020, The Daisy Thrift Shop raised \$26,471 for Fresh Start's essential services. This was through consignment, private shopping appointments, and reduced store hours. The initial goal (pre-pandemic) for 2020 shop revenue was \$45,000.





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## Volunteer Highlights

Due to the pandemic, there were fewer volunteer opportunities at Fresh Start during 2020. However, volunteers continued to serve on the Board of Directors and committees, completed internships, provided office assistance, cooked Sunday night suppers, did yardwork, organized the storage area, and ran The Daisy.

Volunteers provided approximately 2,788 hours of service to Fresh Start in 2020! Per the [independentsector.org](http://independentsector.org), this is the equivalent of \$79,570.

