

# ANNUAL REPORT


July 1, 2013 – June, 30, 2014



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GREATER WASHINGTON

 <p>United Way of the National Capital Area</p>	<p><i>Participating in:</i></p> <p><i>United Way # 8594</i> <i>Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) # 56716</i> <i>Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (CVC) # 8278</i> <i>DC1 #8594</i></p>
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# Purpose, Activities, and Accomplishments

**Origins:** The Brain Foundation (TBF) was established by Trudy Harsh in 2003 in order to educate the public about brain diseases and provide affordable housing to enable independent living for those afflicted by brain diseases. The professionally talented and devoted members on the Board of Directors volunteer to conduct all the staff functions without compensation. TBF obtained IRS certification as a 501 (c) 3 non profit organization and the State of Virginia recognizes it as a charitable organization authorized to solicit contributions for its activities. Trudy is currently the Chairman of the Board of Directors and President of TBF. She also is:

- Realtor – 1977-Present; Associate Broker, Long and Foster Realty;
- Former member and President of the Northwest Center Mental Health Advisory Board – 1990-96;
- Member, Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board Residential Housing Committee – 1990-98;
- Appointed Sully District Representative to the Fairfax - Falls Church Community Services Board – 2001-10;
- Member, the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board Mental Health Committee – 2001-present;
- Member, NAMI; formerly known as the National Association for the Mentally Ill – 1990-Present;
- Founder and President, Friends of Rock Hill, a mental health residential facility – 1991-96;
- Recipient, United Way In My Back Yard (IMBY) Award -- 1996;
- Principal supporter of the existing Stephenson House in Fairfax and principal proponent for building two more such houses -- 2008;
- Recipient, Nancy McDonald Beyer Exemplary Community Service Award -- 2005;
- Commendation, Virginia House of Delegates – 2006;
- Recipient, Volunteer Service Award for working with Persons with Disabilities by Volunteer Fairfax – 2008;
- Recipient, Joshua Steven Collins Award of Excellence by NAMI-VA – 2008;
- Recipient, Ed and Vivian Brazill Leadership and Lifetime Commitment by Fairfax-Falls Church Mental Health Advocacy Community –2009;
- Recipient, Washingtonian of the Year, by Washingtonian Magazine – January 2011;
- Recipient, Commendation for efforts to combat homelessness, by Fairfax County Board of Supervisors – March 2011;
- Selected as one of the best small non-profits in the DC area by the Catalogue for Philanthropy – June, 2012; and,
- Recipient, Good Neighbor Award -- National Realtors Association – November 2012.

**Mission:** TBF provides affordable housing for those suffering from serious and persistent brain diseases, such as schizophrenia and bi-polar disorders, who are homeless or vulnerable to becoming homeless.

There is no clear line of division between the mind and the body. No one of us has been spared at least occasional and mild disorder in our brain. But serious and persistent brain disease such as schizophrenia, bipolar disease and depression are chronic, disruptive, devastating and even deadly to those who suffer and tragic and costly to families who suffer with them. Brain diseases occur no less frequently than disease in other organs of the human body but it is more misunderstood, more feared, and more neglected.

Although there is still so much to learn about causes and solutions, serious and persistent brain diseases are treatable and manageable. When provided the best of our knowledge and resources, the vast majority of people who suffer can live fulfilled lives, participating in and contributing to their families and communities. In those few cases where current medical treatment is not effective, alleviation of the consequences of disease are still possible, effective and obligatory.

TBF is comprised of people who accept an obligation to educate, advocate, alleviate, and collaborate in the world of the complex, challenging reality of mental illness (brain diseases). They diligently collect, organize, and disburse a wide array of resources to do effective, concrete work for and with those who have serious and persistent brain diseases.

Persons with serious and persistent brain diseases often live on Social Security Disability Insurance and cannot afford to pay more than 1/3 of the cost of safe and adequate housing. TBF is committed to raising the negative cash flow (as high as \$25,000 per house) annually to subsidize the remainder of these costs. With inflation and debt reduction, these homes will become self-sustaining.

TBF has purchased eight, four bedroom, family townhomes close to grocery shopping and public transportation services. Four mentally ill residents are selected for each home by Pathway Homes, the Fairfax County Community Services Board (CSB), or PRS, Inc. They provide about 10 hours of social worker services per week to the residents at no cost to TBF. They have great experience in providing such services throughout Northern Virginia. The residents care for themselves, and do all the ordinary family household functions of cooking, cleaning, taking out the garbage, etc. This stable living environment provides an opportunity for wellness to occur.

## **Financing Affordable Housing:**

- The establishment of the first "Laura's House at Wilcoxson" in November 2006 opened several avenues of support.
- On June 6, 2007, TBF received a \$50,000 Northern Virginia Regional Grant to support the opening of a second house "Laura's House Layton Hall" in November 2007.
- In December 2007, the Philip Graham Fund provided a \$40,000 grant to provide a down payment on a foreclosure property in June 2008. It was refurbished and ready to rent in August 2008. The third house was named "Laura's House at King Edward I".
- In September 2008, TBF was certified by Fairfax County as a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) and became eligible for HOME funds through HUD. These are zero interest loans with no payments. In December 2008, a second foreclosure property was purchased the fourth house as "Laura's House at King Edward II."
- In December 2009 another CHDO Home loan was awarded. The fifth house, "Laura's House at Armstrong" was ready for occupancy in March 2010 for four brain diseased women.
- In July 2010, TBF was awarded \$300,000 from the Fairfax County Community Funding Pool to purchase a sixth home. "Laura's House at Farsta Ct." was purchased in March 2011 for four brain diseased men.
- In June 2012, financing was in place to purchase 3 more Laura's Houses from Fairfax County through use of HOME loans and CDBG funds.
- In June 2012, the Catalogue for Philanthropy chose the Brain Foundation as one of the best small non-profits in the DC area opening up new avenues for large donations.
- In September 2012, the seventh house, "Laura's House at Great Heron," was purchased using \$360,000 of CDBG funds for four brain diseased men.
- In November 2012, Trudy received a "Good Neighbor Award" from the National Realtors Association for her efforts to provide affordable housing. It included a grant of \$10,000 and a \$2,000 gift card from Lowes Home Improvement stores.
- In May 2014, TBF purchased its eighth house, "Laura's House at Fox Lake" for four brain diseased women.
- In June 2014, TBF applied for a \$250,000 loan from VHDA to supplement the \$200,000 from CDBG to begin buying the ninth house.

All of these homes have been beautifully furnished with donated items and donated services. Pathway Homes, Inc., which has experienced social workers, selected the brain diseased men and women residents and manages their care in five of the homes. The Fairfax/Falls Church Community Service Board selected the residents and provides services to two of the homes. PRS, Inc has partnered to select residents and provide services to one of the homes.

While the challenge of sustaining the unfunded costs of this operation is great, TBF expects continued contributions to be forthcoming. The 2011 United way of the National Capital Area campaign designated \$2,000 to TBF. It participates in the United Way as #8594, the Combined Federal Campaign as #56716 and the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign as #8278. Donations are solicited through

fundraising campaign letters sent from the Board of Directors to friends and business associates explaining the merits of designating funds to TBF. Such letters will also be sent to family members of the residents.

TBF received United Way Community Impact Grants of \$24,000 in 2009, \$20,000 in 2010, \$9,250 in 2011, 0 in 2012, and \$15,000 in 2013. TBF receives U.S. Department of Housing and Urban development (HUD) rental subsidy assistance on two of the homes which significantly reduced their unfunded cash flows. This assistance, for up to 10 years, is based on the resident's low incomes and their inability to pay fair market rental rates. In November 2010, TBF was provided a waiver of real estate taxes for the third house in Fairfax City as a non profit providing social services. Fairfax County will not provide additional real estate tax waivers and considers its use of HUD's Home and CDBG zero interest, zero payment loans to be their support of affordable housing. These annual contributions, grants, no payment loans, waivers and HUD's rental subsidy assistance will be supplemented from the reserves, if necessary, and sustain the Laura's Houses into perpetuity. TBF has a policy of targeting about two years of reserve funding before purchasing another home. Currently, TBF has about \$200,000 of reserve funding.

**Addressing needs of those who suffer from Brain Diseases:** TBF provides help to individuals who are disabled and disadvantaged as a consequence of brain-based diseases. Its initial and primary focus is the needs of the population within that group who suffer from serious and persistent mental disease such as bi-polar disease, schizophrenia and chronic or major depression. TBF is dedicated to providing and promoting substantial increases in the availability, quality and effectiveness of a broad range of assistance so that such individuals may live in dignity and safety within communities that respond to them with respect, acceptance, protection, healing and opportunity.

TBF directs most of its net resources to providing affordable housing and the remainder to public education and social integration. Hundreds of thousands of mentally ill Americans who, prior to the mid-1950s, would have received treatment in medical institutions have been relegated to the unfulfilled promise of adequate community-based treatment and support.

All too often, people who should be receiving medical treatment in appropriate environments are instead homeless or in prison. Estimates from sources such as The National Institute for Mental Health and advocacy groups such as NAMI estimate that more than fifty percent of homeless individuals have a brain-based disease. A 200 page report released October 9, 2007, by Virginia's General Assembly's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission concluded that after four decades of emptying the mental wards of its state hospitals, jails now house more people with mental illness than state and private hospitals combined. The June 2009 issue of *Psychiatric Services* showed that the prevalence of people with serious mental illness in jails is increasing. It found that overall, 16% of jail inmates have a serious mental illness. Even more alarming, 31% of female jail inmates have a

serious mental illness. Currently, there are over 500 mentally ill people on waiting lists for housing in Fairfax County.

A person who received SSI benefits in 2013 lives on \$715.00 a month; yet, in Fairfax, Virginia average monthly rents exceed \$1000.00. Recent major cuts to state and local funding have exacerbated an already severe shortage of subsidized housing and the number of ill and needy people with nowhere to go is a national disgrace. A recent study from the University of Pennsylvania proved that it costs society no more to house and treat an ill individual than it does to leave him or her untreated or inadequately treated and on the streets or in jail. TBF intends to replace such conditions with safe and stable housing.

**Supporting health care needs; social integration; day care and employment opportunities; legal services; and, promoting human rights:** The remainder of TBF's resources will be devoted to alleviating the many challenges that adversely affect people with brain-based disorders.

The need for adequate counseling and pharmacological treatment for psychological disorders and adequate and effective treatment for other healthcare needs such as dental care is pervasive. One recent study demonstrates that, over a three year period, the cost of one group of anti-psychotic medications increased 192 percent.

The recent Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health states:  
"Stigmatization of people with mental disorders has actually increased since the 1950's. Stigmatization leads others to avoid living, socializing or working with, renting to, or employing people with mental disorders. It reduces patients' access to resources and opportunities and leads to low self-esteem, isolation, and hopelessness. It deters the public from seeking, and wanting to pay for their care. It deprives patients of their dignity and interferes with their full participation in society."

TBF addresses these requirements by directly supporting other programs that provide health care services, mentoring, counseling, education, recreation, day programs, employment, and human rights advocacy. It has been using some of the funds to support other organization's activities related to improving the quality of life for those afflicted by brain diseases.

TBF is a strong proponent of the need for Fairfax County to provide two more Stephenson type houses. It has provided leadership on how to organize and manage affordable housing for the brain diseased. Dave's House in Fairfax is one example. Various local NAMI organizations have asked TBF to provide information on their business model in order that they could emulate our approach to providing housing for those with brain diseases. The Brain Foundation of Central Florida has used our organizational model.

**Program Performance Evaluation:** Dr. Katherine Newcomer, Associate Director of The Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration, George Washington University provided the model which The Brain Foundation uses in evaluating its performance as judged by the low income beneficiaries of its services. The statistical results from 22 of the 28 residents for 2014 follow.

The mentally ill residents living in seven Laura's Houses have very low income – 28% obtain less than \$700/month largely supported by Social Security Disability Insurance payments. 36% had been able to become well enough to hold part-time jobs and earned a little over \$1,000/month. There are one Hispanic, five Blacks, and two Asians; while the remaining residents are Caucasian. 73% of the residents have lived in Laura's Houses for more than a year; thirteen being there more than 3 years. Their average age is 45 years and ranges from 25 years to 66 years. Their rents range for less than \$175/month to slightly over \$310/month and reflects 30% of their income. Five of the very low income residents are on the Board of Directors.

The respondents indicated that some had waited very long periods before finding a home – 50% had waited more than a year; 18% had waited more than 5 years; and 1 person had waited more than 10 years. However, 40% had waited a few weeks or less.

The respondents reported living in various environments, often unstable, since turning 21 years of age. Residents had lived with aging parents, in homeless shelters, on the street or in parks, in jail, in institutions, in 24/7 mental health facilities, in crisis relief centers, in another group home and in an apartment or rented room. Elderly parents worry greatly about what will happen to their offspring after they are gone.

The respondents to the survey rated the comfort of the homes very high as 4.1 out of possible 5. They rated whether the house was supportive to getting well as 4.4 out of a possible 5, with over 50% rating it a 5.0. They rated their fellow housemates as 3.4 out of a possible 5. They rated their social services as 4.2 out of a possible 5. This information was shared with Pathway Homes and the CSB so that they could improve the housemate's relationships.

While 32% of the respondents found no reason to suggest improvements in the houses, the other 68% did make

suggestions such as enforcing the ban on smoking in the house, problems with heat and lack of hot water, adding a refrigerator, updating appliances, muddy back entrance, and more understanding housemates on chores, cleaning the house, and sharing the yard work.

Various residents have assisted in TBF activities such as moving furniture, rearranging furnishings for the new houses for other residents, installing shrubs and other ornamental gardening features. Residents often call Trudy Harsh with questions about taking care of their houses or needs for repair and maintenance. TBF is looking for volunteers to become house representatives, plumbers, maintenance chiefs at each of the houses, including some one to take over the duties of being the property manager.

The greatest challenge was to provide housing that will provide a place where wellness can occur to all residents. While "Housing First" is an important element to improving the health and well-being of those afflicted with brain diseases, they must remain committed to their recovery program. This year, one resident failed to comply with his treatment and unfortunately died. Two residents have gone off their meds, became highly disruptive and had to be placed on probation.

We have addressed the concerns of disruptive residents by recruiting volunteers to be House Representatives who visit the home monthly to meet with the residents, receive complaints about the lack of complying with the lease and house rules, and examine the orderliness and cleanliness of the home. If there are any violations, a letter of warning is sent to the resident with copies to their counselor so that deficiencies can be addressed. Pathway Homes and the CSB welcomes our surveillance as it improves their ability to assist the resident's recovery and we will be meeting bi-monthly to assess progress.