

Serenity Sistas Inc

2020 Annual Report

Happy New Year to our donors, supporters, friends, families, and our Board of Directors. Wow, what a year it was!

Your support of our mission has made it possible to continue to help recovering individuals. When a recovering addict leaves a treatment facility, they typically are not ready to enter mainstream life. Serenity Sistas provides a safe, secure and healthy living environment. We bridge the gap from an addictive lifestyle into a positive, substance-free, daily living routine where they can become a productive member of their family and community.

Our program works! In the past year, we have given over 220 people hope that recovery is possible and that they can live healthy, productive lives. As recovery is a personal journey each participant has individual needs, meaning they may need 6-24 months of housing to accomplish their personal goals.

We are proud of our success: 30 of our residents have remained drug- or alcohol-free for 12 or more months over the span of 2020/2019.

Many of our residents who left Serenity Sistas in 2020, have remained sober to date. While participants are with us, we give them the tools of recovery, and help them build life skills that they will need moving forward in the world. It is said that everyone wants to be a Sista or a Mista – until they actually are. They learn that we are serious about recovery. Our rules are serious, but we guide our residents with gentle support and they thrive.

Sadly, some will return to use upon leaving our residences. Three “Sistas” and two “Mistas” who left our program in the last two years lost their battle with addiction in 2020. The loss of life pushes our staff to strive harder to help participants of Serenity Sistas that much more.

We are truly thankful for your support. Your donations have allowed for 31 “scholarship” entry fees for men and women who could otherwise not afford to come to one of our homes. In 2020 your donations aided 19 separate residents to date. Often, the beneficiary was a “newbie” who could not afford the first two weeks; others were established residents who were perhaps in between jobs or had experienced layoffs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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In one particular case, a mom arrived with her children; we were able to accept all of them because of a generous donor. Overall, one hundred percent of our residents were grateful recipients of donors' material generosity that included clothing, bed linens and food.

Serenity Sistas Inc. was fortunate enough to gain a new donor this year who made sure each child in our Women and Children's program had a gift to open during the holidays. We were astounded by the generous nature of 9-year-old Penelope who organized this effort.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected far too many people in the world. Serenity Sistas has been blessed – our residents have been careful and compliant with all health guidelines. Despite all of our precautions, in November, we encountered 7 residents who tested positive for the virus. Happily, all the cases turned out to be mild with no hospitalization required. All have recovered. Due to Maryland state and Anne Arundel county requirements, when a resident tested positive, he or she quarantined as required. Contact tracing was performed, and every house was vigorously cleaned and disinfected by professionals. We have modified our Intake protocol to perform required health exams.

As 2020 began, we looked forward to many events including fundraising events. Due to the pandemic, everything was cancelled, or held remotely via Zoom or other telecommunications capability, resulting in a loss of donations.

Our most aggressive activity to date has been planning and executing a Recovery Community Center (RCC) in the City of Annapolis. This is a place where people recovering from addiction can be connected to critical services, including job-readiness training, vital life skills, Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, while networking and socializing with mentors and peers in a substance-free environment.

We found an appropriate property for sale, provided a good faith deposit, had it inspected, and secured estimates for any needed repairs. We were awarded funds by the state of Maryland to purchase the property with the stipulation that we raise matching funds. We are half-way there. However, due to uncertainty caused by the pandemic, some of our long-term investors backed away from the project. Unhappily, we were forced to cancel purchase

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of that specific property. We are now in the process of searching for another property while continuing to raise matching funds.

Fatal overdoses more than doubled in the City of Annapolis (our home), and increased by almost 20 percent in Anne Arundel County in 2020. This can be attributed to the pandemic which has resulted in the need for isolation and loss of employment. This has had a devastating effect on people in recovery or struggling with addiction and mental health issues. The pandemic caused many group recovery meetings to cancel or move online in the spring.

Annapolis is desperately in need of a Recovery Community Center; we are committed to finding space to purchase, furnish, and open to the recovering community. This dream can become reality with help from the community and generous donors. In the interim, we have repurposed the lower level of one of our houses and furnished it as a temporary RCC for use by our residents.

One of our guidelines states that residents are to be out of the house between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Due to Covid-19, Serenity Sistas has temporarily adjusted the time from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. They must use this time purposefully — looking for a job, taking classes, attending NA or AA meetings, or spending time at a local library where they can attend classes and use technology resources to create resumes and apply for jobs. The library is an important part of a person's recovery.

During this pandemic, however, the library has found it necessary to limit access and prohibit walk-ins. The temporary RCC now enables our residents to accomplish many task they previously performed at the library.

To recognize the Library system's role in recovery, we supported the Library Foundation by sponsoring two bricks in the walkway at the newest Anne Arundel County Michael E Busch public library in Annapolis, Maryland. A picture of the sidewalk can be found here: <https://www.aacpl.net/bricks>. Location of the bricks can be found at <https://www.aacpl.net/brick-pathway-list>. Follow directions on that page and type in "Sista" to see the locations of the bricks.

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Throughout 2020, we have continued our good relationship with state and local health care officials as well as the Anne Arundel County Crisis Response team in support of the County Safe Stations program. In mid-2020, we forged a partnership with New Life Addiction Counseling and Mental Health Services. Serenity Sistas will provide the space and New Life will provide virtual and in person IOP (Intensive Outpatient) services.

We continue to keep our staff trained. This training consists of:

- **CPR** and **First Aid**
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Best Practices for Managing Moms with Substance Use Disorder
- **CCAR** (Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery) Recovery Coaching and Professionalism
- **CCAR TOT** (Training of Trainers)
- **TIPS** (Training for Intervention ProcedureS) Recertification
- **CADCA** (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America) CEUs in prevention

Our houses undergo random inspection by the Anne Arundel County Department of Health and have always passed, resulting in the support and certification by the AACDOH and MCORR (Maryland Certification of Recovery Residences).

Serenity Sistas continues our commitment to help anyone who is looking for recovery and turning their life around.

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We look forward to the new year and creating partnerships with other organizations to provide all-around recovery support to anyone who seeks a new way of life.

To make a donation, go to SerenitySistas.org and click on "[Donate](#)" at the top of the page.