



# March 2021 Newsletter

Volume 38, Issue 1

## Welcome To The New Year!

Do you miss getting together in warm weather?

Do you miss seeing the smiling faces of people in a safe way?

We are excited to be working towards having all of our events in person this year!

That is not to say we are completely moving away from Zoom. We will be working on a hybrid version for all of our friends who want to join but can't make it in person.



*Join the Annual Dinner Committee! We need you!*

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*Helping People in Need; Building Community to End Poverty.*

## Golf Outing



Come join us in person for this year's **Golf Day** on May 17th at the **Washtenaw Golf Club**.

Keep an eye out for our Save The Date! This year we are working on bringing back that feeling of community and camaraderie from years past!

**More details TBD.**

## Annual Dinner



Get ready for the warm weather and good times in July.

The Annual Dinner will take place in a park. Bring friends and family, children included.

Keep an eye out for more information. We can't wait to see your wonderful faces.

**More details TBD.**

## Over The Edge



Join us on **October 2nd** for this year's **Over The Edge** fundraiser!

Rappel down the Graduate Ann Arbor's 14 stories! Last year was a lot of fun, and we are looking forward to another successful year of (fun)draising!

**More info on page 7**

# Transportation: Making a Difference!

Donnette received a car from us after four years of being without transportation.

## What happened?

Donnette was a business owner with reliable transportation and financial stability. She fell into trouble when she started making bad investments. She had never needed to deal with the amount of funds she was working with before and neither had her family. With no solid base to build upon, it felt like everything crumbled apart rather quickly.

## And then the accidents...

Donnette found herself under the dashboard of her car. The policemen surrounding her hadn't thought to call an ambulance because Donnette appeared dead on the scene. Then, by the 'grace of God,' one of the policemen saw her moving her pinky finger, and she was swiftly taken to the hospital. When she woke up, she was told that she had dislocated everything on the right side of her body. Since she couldn't drive her stick shift, she relied on friends and family to get around.

Still recovering, Donnette was riding along with her friend when another car decided to drive through a red light while going 50 MPH. Donnette's friend's truck was flipped and they could see that gas was leaking out of the car. They feared the car would explode and climbed out of their respective sides. Donnette would later learn that by crawling out, she had dislocated everything on the left side of her body.

## Stupid COVID!

For years after, Donnette relied on friends and family to get to places like her doctor appointments and the grocery store. Since the pandemic started, however, she hasn't been able to ask them for help; and she can't take the bus because the closest stop is still too far for her to walk.

She now relies completely on taxis to get around town, which is not only expensive but unreliable.

Like the rest of us, taxi services have changed to adapt to COVID. People now need to schedule trips 1-3 days ahead of time to see if there are any



available spots. This makes it incredibly hard for someone like Donnette who often needs to get to a pharmacy right after a doctor's appointment.

Donnette also needs a ride to the grocery store, and she can only afford to take a taxi once a month. Worse yet, taxi rules during COVID restrict her to two bags of groceries a ride.

## The good news

Donnette believes "that God does everything for a reason" and that maybe she went through this so she could relate to and help other people. She plans on using her car to help her step father, as well as other people in her situation.

Donnette is a shining light trying to brighten up the world.

~ Article by Amtheyst Floyd

## New Garage Partner

Friends In Deed is pleased to introduce our newest community garage partner: **Auto Ave of Ypsilanti!** Our other garage partners are based in Ann Arbor, so we decided to expand our program with a local Ypsi business. Auto Ave has been reliable and flexible for our clients in need of car repairs, so it seemed fitting to loop them into our Car Donation program.



They are located at **1021 East Michigan Avenue** across from the old Tyner Furniture building. It is important to support and promote local businesses during COVID-19, and the location will hopefully be more convenient for our Ypsilanti clients. We look forward to working with Laith and his team to get our donated vehicles to the people who need them!

**We Need More Donated Cars!**



Please send a big hello to our new case worker, Kia. You may have already seen her around Circles, speaking to the community, or at our Predatory Lending Town Hall.

### Detroit and beyond

Kia was born and raised in Detroit. She decided to move out of state to Missouri in 2007, where she spent a little less than a decade. She soon realized that she missed her family and returned to Michigan. She spent some time looking around the neighboring cities, but found herself residing comfortably in Ypsilanti. It was just the right fit.

Once she moved to Ypsilanti, she started her search for resources. Kia

## Our New Caseworker: Nikia Smith

was specifically searching for help paying her utility bill from The Hope Center, and someone from there pointed her to Friends In Deed.

### Circles and beyond

After receiving help from our Direct Assistance program, Kia looked into our Circles program. It ended up being a good fit for her needs, so she started on the program's 18-month journey.

Kia and her first daughter fell in love with the program and its community. When Kia launched from the program, she wasn't ready to leave her new family. She was able to stick around by becoming a co-facilitator for the next cohort. After several speaking engagements during her time as a Circles Leader, the position was a natural fit.

For example, Kia shared her experiences with predatory lenders in a Circles Town Hall on the subject. In doing so, she provided a much-needed perspective as to why it is so easy for

these lenders to take advantage of people in poverty.

Kia says that the pandemic changed things, but she still likes to be around her Circles family. In fact, her daughter often asks if they can go back to St. Luke, the place where Circles meetings took place during Kia's time as a Leader.

### Life outside of work:

Kia was working at a nursing home at the beginning of the pandemic. While she enjoyed the work, she wanted something different. She also wanted something that would allow her to spend time with her daughters, and Friends In Deed's flexible schedule would allow her to do just that.

Kia has an 11-year-old daughter named Nya, as well as a beautiful newborn daughter named Nova. Nova is now 2 months old!

Congrats and welcome aboard Kia! We are grateful to have you work alongside us.



## Bed and Crib Drive

Together, we raised \$26,579.27!

Last year held a lot of surprises, and our annual Bed and Crib Drive was no exception. Thanks to all of you, the Bed and Crib Drive had its most successful year ever. Along with the donations from our generous supporters, Van Winkle Mattress Co. matched 25% of the donations. The final total was **\$33,079.27**.

This was an amazing turn out considering the affect COVID had on wholesale bed prices. Because of the pandemic, the business from which Van Winkle normally purchased their beds went under, so Van Winkle had to find another supplier. While the beds were more expensive, they were also of higher quality for our low-income families.

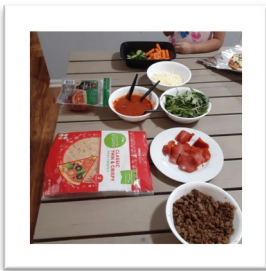
**Thank you to everyone who donated!**  
**We also want to thank Ken Fil at Van Winkle Mattress, Co.!**

## Circles News: Welcome Cohort 4!

On January 21 of 2021, Circles Washtenaw ushered in our **FOURTH** cohort of Circle Leader trainees—nine amazing individuals who are determined to create a better life for themselves and their families. Our new cohort consists of 8 women, 1 man, and 7 kids who range from preschoolers to teens. They are midway through their 14-week training class. The facilitators are Candice Everett, a former Ally, and Ginny Rezmierski, a long-time Circles volunteer.

Though COVID has been challenging for Circles, hardship can bring out the best in people. This group has taken initiative to reimagine community. To help each other set and clarify goals, for example, they already organized their own Zoom session on how to create a visual journal and have organized a virtual work session to find images for their dream boards. Furthermore, they've already begun to share their skills with each other, offering to teach everything from crocheting to hair braiding to walking someone through the steps of purchasing a home through Habitat for Humanity. We will be bringing in Leaders from earlier cohorts to share how Circles helped them achieve their goals: La'Shun from cohort 1 will share lessons learned about getting out of debt and buying a home; and Shaniqwa from cohort 2 will talk about using social capital and networking for success in college. Down the road, other Leaders will be sharing their experience of going back to school for their dream jobs. Cohort 4 trainees will complete their training in May and be matched with Allies in June. We look forward to great things from cohort 4!

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Circles has been focusing on healthy eating on a budget! Najma Treadwell, a current FID board member and Circles Children's Program Teacher, led two fun cooking classes: (1) Pizza Making that got kids interested in trying their hand at assembly, and (2) Crockpot Cookery that made everyone's mouths water. Thanks to a grant from the PNC Foundation, Circles was able to purchase crockpots for each of our current Circle Leaders.



## Child Savings Accounts



Thanks to a \$4,400 grant from the Kiwanis Club of Ann Arbor, Friends In Deed was able to start a Child Savings Account (CSA) program for the children of both the Leaders and Allies in cohort 3. The grant was used to seed accounts and provide bonuses/incentives for the children to encourage a savings mentality and positive behavioral change. Best of all, the work done in creating the Child Savings Accounts will be used as a blueprint for Circles to offer CSAs to children in all future cohorts!

**What are CSAs and how do they work?** CSAs are long-term savings or investment accounts intended for a particular purpose, such as to pay for postsecondary education or career training.

**Why are they important?** The children growing up in low-income families oftentimes do not have the resources, support or skills they need to attain the college/career training necessary to compete for high paying jobs. Child Savings Accounts will help these children build savings for the future. This act of saving for the future will, in turn, build the hopes and expectations of the children (and their families) regarding their ability to attend college or career training and achieve financial stability. The accounts also help the entire family think about money differently – as something to be invested for a long-term goal rather than something used for an immediate want or need.



# *Direct Assistance*

It has been busy on the direct assistance line as we continue to be there for our struggling community. Friends In Deed has been working closely with other organizations to make sure individuals in crisis are getting the financial assistance they need to keep the lights on and stay in their homes.

## **What are some of the things we are doing?**

Fighting against poverty means fighting for education! We were happy to provide the funds for a community member who was struggling with making her finale tuition payment. This individual will now be able to finish her last term, which will lead her to a work promotion.

The pandemic continues to put stress on relief systems in the community. Organizations continue to do their best to keep up with demand, but the demand continues to outweigh the supports readily available. FID continues to answer the call with emergency assistance by providing partial rent payments, car repair, gas for vehicles, and utilities payments.

We are happy to give community members a “Lyft.” COVID has forced most public transportation to be scarce and is causing barriers to the elderly and individuals without their own transportation. FID has paid for rides to doctor appointments, the bank, grocery stores and most recently, a vaccine clinic.

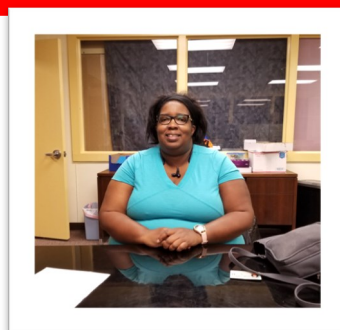
## **What is the greatest need?**

Car repair continues to be an ongoing need. People are out of work and struggling to pay for car repairs. Being in Washtenaw county right now requires a vehicle. Just because you’re not working doesn’t mean you don’t have anywhere to go. FID is doing what we can to help repair vehicles so people can look for jobs, return to work, get to the grocery store, and see their doctors.

## ***VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!***

Interested in helping the community but don’t feel like you have the time or understanding?

Join the ***Annual Dinner Committee!*** Your time, ideas, and perspective will ultimately help the people we serve. The committee meets once or twice a month leading up to the July event. Please contact Amtheyst at [Amtheyst@friendsindeedmi.org](mailto:Amtheyst@friendsindeedmi.org) if you are interested.



The pandemic made for an interesting year for Friends In Deed, but a lot of grant-making organizations went above and beyond to give us the resources we need to keep our doors open and help folks.

### COVID-Related Grants

Several of the grants we received over the last year were earmarked for either Friends In Deed’s operational expenses during the pandemic or direct assistance to low-income families.



We received a \$20,000 COVID-19 Response Grant from the James and Faith Knight Foundation.



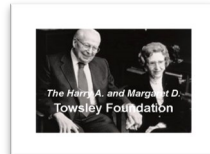
- We received a \$20,000 grant from the United Way of Washtenaw County from its COVID-19 Community Recovery Fund to address the COVID-related needs of low-income families.
- We received a \$15,000 grant from the United Way of Washtenaw County to help Friends In Deed with operational expenses.
- We received a \$10,000 grant from United Way of Washtenaw County for transportation relief during COVID — the funding was provided by Toyota.



We received a \$20,000 grant from the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan for technology enhancements and staff to ensure the safe delivery of valuable human service programs to Washtenaw County residents.



We also received a \$7,500 grant from Old National Bank to help cover Helpline staffing during the COVID transition.



Circles
Kiwanis Club of Ann Arbor \$4,400 (Children’s Savings Accounts)
PNC Foundation \$5,000

Operations (Non-COVID Related)
Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation \$11,750
First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor \$5,000
The Harry A. and Margaret D. Towsley Foundation \$20,000 (Second year)
Speckhard-Knight Foundation \$2,000

Transportation
James A. and Faith Knight Foundation \$12,000
United Way of Washtenaw County \$10,000 (Second year)

# Over The Edge

**In 2020, our first year holding an Over The Edge event, we raised \$112,859!**

**What is *Over The Edge*?** Over The Edge (OTE) is a nonprofit that helps give other nonprofits an opportunity to make fundraising fun. As part of an OTE event, a person or “edger” pledges to raise \$1,000 to secure a spot to go over the edge and rappel down a building!

**What building do edgers rappel down?** We are lucky enough to partner with the Graduate Ann Arbor and its 14-stories for OTE! If you want to check out their view, just look at the pictures on the right from 2020. Can you see how excited each edger is?

**How did it go last year?** While COVID made things interesting, it didn’t crush our spirit. We handled event planning during a pandemic by preparing for the worst and hoping for the best.

While it was hard to spread the word about the event given that most people were locked down in their homes, we were able to reach all corners of Washtenaw County with the help of our families, friends and volunteers.

**A false start but eventual success:** We had our soft opening at Arbor Brewing Company before the pandemic hit in 2020. It was a filled with cake, trivia, and laughter. We were a little nervous, however, when we had to change OTE’s date because of COVID; but we soon had 67 people registered to fundraise. Not too long after that, the “edgers” were reaching and surpassing their fundraising goals. In fact, the chair of the *Over The Edge* committee, Lorin Cartwright, raised over \$8,000!

**What’s happening with the event in 2021?** Our goal for our event in 2021 is to raise \$150,000. Our edgers are ready, and we can’t wait to start fundraising!

**Clear your schedule on October 2, 2021!**

**Are you interested in joining this year?** Please contact Amtheyst at [Amtheyst@friendsindeedmi.org](mailto:Amtheyst@friendsindeedmi.org) to be added on to the edger mailing list. She will send out the link to sign up the moment we launch our online registration. Feel free to ask her any questions or check out the Friends In Deed website for more information.



# FRIENDS IN DEED

1196 Ecorse Rd.  
Ypsilanti, MI 48198

*Return service requested*

Non-Profit  
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U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 365  
Ann Arbor, MI.

DONATE ONLINE:  
[www.FriendsInDeedMI.org](http://www.FriendsInDeedMI.org)

## Friends In Deed - Contact Information

1196 Ecorse Rd. Ypsilanti, MI 48198  
[www.FriendsInDeedMI.org](http://www.FriendsInDeedMI.org)

**Administration Line**  
(734) 485-7658

**Help Line (734) 484-4357**  
Monday-Friday 9:30 AM - 2:00 PM

**Furniture Line (734) 484-7607**  
Tuesday-Friday 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM

**Circles Program (734) 340-9042**

## Newsletter Contributors



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## Did You Know ...

Your end-of-the-year donations were especially generous this year, and we surpassed our goal!

## Thank you, thank you!

You are reliable and true; but if making a big donation before the holidays was a struggle, please take us up on dividing your yearly donation into a series of monthly, automatically recurring gifts. You can find out more about that here:

[https://  
www.friendsindeedmi.org/  
planned-giving/](https://www.friendsindeedmi.org/planned-giving/)

