

Newsletter of Friends in Action of the Eastern Panhandle

NEW HORIZONS

WINTER 2007



Tastes and Sounds of the Town Fundraiser . . . A Great Success!

Friends in Action's first annual **Tastes and Sounds of the Town** fundraiser, held on Sept 8th at the Men's Club in Shepherdstown, was a wonderful success. The more than 200 attendees of the event were able to sample sumptuous cuisine from each of the fifteen area restaurants that participated. Each attendee cast a vote for their favorite restaurant based on both food and table décor. **The Press Room** was the winner and was awarded a **Best in Show** plaque from Friends in Action to display in the restaurant until next year's event and competition. It was really a choice of which part of the diamond shines the brightest. All of the restaurants did a great job. The food overall was outstanding and thanks to their generosity Friends in Action raised funds to support our work helping struggling families in our community.

The evening was made even more enjoyable by the nine very talented local musicians who performed throughout the evening. A good time was had by all and much needed funds were raised to support the work of Friends in Action.



Press Room owners Master Chef Michael Luksa and Deb Luksa receiving Best in Show plaque from Anne Conlan.

From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As we enter the Thanksgiving Holiday and the approaching Christmas Season, it seems an appropriate time for Friends in Action of the Eastern Panhandle to formally express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the many volunteers and donors who make it possible for us to fulfill our mission.

Thanks to you, our mentor volunteers, Americorp VISTAs and donors, Friends in Action has been able to help many low-income families in Jefferson and Berkeley counties make significant progress toward self-sufficiency and a better life for themselves and their children. Without you, our work would not be possible. Because of you, the lives of families are changing for the better.

This summer, two of our moms started college, one at Shepherd University and the other at Blue Ridge Community College. Two other moms enrolled in Rumsey Community College's "Step Up for Women" program and still another two will be starting a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) program later this year. Over the past year, Friends in Action has assisted two families in finding affordable housing and has provided donated household furnishing to four families. With the help and encouragement of their Friends in Action mentor teams, two moms in our program have begun working on their GED. We are proud of these families who continue to work hard to overcome the many challenges and adversities in their paths. And, we are especially grateful to the volunteer mentors who bring the spirit of hope, possibility, guidance and the power of friendship to these families.

The Friends in Action commitment is, first and foremost, a commitment to caring. Caring builds hope and feelings of self worth; it is the foundation of change. FIAEP is more than a conduit of resources from the middle and upper classes to the poor. It is an experience that builds community and enhances the lives of all who participate. Thank you for your continued support in helping us to reduce poverty in the Eastern Panhandle one family at a time.

May you have a blessed and happy holiday season.

Anne Conlan
Executive Director

FIAEP is a United Way Agency



Meet our VISTA Volunteers

Through a grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), Friends in Action is blessed to have two dedicated AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) volunteers, **Juliette Suau** and **Katie Benson**. Juliette, who joined FIAEP in January, 2007 is a graduate of Empire State College with a major in Human Development. Katie came to FIAEP in August, 2007 after graduating from Shepherd University's Social Work Program. Prior to Katie's arrival in August, Nicole Taggart served for one year as a VISTA with FIAEP. The hard work and dedication of these VISTA volunteers have been invaluable to the success and growth of Friends in Action.

AmeriCorps was founded in 1963 by President John F Kennedy and modeled after the newly established PeaceCorps. AmeriCorps is based on the great American ideal of service. It calls upon Americans of all ages, races and faiths to contribute in meaningful ways to their communities and fortify the civic connections that make us strong as a nation: to serve one another. The AmeriCorps*VISTA program focuses exclusively on fighting poverty. VISTA members commit a year or more of their lives working to reduce poverty in our communities and in our nation. AmeriCorps*VISTA is dedicated to the proposition that no one in America should go hungry, be without a home, a good education or a livable income. VISTA members focus on building the capacity of community based programs, services and systems that help families living in poverty improve their lives for the long term. We are grateful to the AmeriCorps Program and our VISTA volunteers for their service and support of the Friends in Action program.



Adopt a Family to Help Fight Poverty in Our Community

You can help Friends in Action reduce poverty in the Eastern Panhandle one family at a time by becoming a Friends in Action's **Adopt A Family** sponsor. FIAEP is seeking businesses, civic groups, congregations, and individuals to invest in the future of a motivated family, giving them the chance to create a better life for themselves and their children. Your investment of \$2,500 per will help cover the costs associated with volunteer recruitment and training, skills education, case management and mentoring services to support a deserving family for one year. **Adopt a Family** sponsors will be eligible for a **\$500 WEST VIRGINIA STATE TAX CREDIT** [NIPS credits]. **The first two Eastern Panhandle businesses to become Adopt a Family sponsors are Jefferson Security Bank and Minghini's General Contractors, Inc.** In addition to providing financial sponsorship to help a low-income family in our community, employees of Jefferson Security Bank will be trained as mentor volunteers and work with a low-income family for one year.

Friends in Action is positioned to make a significant and lasting contribution in the lives of underserved families in the Eastern Panhandle and to all who live here. Friends in Action needs the support and involvement of this caring community in order to accomplish our goal to reduce poverty in the Eastern panhandle one family at a time. For more information on this program, NIPS credits and other ways you can support FIAEP, please contact Anne Conlan at 304-876-8500. Thank you in advance for your support.

YOU CAN HELP US ACHIEVE OUR MISSION

Your involvement can help guarantee our success. We need the community to help us reduce poverty one family at a time.

There are many ways you can help:

- **BECOME A MENTOR VOLUNTEER**
- **PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO FOSTER PROGRAM GROWTH**
- **SET UP A PRESENTATION (GIVEN BY FIAEP DIRECTOR) TO YOUR PLACE OF BUSINESS, CIVIC GROUP, OR CONGREGATION.**

Volunteers wanted!

**Our next training dates are Thursdays
February 7th and 21st from 6:00 – 9:00 pm.
All interested persons can call the office to sign up!**

Friends in Action of
the Eastern Panhandle
PO Box 1720
Shepherdstown, WV 25443
304-876-8500

**See how you can get
involved with
Friends in Action!**
Visit us on the web
www.FIAEP.org

OUR MISSION

To help low-income families identify their strengths and develop attainable and manageable goals that guide them toward greater self-sufficiency and personal well being.