

BACKGROUNDER



Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington (SMGW) was founded in 1986 by leaders from 12 Episcopal churches in the Washington, DC metropolitan area who believed they could do more together than separately. Together, they formed an independent organization providing non-sectarian social services designed to assist and empower homeless or jobless neighbors and others in need beyond the provision of emergency assistance. Starting with one staff member and a small group of volunteers in one location, we expanded to the multi-site organization that we are today, with more than 15 staff members and hundreds of volunteers annually.

In the spirit of the Good Samaritan, we offer a continuum of care to homeless and low-income individuals and families so they may move toward sustainable and more purposeful lives. Individuals in our program are “participants” – not clients since they do the work themselves.

Through our innovative Next Step Program – now including the STRIVE workforce development training and placement process – participants work with a caseworker to set goals (employment, housing, education, etc.) and then break down their goals into manageable next steps. The largest number of those goals and steps relate to meaningful and sustained employment, as well as affordable housing. Our caseworkers support participants in staying focused on their Next Steps and provide resources that support them along the way. Participants in the STRIVE training also receive supportive services from trainers and job developers.

Today, we provide services at seven locations, including two satellite offices in the greater Washington area. Core services include: relational casework, resume writing, pre-GED classes, sales and entrepreneurship training, basic computer training, HIV/AIDS services, STRIVE workforce development training and direct job placement. We continue to provide services at no charge to our participants with generous support from our volunteers and donors. There are no religious requirements for participation. Almost 90% of our budget comes from individual donors, private foundations, Partner organizations and corporate contributions.

Samaritan's monthly electronic newsletter (In Step), social media and web site provide useful information about the organization, including upcoming events, updates on casework services, contact information for our different sites' full-time staff, and testimonies from participants and volunteers.

Future plans include reaching out to more neighborhoods with our casework services, exploring ways to extend our casework hours to be more available to participants, offering more volunteer positions allowing more opportunities for participants to interact with people of even more diverse specialized backgrounds, and providing residential casework in the context of Housing First, an approach that prioritizes providing people experiencing homelessness with permanent housing as quickly as possible – and then providing voluntary supportive services as needed.

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MISSION STATEMENT

We are a faith-based community partnership – bringing together our neighbors who face poverty, homelessness or other debilitating challenges – with partner leaders, donors, volunteer and paid staff in a shared ministry that improves the lives of all throughout the Washington area, one next step and neighbor at a time.

Specifically, we seek to –

- Empower our participants to develop capacities and address barriers they face in order to live sustainable purpose-driven lives, guiding them to set goals, and take “next steps” to meet those goals.
- Engage our partner churches and schools to share in this ministry by offering their time, talent and treasure, cultivating relationships that nurture both their missions of community outreach and the mission of the Samaritan Partnership as a whole.
- Identify the basic, systemic and unmet needs of our community that underlie poverty – and engage in organized, collective education and action to address those needs.

CORE VALUES

Our core values reflect the essential, enduring tenets of who we are and what we do. They are the basis for our shared mission, vision, goals and work. They are what bind us together in community partnership, one with another – program participants, volunteers, staff, and partners. Inspired by the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), we are called to practice –

- Compassion – to be neighbors and love our neighbors as God loves us, sharing one another’s suffering and joy, treating each other as we would like to be treated, with kindness, mercy, and justice.
- Transformation – to participate in one another’s growth and development in ways that encourage one another’s strengths and abilities, empowering one another to live fuller, more meaningful lives.
- Dignity – to honor one another’s inherent worth by promoting one another’s self-respect and confidence, sharing our common struggles and celebrating the transformational journey that binds us together.
- Community – to work collaboratively with one another, seeking unity while celebrating our diversity, thereby creating a foundation to do together what none of us can do alone.

