

“Fairhill is saving my life”

“I never thought I would be homeless,” said Natalie Pickett, a former Senior Guest House (SGH) participant who now is “ecstatic” to have her own place.

Ms. Pickett was living with her daughter and son-in-law and lost her belongings when they “tossed me out.” She contacted the City of Cleveland for help, and they put her in touch with Fairhill Partners.

Ms. Pickett, who is disabled, was adamant about getting out of the Senior Guest House and did a lot of her own research to try to make it happen.

“You see those green cards on the board? Those are all Natalie’s,” said Carla Lanier, Program Coordinator, who works with SGH participants to help them get housing. Each green card on the board represents a person or organization that can assist.

“The computer lab was Natalie’s best friend. She’s a really good researcher and spent a lot of time online,” Ms. Lanier said.

Many times, though, Ms. Pickett she couldn’t get an answer from the people she was calling. Ms. Lanier made calls and got answers on her behalf, and helped Ms. Pickett fill out many applications for housing. Ms. Lanier also called the Housing Advocate and followed up with a lot of the resources Ms. Pickett gave her.

“I went outside of my own box,” Ms. Lanier said. “I learned a lot from working with Natalie.”

While Ms. Pickett was at the SGH, she also took one of the participants, an older man who needed some help, under her wing. She took him to a shop which had a sweater jacket which reminded him of his childhood; he didn’t have enough money to pay for it, so Ms. Pickett negotiated with the store owner to let her friend put the item on layaway. He now wears it every day during the colder weather.

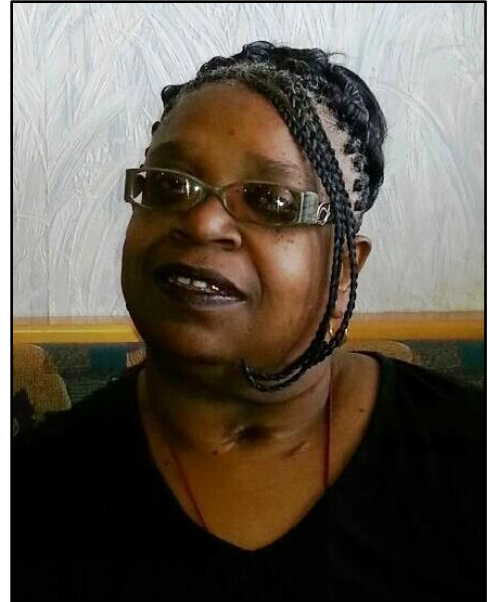
Ms. Pickett also helped out at the SGH by cooking some meals for the other participants, and created a Thanksgiving dinner so “everyone would have a home,” said Ms. Lanier.

“I know how it feels to go somewhere and have absolutely nothing, so I want to help others,” Ms. Pickett said. “Nobody wants to be in the shelter, and this is the only program like it for seniors.”

She credits Fairhill with understanding her personal situation. “I know it’s a 90-day program, and I was here 14 months. I wasn’t put out in spite of my difficult personality. Fairhill understood that I was trying to get myself out and not make this a permanent home. Even though there were guidelines about how long we could stay, Dr. FallCreek (President/CEO) still allowed me to stay until I could find a place.”

“Fairhill is saving my life,” she told Ms. Lanier more than once during her time here.

Fairhill’s Senior Guest House, which opened its doors on campus in 2004, provides a safe, temporary shelter to 8-10 first-time homeless older adults at a time while they look for permanent housing. Although the participants are encouraged to make a plan and look for housing on their own, Fairhill’s staff members and volunteers make calls on their behalf and help fill out applications when necessary; make sure they get to housing and other appointments; provide education and oversight of the living arrangements; and screen each person for public benefits. In addition, participants are encouraged to participate in Fairhill’s other programs for health promotion and lifelong learning.



The Senior Guest House is supported by funding from United Way of Greater Cleveland; Cuyahoga County; City of Cleveland; The McGregor Foundation; other family, corporate and charitable foundations, and many individuals who appreciate the work we do. To find out how you can become a part of this effort, please contact Dr. Stephanie FallCreek at sfallcreek@fairhillpartners.org or 216-421-1350 ext. 111. It makes a difference.