

Thrive DC: “Group Takes Proactive Approach to Help DC Needy Thrive”

As seen in the March 2009

issue of DC NORTH, an affiliate of Capital Community News.



Group Takes Proactive Approach to Help DC Needy Thrive

BY AMANDA ABRAMS

In sketchy economic times, ensuring that society's most down-and-out members are still being helped requires a variety of strategies. On Feb. 27, the Dinner Program for Homeless Women (DPHW) took a proactive approach by holding a celebratory fundraiser that culminated in a name change for the organization.

After decades of helping both homeless men and women with not only meals but also counseling, crisis assistance and job training, DPHW finally decided it was time for a better name. To celebrate, it held a fundraising party in the True Reformer building at 12th and U streets NW. After hors d'oeuvres and a drumroll, the organization announced its new name: Thrive DC.

The evening's short, upbeat program – which included the testimonials of two homeless clients – energized attendees and highlighted the organization's distinctive emphasis on reinforcing

the humanity of each individual it helps. And in the process, it served to remind the audience of the group's continued need for their support.

Speaking from the podium, Executive Director Erika Barry commended supporters in the audience for their commitment. “You believe that whatever challenges this community faces, we all deserve to live lives of dignity,” she said.

After the event, Barry elaborated on the organization's current situation in more detail. “We ended 2008 in a good place: our individual donors dug deep,” she said.

But the rest of the group's funding, which comes from grants, local government funds, and corporations, is more tenuous, she said. Foundations have lost endowments, the District's budget is in the red, and corporations are pulling back. And yet the number of individuals needing assistance has increased. “In 2008, we served 1,000 more meals per month than in the year before,” said Barry.

Whether that need continues to increase – and whether the organization's strategy of facing tough economic times head on succeeds – depends largely on the economic fortunes of 2009.

To learn more about Thrive DC, call 202-737-9311 or visit www.dphw.org.