

New Harmony House Director Passionate About Housing



Yonette Fredericks became the Director of Harmony House Jan. 29.

Yonette Fredericks has had a passion for housing for many years. She's happy to be the director of Harmony House, New Community's transitional housing facility for homeless families. As director, she supervises case managers, ensures contractual services are being provided and ensures the facility is in compliance with its license. She's been in the role since Jan. 29.

Fredericks has known about New Community for a number of years. She first heard about the organization through the Housing Scholars Program, offered through the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Division of Community Resources. The program matches interns with nonprofit organizations actively involved in the development of affordable housing. She was

not picked to intern with New Community at the time, but continued to follow it.

Her previous job was with Urban Renewal as the program director of two halfway houses: a 90-bed male facility and a 30-bed female facility. Part of her job was connecting clients with community services, including education. She had a relationship with New Community Workforce Development Center to get clients enrolled in its classes.

Fredericks has always been passionate about housing and assisting those in need. She decided to make the transition to housing after working in the corrections field for 17 years and came across the job opening at Harmony House.

"I always wanted to work with New Community," Fredericks said. "It's funny how life comes full circle."

Fredericks earned her undergraduate degree in Science, Technology and Society from NJIT and has a master's degree in Public Administration from Kean University.

While Fredericks is able to use her experience with halfway house residents, there are differences in her new role, including that most care is based on clients' participation.

"We're trying to motivate clients to see what's in their best interest and uplift themselves. It's sometimes challenging, but we have a dynamic team here with a vested interest," Fredericks said.

From the start of her tenure, Fredericks said the New Community family has welcomed her and has been open and willing to share information.

"I think because it was so inviting, I don't feel like the outsider," she said.

Chief of Health and Human Services Arti Kakkar is glad Fredericks has joined New Community.

"She has a very strong work ethic and has already created a working structure with the staff and residents alike," Kakkar said. "She is a team player for sure. I am happy to have her on my team."

Fredericks' favorite part of her job is conducting unit inspections because it helps her see clients as they really are and connect with them.

"It helps to connect on a different level, on a humanistic level," she said. "You can see if they're hurting and they need help. It's a window into their reality."

Housing has been a passion for Fredericks since college. Throughout her career and even in her personal life, she has been the go-to person for people in need of housing.

"Housing is the core of an individual's stability," she said. "Without that, everything else is just surface, like putting a band-aid on a puncture wound."

Fredericks came to the United States from Guyana in 1992. She has been an Essex County resident since 1999, always living in urban areas.

She is very family oriented, participating in many family functions. She also loves to read, everything from fiction to nonfiction to self help to motivational books.

Fredericks has three goals for Harmony House: maintain 100 percent compliance with its funders' contractual requirements, increase staff trainings and improve client satisfaction.

"I'm ready to do a great job," she said.