

## 2016 ASSET LIAISON REPORT

### Friendship Ark, Inc.

Date of Agency Visit: October 13, 2016

Date of Agency Board Meeting Attended: September 22, 2016

ASSET Liaison: Melonie Stall, CICS Volunteer

**Need for Program.** Friendship Ark, Inc. (FAH or Agency) was incorporated in 1999 by Joe and Lois Johanns after two years of public meetings and broad support for creating an L'Arche-like model of residential support for individuals with intellectual disabilities in Story County. By the spring of 2001, staff and three core members were living in the first Friendship Ark Home. L'Arche is an international federation of family-like homes and communities in which individuals with intellectual disabilities share life with their live-in assistants in environments that nurture the emotional, social, and spiritual well-being of each individual. The L'Arche movement began in 1964 and today there are 147 L'Arche communities in 35 countries.

FAH serves an increasing targeted population of adults with intellectual disabilities which is evidenced by their 26 member waiting list for the 20 beds in their four residential homes, 6 core members receiving supporting community living services and 24 core members utilizing their day habilitation services. All but one of their core members is originally from Story County and their ages range from 19 to 70.

FAH is requesting ASSET funding for two services in Story County that the Agency began offering in September 2015 as follows:

1. **Hourly Supported Community Living (SCL) [Service Code 3.18]** services are provided in a member's home and include: personal and home skills training services, individual advocacy services, community skills training services, personal environment support services, transportation and treatment services.
2. **Day Habilitation Services (Day Hab) [Service Code 3.20]** are provided in a non-residential environment and are meant to include: assistance with acquisition, retention, or improvement in self-help; socialization and adaptive skills that enhance social development; and developing skills in performing activities of daily living and community living. Activities and environments are designed to foster the acquisition of skills building positive social behavior and interpersonal competence, greater independence and personal choices.

FAH currently has 6 core members, ages 19-24, that receive Hourly SCL services, an increase of 4 core members from last year when the program first started. In addition, the Agency currently has 24 core members utilizing their Day Hab, an increase of 6 persons from last year when the program first started. This program is currently at capacity and has a 5 member waiting list. As the waiting list grows, FAH hires staff to be able to offer these services.

If the services provided by FAH ceased to exist, the needs of the core members could fall back onto the family or could cause the core member to be placed in a more restrictive, higher level of care environment.

There are several other providers of services to individuals with intellectual disabilities in Story County, including (not necessarily all-inclusive) Mainstream Living, Inc., Lutheran Services in Iowa, Mosaic of Central Iowa and Optima LifeServices. Most of these providers offer similar services to FAH. The Agency is unique from these other providers in that it operates as an L'Arche community and many of the core members served by FAH have more challenging needs (aging, aggressive, wheel-chair bound, etc).

FAH's programs address the following priorities established by ASSET's five funders for fiscal year 2017-18:

1. **City of Ames** – None.
2. **Story County** – Services are available and accessible county-wide, with an emphasis on services promoting self-sufficiency and for the safety, health and well-being of adults.
3. **Central Iowa Community Services** – Core Service Domains – Treatment designed to improve a person's condition and Core-Plus Service Domains – Sub acute services provided in a community-based setting supported by evidence-based practices.

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4. **United Way of Story County** – Education: Individual advocacy services and Income: Individuals have basic and emergency needs met and move toward self-sufficiency.
5. **ISU Student Government** – None.

**Program Strengths.** FAH received its first three-year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitative Facilities (CARF) in March 2016. This is the highest possible level of accreditation CARF can award. One of the comments from the survey report summarizes one of FAH's main program strengths - "Staff members are responsive, eager and passionate about excellence in service delivery. It is evident that the staff members' sole purpose at work is making the lives of the core members the best it can be."

FAH's other program strengths include staff coverage often in a 1:1 ratio due to the needs of their core members. The Agency also has a low staff turnover rate of 33%, about half of the state and national average, with a history of staff longevity as well. The Human Resource Manager, Accountant, two House Coordinators and two Supervisors all have ten years of service at the Agency and several other Supervisors and Coordinators have five or more years of service. All staff is trained in the philosophy and practice of Gentle Teaching – a way of relating to others that brings about feelings of trust, safety and love. Staff is also cross-trained, enabling them to work in FAH's residential home, Day Hab or SCL programs.

Turnover of those receiving care at FAH is very low as well. During the past year, one person moved to Texas and left FAH's SCL and Day Hab Services and one young woman passed away in January 2016 who was living in a FAH residential home. All the remaining 38 core members have remained with FAH from the previous year.

A family atmosphere is also one of FAH's strengths – core members share meals in their homes together, perform household chores together and attend activities together. FAH has also been adding more volunteer opportunities for its core members and community members, working toward that five-star quality service level, defined by Derrick Dufresne, as "...services that can only be done in the community and with a companion who is not paid to be with her (him) and is not a family member".

**Program Weaknesses.** There is currently a waiting list that could fill five more homes and there is no readily available funding for FAH to build these homes. When people discover the waiting list is 26 persons long, many people do not even bother to get on the list, so the need is likely understated. Because of this, persons with needs in Story County are going unmet. Staffing is a continuing challenge as well.

**Financial Outlook.** The Agency's biggest challenge for the year was the switch to Managed Care Organizations (MCO). FAH went four months with no payments from one MCO and two months without payment from the other two MCO's, but payment is now current with the exception of a few claims. Because of careful planning, FAH did not have to utilize any of their line of credit during the transition and the level of core member care was not affected.

At the September Board of Directors meeting, the FAH Board approved the plan to start a capital campaign drive to raise funds for a fifth home in Ames to open in the fall of 2017. Estimated total costs for the new home are \$450,000.

FAH is projecting \$2.2 million in gross revenues for fiscal year 17-18. Their main source of income is Medicaid at approximately 88%. The Agency does have one partial-pay private pay client, with the other part coming from ASSET funding. The amount of funding requested from ASSET (\$90,000 for fiscal year 17-18) is necessary as no other funding is available to provide services to persons not covered by Medicaid. The Agency received a \$10,000 grant from United Way this past year to fund an accessibility plan.

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**Internal Management Practices.** FAH's Board of Directors (Board) members have a broad variety of business and social services backgrounds with all but one member residing in Story County. Three new members were added to the Board this past year to enhance the Agency's fundraising, marketing, and policy knowledge and expertise and all members are very active. The Board participates in seven board committees which advise on Agency policies and practices.

FAH has 55 staff members - the Executive Director, Human Resources Manager, Accountant, Administrative Assistant, seven Supervisors (one for each home, plus two for Day Hab and one for SCL), eight House Coordinators (two for each home), four Program Coordinators (three for Day Hab and once for SCL) and 32 Live-Out Assistants.

Executive Director Jennifer Ellis is starting her third year at FAH and has 15 years of experience in the field.

**Agency Suggestions/Comments.** FAH staff is very appreciative of the ASSET personnel support and funding process, especially during this past year which was their first year receiving ASSET funding. Since it was FAH's first year in ASSET and the programs they sought funding for were also new, determining the correct level of funding to request was challenging.

**General Assessment.** Friendship Ark, Inc. is clearly a sought after provider in Story County of persons with intellectual disabilities given their waiting lists and high retention of the core members they serve. Their CARF accreditation is evidence that they care about the quality of their programs and level of service to their core members.