



## *Fletcher Group Partner Success Story*

# AN ACT OF FAITH

PAGE 1

## FROM DOUBT AND UNCERTAINTY...

*"We were overwhelmed," says Fay Russom, Executive Director of Hardin County Jesus Cares, a Savannah, Tennessee nonprofit dedicated to helping rural families in crisis. "We've always had a heart for people who are homeless and had been wanting to provide recovery housing for years, but none of us had any experience. That's why I started looking for someone who could come in, give us the technical assistance we needed, and help us implement a program the right way." That someone was Fletcher Group Outreach and Engagement Specialist Claire Pierson who was contacted by Russom through the Fletcher Group website. "That's when everything began to change," says Russom.*



## TO CONFIDENCE & EMPOWERMENT

*"As soon as Claire arrived, all the tension went away and everyone relaxed," says Russom. "It was like, 'Okay, now we have someone who's knowledgeable, we're not doing this alone anymore, we're going to get this done, and we're going to do it right.'" With Claire's help, numerous critical issues were soon resolved: how to vet applicants, how to process new residents, house rules, tenant rights, insurance requirements, lease agreements, document formatting, and how to partner with and obtain approvals from local agencies. "It's all those technical things we didn't even think about because of our lack of experience," says Russom. "Claire brought in so much more knowledge than we ever could have imagined and saved us an unbelievable amount of time."*

## WE CAN DO IT!

*"The Fletcher Group's been such a breath of fresh air," says Executive Director Fay Russom. "We were really wondering if this project was beyond our capabilities. But when Claire came in, looked at what we'd done, and said we were on the right track, that gave us the confidence we needed. Finding the Fletcher Group opened the door and I don't know where we'd be without them. We might have ended up with a pilot program but maybe not a complete program, certainly not as complete as it's looking now."*







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PAGE 2

## RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING

*Hardin County Jesus Cares draws its funding and volunteer staff from local church and community resources. "Because our program is faith-based," says Russom, "we sometimes wonder if partners will disapprove of our approach or orientation. But I didn't feel anything like that with the Fletcher Group. When Claire came in, all she said was, 'Hey, let's do a great program together,' and I'm like, 'Great! That's what we want.'"*

*The principle of "meeting people where they're at" is, in fact, part and parcel of the "strengths-based approach" the Fletcher Group takes with all partners. Respecting and understanding each person's beliefs, values, and needs brings out the best in all of us.*



## PROGRESSING STEP BY STEP

*Next steps include finalizing the paperwork for a newly purchased house in Savannah and several weeks renovating it. Staff will also need to be hired and trained. The Fletcher Group will likely be heavily involved in the latter. "Staff training is another thing we're not experienced with," says Russom. "And it's something that's very important," says Claire. "Some people will look at the guidelines and policies and wonder why they're needed. It's hard to implement a program if you don't completely understand it and believe in it. And you normally don't get that without detailed one-on-one training. The good news is that we specialize in that and can provide it."*

## EASY DOES IT

*"We have momentum now," says Russom. "For the first time, we can see that this is going to work. And Claire's been such a big part of it. She impressed us right from the start. Her guidance and personality are awesome—so calm, collected and knowledgeable. And if there's something she doesn't know, she says so and gets to work figuring it out. We know now that our program's going to work. But to be honest, we might still be stuck if not for Claire and the Fletcher Group. They've been wonderful."*

