

Housing Plus+

Housing management services since 1979; rental, repair & rehab

April 14, 2015

Re: Freedom Works

To Whom It May Concern:

Housing Plus is a property management company located in the same block of Penn Ave. N. where Freedom Works' residential facility is located. We own six small buildings and our office on the opposite side of the street. Freedom Works is the best neighbor we have ever had on the corner of Penn and 36th. We have never had any problems with their residents in terms of behavior that is bothersome to neighbors.

Freedom Works is a wonderful, effective rehabilitation program that is working with men coming out of prison to prepare them, with God's help, to return to society as productive citizens. They are good neighbors and we recommend them to you. They would be an excellent addition to your neighborhood.

Most Sincerely,



Judy Grommes
Housing Plus

Management Office

(612) 522-3394

Fax: (612) 521-9714

E-Mail: housingplus@comcast.net

Mailing Address:

Housing Plus

3522 Penn Ave. N.

Minneapolis MN 55412

4/26/15

To Whom it may concern

I have been involved with Freedom Works for five years as a mentor/volunteer. Freedom Works is a Christian faith based ministry involved with helping men formerly in prison to be caring, productive members of our society. I have personally witnessed men's lives being transformed dramatically being a part of this Christ-centered ministry. Freedom Works is a comprehensive program which provides each man a place to live while helping to prepare them to get a job. Each man is expected to be a part of weekly bible studies and training sessions designed to help them to get a job. Each man will have a Christian mentor to talk to and meet with on a weekly basis. There are weekly fellowship dinners where the men in the Freedom Works program get a chance to know the other mentors and volunteers in this ministry. There is also a man speaker giving an inspirational Christian message to the men.

I really can't say enough good things about Freedom Works. It has been very rewarding for me to be a part of this program. It has built my faith to see how God has changed the lives of these men. This ministry deserves support from the community.

May God richly bless this ministry

Richard Matthews

April 18, 2015

To whom it may concern,

My name is Terry Schoonmaker. I was in the Minnesota prison system from 2007 til 2010. I was in for drugs and burglary.

Before getting out of prison, the probation and parole people needed to know where I was going upon my release. I had absolutely no idea. I looked into several different aftercare houses and even considered going back to my old stomping grounds. It's a good thing I didn't do that!

My caseworker in prison found exactly what I was looking for! A faith based halfway house that would help me not only transition into society but actually contribute to society.

The place that she had found for me was FreedomWorks post prison ministry.

Freedomworks helped me look for jobs. They helped me with food, clothing, and a bus pass. FreedomWorks helped me focus on what is important and helped turn my focus away from my old life and old habits. They did this by constant accountability through Bible studies, community services, and counseling. And to my understanding, FreedomWorks does not accept violent criminals.

FreedomWorks gives to the community ... not takes away from it. I am so happy and proud to have been a part of such a wonderful organization.

I am now a Sunday school teacher, a care group leader in my church, and a leader in the Northwest Christian Teens Awana club group. I truly thank the Lord for putting me in the FreedomWorks post prison ministry! They helped me get on and stay on the right path. What a wonderful organization!

Thank you and God bless!

Thoedore (Terry) Schoonmaker
12985 South Main Drive
Cataldo, ID 83810
(208) 512-2889
farmerbob.011@gmail.com



4-18-15



April 21st 2015

To whom it may concern:

I would like to whole heartily give my recommendation in support for the services that Freedom Works provides. Speaking to the quality of character and mission, we have found that George Lang and team take the mission of working with individuals that have had some real barriers to overcome in life very seriously. We know that because we have hired a number of his guys and they have all been hard workers that really want to do the right things in life.

I know that the training and supportive atmosphere of what Freedom Works does as part of their program is passionate and effective. George Lang heads up an effective responsible program, I have every confidence that he, his team, and the population that they will be responsible for will be a great neighbors!

Regards,

Tom McCullough

Executive Director



755 - 73rd Avenue NE
Fridley, MN 55432
Phone: 763.784.7199
Fax: 763.784.1931

April 16, 2015

Council Member William K. Finney
15 W. Kellogg Blvd. Ste. 320C
St. Paul, MN 55102

Dear Sir,

With complete confidence I commend to you Freedom Works, a ministry which hopes to purchase the former Convent on St. Paul's east side in the Dayton Bluffs neighborhood at 869 5th St., St. Paul, MN 55106. I affirm how that building space and site would further the mission of Freedom Works to provide hope and direction for men who are accepted into their program after their incarceration.

I have had many opportunities to observe Freedom Works over the nine years of my pastorate at Grace Evangelical Free Church of Fridley. One of our church's ministries has been a "Second Friday of the Month" food distribution that we have provided in cooperation with Second Harvest. When we began this outreach ministry eight years ago, we invited Freedom Works to partner with us. We requested that they serve as "cart pushers" to help the recipients get their food/food products from the end of the distribution line to their cars. I'm very grateful to report that since we started this food distribution, each month, almost one-hundred Friday evenings, regardless of the weather, approximately fifteen to twenty men associated with Freedom Works have been fully engaged in serving approximately six hundred family units who come through the lines. I have had many opportunities to observe their interaction with each other, with other volunteers, and with the recipients of the food/food products. They have modeled well a spirit of goodwill and cooperation. Most importantly, I have seen how purposeful everyone associated with Freedom Works has been (staff, board members, and men in the program) to make a positive contribution into the lives of others.

I have complete confidence that this ministry radiates integrity in every way. Based on what I have witnessed, I have assurance that Freedom Works will benefit not only the men who directly participate in this ministry, but also the Dayton Bluffs neighborhood in which Freedom Works seeks to locate. Their track record in their present location in North Minneapolis would affirm that expectation.

My hope is that the Council will approve Freedom Works' application to proceed in purchasing this strategic property. If granted I believe the property will be used in strategic ways to strengthen the whole area. I would welcome any further opportunity to speak on behalf of Freedom Works.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gerald L. Stigall
Senior Pastor

FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH

Building a Community of Faith through God's Faithfulness
in our worship, fellowship, discipleship, service and evangelism

April 13, 2015

To Whom it may concern,

I first became involved with Freedomworks about 6 years ago, attending meetings on Thursday evenings with them at an Episcopal Church on the near north side of Minneapolis. I was serving as a Trustee at Faith Baptist Church at the time and was approached by directors of Freedomworks about the possibility of moving their Thursday night fellowship gatherings and Monday night Bible studies to Faith Baptist Church. Meetings were set up with our head Pastor at the time, Kerry Bender, and Church leadership and we agreed to allow Freedomworks to have this Monday and Thursday access to our church building. In all the time they have been using our facility we have never had a problem with breakage or damage of any kind. They leave the facility at least as clean as when they arrived. We have never felt uneasy about them having key access to come and go as they please because we have found them to be good stewards of our facility and care for it as we do. They pay monthly rent and the rent is paid on time – always.

Faith has been the benefactor of those in residence at Freedomworks, they have worked at our annual church block party. Many of those in residence have and do join us for our Sunday service and we have come to look upon them as good and faithful neighbors working to make North Minneapolis a better place to live and work.

Faith has been involved in cook outs at the Freedomworks residence and the basis for these cookouts is to give back to their neighbors. They have fed thousands (I know because I've cooked for two of them) absolutely free of charge.

I now serve as a Servant Elder at Faith, we feel privileged to call Freedomworks Partners and look forward to growing an already strong bond that exists between our two organizations. We value them and I pray they value us as well.

Sincerely,

Tim Mueller

Faith Baptist Church Servant Elder

Faith Baptist Church, 4350 Russell Ave. N., Minneapolis, MN 55412, (612) 529-0686
Harry Anderson, Interim Pastor
Mark Jaspers, Music & Youth Minister
Julie Walther, Children's Minister
Jen Woyke, Office Assistant

FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH

Building a Community of Faith through God's Faithfulness
in our worship, fellowship, discipleship, service and evangelism

April 14, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Harry Anderson. I am the Interim Senior Pastor at Faith Baptist Church, Minneapolis, and I am writing on behalf of FreedomWorks Ministry based in North Minneapolis. I have become well acquainted with this organization and its leadership since I began my position at the end of August, 2014. I am just one of many at Faith Baptist who would be able to verbalize and document their very favorable opinions and interactions with FreedomWorks.

First, I can say without reservation that from the very beginning of my interactions with George Lang and the leadership of this organization, they run an excellent ministry program and provide a dynamic environment that has a clearly defined mission and focus. Many of the members of Faith Baptist are involved on a regular basis and find great joy and meaning relating to and interacting with the men of FreedomWorks. Each and every individual from Faith that I have had conversation with can't say enough good things about their interaction with this organization and its leadership. They run a very tight ship. They are on mission, highly organized, and very intentional on bringing great things into the lives of these men who are seeking wisdom, structure, and a promising future.

Second, Faith Baptist Church has a great presence in the North Minneapolis community and continues to carry an excellent reputation for children's and family ministry. It has been a presence for decades with a multi-generational congregational demographic and continues to serve the immediate community as well as our surrounding suburbs. That said, the FreedomWorks organization is granted unrestricted access to utilize our facility every Thursday evening for a dinner and education/inspirational/training event. The relationship between FreedomWorks and Faith Baptist is nothing short of excellent because of the way the leadership, its' volunteers, and participants have conducted themselves.

Third, there are now many men of Faith Baptist who have more than a casual relationship with the men of FreedomWorks. Many of the men from FreedomWorks attend a community bible study on Monday evenings. We now have two services a year where FreedomWorks and Faith Baptist combine for celebration and worship. And at the present, a number of men now attend regularly our Sunday morning worship services with regular invitations extended for dinner on Sunday afternoons.

Finally, I speculate that many of the possible questions and concerns that may have been a part of the thought process in building an ongoing relationship with an organization like FreedomWorks have been washed away by the quality and integrity of the leadership, the powerful impact on all the men who have invested and participated in this ministry, and the simple joy of redeemed people living in redemptive relationships. FreedomWorks is a dynamic part of the weekly schedule of Faith Baptist.

Simply stated, it is a profound blessing and honor to be associated and connected to the ministry of FreedomWorks. Blessings!

Sincerely,

Rev. Harry Anderson, Interim Senior Pastor, Faith Baptist Church

Faith Baptist Church, 4350 Russell Ave. N., Minneapolis, MN 55412, (612) 529-0686
Harry Anderson, Interim Pastor
Mark Jaspers, Music & Youth Minister
Julie Walther, Children's Minister
Jen Woyke, Office Assistant

Sundell, John <jsundell@metlife.com>

To whom it may concern. I have been very active with prison ministries through both Charis of Minnesota and FreedomWorks Ministries for many years. I briefly worked at Lino Lakes with Mike Gattie supporting CBS bible studies which were held weekly in the prison. Mike had been doing this with a team for about 6 years. This ministry was moved to outside the walls 6 or 7 years ago providing a place of worship, study and fellowship for men like me from the suburbs and men coming from prison into halfway homes like FreedomWorks. I have known George Lang who is the executive director of FreedomWorks since his exit from Prison. What I do know is I have met dozens of men who have come through FreedomWorks and fully trust their journey in life because they are held to a higher standard than anyone I know who has never been to prison! They are immersed in projects of serving others and not themselves. If the community of Dayton Bluff sees past their concerns they will be rewarded with neighbors who will be shining stars in the community.....protecting and serving that community not creating a problem.....my friend they are an awesome solution to that vacant building.....please allow them in your neighborhood and you will be grateful I promise!

Ken Ehling

Hi George,

I checked the constant contact database we use for R3 emails and your email address was included. I also had the latest mailing resent to you. If you aren't getting these emails, you might want to check your junk mail file. Some times these get caught in the filters and end up there. Let me know if you still haven't received the R3 email and I will look into it further.

Also, good to see you at Norm's place yesterday. Happy to hear the good things happening at Freedom Works and praying for your St. Paul project.

--Ken Ehling

George,

I am providing you with a recommendation letter which you may use in your conversations with the Dayton's Buff neighborhood.

I was fortunate to meet a gentleman that had participated in your program at a Mens breakfast I attended at my church Lord of Life in Maple Grove. I would like to share the perspective I received that morning from this gentleman.

I did not know anyone at the breakfast as it was my first time attending. I sat down with a few guys and starting talking to one person in particular. As it turned out, this gentleman was one of our speakers and a graduate of the FreedomWorks program. He was very kind and open with his experience and you could see that like the rest of us, his daily walk was a combination of building a career and a relationship with his community.

What struck me and what I want to share in this letter is consider the challenge this man shared. When he was first released from prison after serving 18 years, he was so scared to be on his own that it took him 3 times before he could enter a store to buy toothpaste and a tooth brush. Something that we do automatically seemed so foreign to him.

The gentlemen that participate in FreedomWorks have committed crimes and have served their punishments. They are making a concerted effort to enter the community and be productive members to society. I applaud the efforts of FreedomWorks to work with these gentlemen to reenter society.

Sincerely,

Randy Halvorson
612-227-2051

William Bevan

Hi George.

Well it has been another blessed and positive year of observing and participating in the many aspects of your Freedom Works (FW) ministry. Each year I can see what a spiritual and personal benefit it is for each of the men that have applied for and been accepted into the FW recovery program.

I know how serious the men are about applying themselves to do whatever it takes to continue in their quest to turn their life around and strive to become a contributing member of our society. The record speaks for itself when you look at the track record since the FW program began so many years ago.

Interacting with the men in our once a week bible study gives me a unique insight into the positive and committed attitudes these men possess and their seriousness about setting personal goals and doing whatever it takes to attain those goals. Their desire and the discipline they possess for the purpose of growing spiritually, reconnecting with their families and establishing a career path is very impressive.

The result of your personal leadership by example and the professionalism of the FW staff has obviously been a positive and contributing factor in the progress and development of these men over the years. The improvement in the in the conditions in the neighborhood where the FW house is located and the complete trust the neighbors have in the men who live there, which has been brought upon solely as a result of of the faith-based and positive oriented environment that exists within the confines of the house, is just one of many examples of the success of the the FW ministry.

George, I know that prayer and faithfulness to God's leading has been extremely instrumental in resulting in the "new life" these men strive for and achieve. I also know that you and your staff will be blessed and be a blessing to the men who have entrusted their future to you for many years to come.

It is so encouraging to see how these men have changed their lives so completely and it has been a privilege to partner with all of you in the FW ministry.

Blessings to you!

Bill Bevan

Ramseyer, Paul E

George,

Here's my comments for the Dayton's Bluff community. I'll be praying that the sale of the building is approved.

Paul

To Whom it May Concern:

I have been involved with the ministry of Freedom Works for over 5 years, attending weekly meetings and other functions. Also, I've been mentoring one of the men living in their home on the north side of Minneapolis for the past year.

The ex-felons in the Freedom Works program whom I have observed, have consistently demonstrated by their actions that they are moving beyond their former behavior and are committed to becoming good citizens. Their Christian faith has obviously played a big part in this transformation. You can rest assured that the residents would pose no danger whatsoever to your community. On the contrary, they would contribute to the betterment of the neighborhood.

I heartily endorse the purchase, by Freedom Works, of the building in question.

Cordially,
Paul Ramseyer
VP for Media (Retired)
University of Northwestern St. Paul

Sherry Johnston

George -

I hope this gets to you in time.

To whom it may concern -

I have given this letter a lot of thought. The main points that I think are important are as follows:

I have been involved in FreedomWorks as a volunteer for a number of years now. I enjoy the time I spend with the FreedomWorks people.

I have worked on resumes for the men and was involved in their weekly meals at a local church. The men volunteer at different events on a regular basis. They share their lives and their stories any number of times. They want to share the good that is in their lives. The good that comes from being involved in FreedomWorks and the good that comes from knowing and having a relationship with Christ.

Have you ever seen some so called 'hardened' man treating an older woman (older man, child) with kid gloves and helping her with a food distribution? I have. It is awesome. Awe-some. Inspiring awe. Have you ever seen that same man cleaning up a table after his fellow members and volunteers have finished an evening meal? I have. Awe-some. Have you ever seen that man at an event and know that you can walk up to him and hug him and know he will hug you back? I have. Awe-some.

I wish I could properly convey what is going through my mind now. The FreedomWorks men are hard workers. They are volunteers. They are fathers. Brothers. Husbands. They are friends. Man are my friends. I consider myself blessed to have friends in my life who are a part of FreedomWorks. I hope the same for you all.

Thank you for the opportunity to write this letter.

Thank you again -
Sherry Lyn Johnston

R. J. Pullman

Dear concerned residents,

First of all, I wish to thank you for allowing Executive Director, George Lang to open the meeting on April 14 with a general presentation regarding the initial development and subsequent growth of the original FreedomWorks in North Minneapolis.

I became a volunteer at FreedomWorks several years ago, while also being a volunteer in the Innerchange Freedom Initiative (IFI) at the Lino Lakes Correctional Facility. While working with the inmates at Lino Lakes who applied to participate in IFI, I witnessed an incredible change in many of those who chose to break the mis-behavioral cycle that brought them there often several times before. What seemed to be lacking in most of their immediate futures, was a carefully controlled residential environment that would allow them to re-enter society with an entirely new persona; that of a productive, law abiding citizen. I was truly amazed to see many of those men literally change before my eyes, as they worked their way through the 18 month program. Did all succeed? Certainly not, but those who sincerely committed themselves to work through each phase of the Christian based IFI Program were ready to be carefully screened for participation in FreedomWorks.

Though not part of the screening process, I do see the results with regard to the attitudes/behavior of the new residents. Though the program is highly structured, the residents are required to make personal decisions and thereby develop their personal integrity. As they mature in the program, they take the responsibility to mentor to those who have recently arrived. Throughout their stay at FreedomWorks, the residents are kept very busy with domestic responsibilities, computer skill enhancement, Bible study, seeking and maintaining full employment consistent with their vocationally oriented aptitudes, interests, and limitations.

I truly wish that there was some way for you to see the pronominal before-to-after changes in these men. And by far, the most critical steps in their rehabilitation is through the halls of FreedomWorks, where good people watch other god people learn from their mistakes.

Your questions are more than welcome.

Sincerely,
Bob Pullman

craig anderson

George, over the last 10 years I have had the pleasure of working with you and FreedomWorks as a volunteer. My role includes being a mentor for men in the program, developing resumes, reading during Thursday night fellowship, developing content for newsletters, and participating in neighborhood and community events (including a Minnesota Wild game - Go Wild!).

In every way, FreedomWorks has been a positive influence on the men in the FreedomWorks' community, and a positive addition to the North Minneapolis neighborhood surrounding the FreedomWorks' house. We've seen lives permanently changed for the better, and strong, positive relationships built with other non-profits both in, and beyond, Hennepin County.

The St. Paul facility would be one more way FreedomWorks can forge new positive relationships and provide strong community opportunities for men in the program. Let me know what support I can provide to help you in this effort.

Thanks.

Barry Naugle

George - I understand the opposition. They are afraid, just like I was 7 years ago when I was asked to a Thursday night dinner. But I took a risk and as is usually the case, I am forever grateful I did. I learned that the residents are people just like the volunteers. They have been in a really bad environment and will work really hard not to go back. The dedication, work ethic, attitude change are something everyone should witness. If the opposition keeps FreedomWorks from moving into the proposed building, they will lose a wonderfully motivating experience.

rhalvorson6072@comcast.net

From: "Bittner, Albert" <albert.bittner@xcelenergy.com>
Date: April 27, 2015 at 9:23:57 AM CDT
To: "ajbertski01@yahoo.com" <ajbertski01@yahoo.com>
Subject: RE: Recommendation letters

To whom it may concern:

My name is Albert Bittner and have had a lot of direct contact with George Lang and freedom works personally.

I attended Minneapolis Believers in Christ Ministries, a church in North Minneapolis and was the worship leader for fifteen years. In that time George Lang had himself gone through the program IFI and I am a personal friend of Randy Washington who was the IFI program director (a prison fellowship ministry) and George Lang became a personal friend while first visiting our church upon his release program.

Freedom works has proved to me time and again to be an extremely effective ministry and program and has always been concerned first and foremost with operating with integrity, transparency and with diligent concern for the immediate safety of the community in which it operates. I have personally been involved in multiple events that Freedomworks has put on including several outdoor events on Freedomworks premises that included a barbecue inviting the entire community where whomever wished to come on the day of the event were served food, there was live music and speakers explaining Freedomworks message of being concerned for the community and the men in the program and the relationship between the community and the men in the Freedomworks program and Freedomworks desire for the community to have men in the community be empowered and for Freedomworks to have the support OF THE COMMUNITY.

George Lang and Freedomworks have been tireless, humble leaders in the community of North Minneapolis with a desire to make Minneapolis a better and safer place including for the sake of the men in the program and THEIR families which are often in the community of North Minneapolis themselves. They have garnered the respect of the community and the endorsement of many within and outside of the community of North Minneapolis and I have seen further success of Freedomworks through many more men that have successfully come through Freedomworks' program come and attend our church and become successfully integrated back into the workplace and community.

Furthermore my wife Annette Bittner has spent time as an employee of Freedomworks as an administrative assistant to the program directors prior to George Lang and my families' experience with Freedomworks was always one we witnessed firsthand the diligent work of Freedomworks' and George Lang's humble concern and hard work of earning the trust of the men they help and the community they are serving. They were always honest and operate with diligence to provide a safe atmosphere for the communities they touch and are a great asset to the city and I recommend them as trustworthy advocates and allies for any community in which they gain opportunity to serve.

Sincerely,
Albert Bittner (AJ Bittner)

4/26/15

To Whom it may concern

I have been involved with Freedom Works for five years as a mentor/volunteer. Freedom Works is a Christian faith based ministry involved with helping men formerly in prisons to be caring, productive members of our society. I have personally witnessed men's lives being transformed dramatically being a part of this Christ-centered ministry. Freedom Works is a comprehensive program which provides each man a place to live while helping to prepare them to get a job. Each man is expected to be a part of weekly bible studies and training sessions designed to help them to get a job. Each man will have a Christian mentor to talk to and meet with on a weekly basis. There are weekly fellowship dinners where the men in the Freedom Works program get a chance to know the other mentors and volunteers in this ministry. There is also a man speaker giving an inspirational Christian message to the men.

I really can't say enough good things about Freedom Works. It has been very rewarding for me to be a part of this program. It has built my faith to see how God has changed the lives of these men. This ministry deserves support from the community.
May God richly bless this ministry

Richard Mathison

