



DELANCEY STREET FOUNDATION

South Carolina

2510 North Hobson Ave

North Charleston, South Carolina

INTRODUCTION TO DELANCEY STREET SOUTH CAROLINA

Delancey Street is a non-profit, self-help organization for about 1500 drug addicts, alcoholics, ex-convicts, and others whose lives have hit bottom. In this community, residents learn to care for others, develop values, self-reliance, gain some dignity for themselves, learn occupational skills, get an education, and earn a sense of self-worth so they can ultimately graduate from Delancey Street and make a legitimate and successful life in society. San Francisco is the headquarters with 500 residents; the other facilities are in Los Angeles, New Mexico, North Carolina, New York, and South Carolina.

Delancey Street is primarily a self-supporting, self-governing community, maintained entirely by the men and women who come to Delancey Street for help; representing all racial, cultural, and socio-economic groups. Many residents come into Delancey Street upon referral from an agency of the criminal justice system. Interviews are conducted by other residents of Delancey Street who have been here long enough to understand Delancey Street's values. Interviews are conducted on Delancey Street premises as well as in selected jails and prisons. It is important to tell the whole truth in your interview. Since we live as an extended family, we come to know all about each other; admitting the truth about our lives and situations begins the process of change at Delancey Street, anyone caught lying in their interview will be asked to leave. New residents are asked to make a two-year commitment because we believe that is the minimum time required to really turn a life completely around which has spent years developing self-destructive patterns. The stay at Delancey Street is disciplined, serious business.

The first few months in Delancey Street are considered the "immigration" phase. Upon acceptance, men will have their hair trimmed to a short length, and the women are asked to remove all makeup. Clothing is provided and the first focus is to turn around street and/or gang images and develop new self-concepts. These first few weeks are spent in maintenance jobs such as cleaning the facilities and serving meals. Residents are allowed to write immediate family members after 30 days and make a call after 90 days; however, they are generally encouraged to spend their time and energy in "immigration" getting to know those around them and becoming involved in their new environment. Following that, letters, phone calls, and visits are earned along with responsibilities and rewards.

The faster new residents learn good work habits and basic positive interactions skills, the more quickly they will earn their way out of maintenance and out of immigration and into one of the numerous vocational training departments where they will learn vocational skills. Training schools, some of which generate income for the house, provide job training in many areas including our moving company, the construction trade, auto mechanics, bookkeeping, culinary arts (including café, restaurant, and catering skills), and sales, among numerous others. The focus is on learning to give, to get good work ethic and to help. Also, a strong emphasis is placed on academic education. Residents are tutored until they receive a high school equivalency and numerous in-house classes are provided.

There are three primary rules: 1) No physical violence; 2) No threats of violence; 3) No drugs or alcohol. Anyone breaking these rules will be asked to leave. Other problems are punished by extra work such as washing dishes. We believe in teaching people to admit their mistakes, fix them, and move forward.

No one in Delancey Street, not even the President, receives a salary. There is no official staff at Delancey Street. Everyone who comes in works his or her way up into some sort of position in which he/she is learning a new job from the person over them who has held that job before, and teaching the job he/she has now to a newer resident. In this way, everyone at Delancey Street is pulling together toward the same goals. No one is simply a receiver; everyone is a giver as well. You are not coming to a program based on counseling. We have a strong work ethic and base our change on learning new ways of living by doing.

If you are interested in reading about Delancey Street in more detail, please write the Intake department and ask for a copy of the chapter from a book written by our President which is entitled “Delancey Street: Process of Mutual Restitution” and we will be delighted to forward it to you.

Eligibility: No hard and fast criteria exists other than a strong motivation to change one’s lifestyle, an ability to interact in an active and fast paced environment, and reasonably good health (our present medical resources are not equipped to treat physical ailments or psychological disorders requiring professional care or prolonged intensive care). Because our work ethic is strong and much of our learning about getting along with others occurs in vocational training, residents must be in good enough health to fully participate. We don’t take sex offenders, arsonists, or dual-diagnosis applicants because we believe they need professional counseling and we cannot offer any. We don’t accept people who require psychological medication.

Area Served: No geographical limitations. Call for a facility nearest to you.

Fees: **None.** Donations are welcome.

Residents who work within the environment receive no salary; those who are employed elsewhere donate their earnings because we pool all of our money to survive. We are not funded. Three months prior to graduation we set aside 50% of each paycheck to cushion the cost of the return to the community at large.

Criminal Justice System Referrals: Delancey Street accepts referrals from every aspect of the court system ranging from diversion and alternative sentencing, through probation and parole. We cooperate with all agencies of the criminal justice system and their representatives in terms of record keeping and when court-referred residents leave Delancey Street under conditions which violate the terms of their parole/probation.

Intake Procedure: If you are interested in becoming a resident of Delancey Street you may come to our building 24 hours a day. We’re located at 2510 North Hobson Avenue, North Charleston, SC 29405; our telephone number is (843) 554-5179 (no collect calls please). Prospective residents may not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol for the interview. If you are, we’ll ask you to wait on the bench until you’re coherent to do a real interview. We consider the interview the first step in becoming a part of our community. Since we receive no government funds for taking a resident and charge no fee, the only thing that matters to us is to be there for people who really want to change. The only thing prospective residents have to offer us is their word. We take that word very seriously. When the person commits to staying two years, we want that commitment to mean something. No lies will be tolerated in the interview. If the person lies to get in and we discover the lie, the person will be asked to leave. We really want to start on a new note and the interview is the first step to a new life of honesty, decency, and integrity.

Other: Residents range in age from 18 to 78. Rules for acceptance and publication in the program are the same for everyone without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, or handicap. Unfortunately, we have more applicants than we have spaces and we have to turn some people down due to lack of room. If we do accept you, we know it can be hard work to truly change, but we are there with you, believing you can do it. We want you to know that the process, like life, can be hard, but it can also be lots of fun. **Write to:**

**Delancey Street Intake
2510 N. Hobson Avenue
N. Charleston, SC 29405**

What We Believe

1. First and foremost, we believe people can change. When we make a mistake we need to admit it and then not run from it, but stay and work to fix the mistake. And though no one can undo the past, we can balance the scales by doing good deeds and earning back our own self-respect, decency, and a legitimate place in mainstream society.
2. We believe that people can learn to live drug free, crime free lives of purpose and integrity. Rather than following a medical model or a therapeutic model, we've developed an educational model to solve social problems. We teach people to find and develop their strengths rather than only focusing on their problems.
3. Rather than solving one issue at a time (e.g., drugs or job skills) we believe that all aspects of a person's life interact, and all people must interact legitimately and successfully with others to make their lives work. Delancey Street is therefore a **total learning center** in which residents learn (and teach) academics, vocational skills, and personal, interpersonal, practical and social survival skills. We believe the best way to learn is to teach; and that helping others is an important way to earn self-reliance. Person A helps person B and person A gets better.
4. Delancey Street functions as an **extended family, a community** in which every member helps the others with no staff of experts, no "program approach". Everyone is both a giver and a receiver in an **"each one-teach one"** process.
5. **Economic development** and **entrepreneurial boldness** are central to our model's financial self-sufficiency and to teaching residents self-reliance and life skills.
6. Delancey Street is **value-based** in a strong traditional family value system stressing the work ethic, mutual restitution, personal and social accountability and responsibility, decency, integrity and caring for others in a **pro bono publico** approach.



Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Who Are the Constituents?**

Delancey Street Foundation maintains Residential Educational Communities for people who have hit bottom and who are disenfranchised. Our residential population represents the most challenging constituency of people in generational poverty with multiple social problems.

Our residential population ranges in age from 18 to 68. Approximately 20% are women. All racial and ethnic groups are represented with about one-third being African-American, one-third Hispanic and Native American, and one-third Anglo. The average resident has been a hard core substance abuser for over 18 years, abusing alcohol and multiple drugs such as heroin, methamphetamine, and cocaine in all its forms. The average resident is illiterate, completely unskilled, and has never held even an unskilled job for as long as six months; they are completely without work habits. The average resident has been trapped in poverty for many generations, is at least a second generation (2.6) gang member, substance abuser, or felon. The average resident has been institutionalized at least four times and has been homeless for at least six months. Virtually all (over 95%) have been victims of physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse.

Statistics can never capture what a life is like and aggregate data can depersonalize the horror of the lives our constituents lead. The biggest issue they face is one that cannot be captured by any of the data. It is the incredible sense of despair that comes from repeated failure and hopelessness. Indeed it leads to a devastating poverty of spirit, values, and belief.

2. **What Are the Principal Activities that Make the Model Unique?**

The numerous principal activities we provide turn lives completely around. Despite the violent criminal backgrounds of our adult residents, gang members once sworn to kill one another live in integrated dorms and work together cooperatively and non-violently. Although the average resident is illiterate, all residents receive at least a high school equivalency degree, and many go on to college. Although the average resident is unskilled, all are trained in three marketable skills before graduating. The minimum stay at Delancey Street is two years; the average stay is four years. During that time residents learn not only academic and vocational skills, but also interpersonal, social survival skills along with the attitudes, values, sense of responsibility, self-reliance and earned sense of pride necessary to live in the mainstream of society drug free and crime free, successfully and legitimately. Over 14,000 men and women have graduated into society leading successful lives including lawyers, truck drivers, salespeople, the various medical professions, realtors, mechanics, contractors, and even a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, the President of the San Francisco Housing Commission, a Deputy Coroner, a Fire Department Captain, and a Deputy Sheriff. We accomplish all of this at no cost to the taxpayer or the client.

- 1) We have developed an educational model rather than a therapeutic model to solve social problems. It is a total learning center in which every aspect of life is taught by residents to residents on an "each one teach one" principle, where older residents help newer ones and everyone works. With regard to academic education, for example, the resident who reads at a tenth grade level tutors one who reads at an eighth grade level, who tutors another who reads at a fourth grade level, who tutors another who is just learning the alphabet. Through this model we provide basic high school learning, all the way through our own in-house Bachelor of Arts program which is accomplished hand-in-hand with accredited universities.
- 2) Delancey Street functions not as a "program" but as an extended family and as a community in which everyone is an important giver as well as receiver in the process of changing their lives. The organization is completely self-governed, with councils of residents dealing with one another on issues such as housing, rule violations, education, and the like. We have never accepted any government funds for our operations nor do we have any staff. We pool all our resources.
- 3) Economic development and social entrepreneurial boldness are central to the model's self-sufficiency. They are also central to teaching the disenfranchised to develop their talents and strengths and not simply to focus on their problems, and thereby gain empowerment, self-reliance and a strong sense of pride and dignity in their own achievements. Each resident at Delancey Street learns three marketable skills by working in Delancey Street training schools. These include one manual, one clerical/computer and one interper-

sonal/sales skill. For most residents who have never held a job in their lives, this is as challenging as it is rewarding. The vocational training schools are managed and taught by residents themselves (some are accredited by the State, and the residents themselves are the accredited teachers). Some of the training schools generate the funding that supports Delancey Street's activities. Current vocational programs include:

- Automotive, mechanical & repair
- Catering, event and wedding planning
- Christmas tree sales
- Construction and property management
- Moving and trucking
- Warehousing
- Office, administrative

Numerous of these training schools have been voted best in their area!

- 4) Delancey Street's focus is value based with a strong traditional family value system stressing work ethic, mutual restitution, social and personal accountability and responsibility, decency and integrity. Most important, the approach stresses the fact that the people who are the problem can become the solution by caring for one another. This pro bono publico approach is central and critical to our model. In line with this, our residents not only volunteer to teach and work with one another, they also volunteer in the community, helping others that are less fortunate through a series of service programs for the elderly, handicapped, and at-risk youths, among others.

In 1990 Delancey pioneered a new neighborhood by completing construction of an expanded and centralized home on the waterfront in San Francisco. This 400,000 square foot complex was primarily built and supervised by Delancey residents. President Mimi Silbert was the developer and Delancey Street was its own general contractor for this unique development called "a masterpiece of social design" by Pulitzer Prize winning architectural critic, Allen Temko. Covering an entire city block, this four story complex contains street level retail stores, a highly acclaimed public restaurant, a screening room written up as one of the top three in San Francisco, a highly reviewed café bookstore and art gallery, housing units for 500 that overlook a Mediterranean-style courtyard which also holds a vast array of educational and recreation facilities for the residents. This was an unprecedented vocational training program, providing over 300 formerly unemployable drug addicts, homeless people and ex-felons in Delancey Street every skill in the building trades (with the support of the Building Trade Unions) as well as training in purchasing, contracting, computer and accounting services.

While we are, of course, proud of our activities and achievements, particularly because all have been accomplished by our residents themselves, we believe that because of these successes, we have a larger responsibility to see that our mission extends beyond reclaiming the individual lives we have served to date into teaching the model to other states and nations who are experiencing the same horrific problems. Therefore, we have been expanding the activities of the Delancey CIRCLE: Coalition to Implement Revitalized Communities, Lives, Education, and Economies. The Delancey CIRCLE is our effort to respond to the growing crisis of the most intractable social problems occurring in the world today: poverty and growing underclass populations, crime, substance abuse, homelessness, child abuse, violence, and the attendant hopelessness that pervades the people who live with these problems and are struggling in a field fraught with failure. As a result of some visibility given our model in the past, we have received over 10,000 requests to teach our model to others.

3. **What is the Impact of Your Work?**

Researchers have numerous objective ways to measure impact. Delancey Street has been viewed and reviewed by a wide variety of people. Dr. Karl Menninger (the founder of the Menninger's Clinic and often considered the grandfather of the American mental health movement at its height) conducted a long-term study on Delancey

Street graduates that demonstrated a phenomenal success rate of 98%. He summarized his findings with the statement, "Delancey Street is an incredible mixture of hard practicality and idealism. It is the best and most successful rehabilitation program I have studied in the world." Studies have been performed by the California State Board of Corrections, and by independent evaluators who have used success indicators such as arrest, recidivism of drug use, risk behaviors, social and emotional well-being indicators such as perceived self-worth and education achievement indicators, among others. All the studies demonstrated success among Delancey Street Foundation participants.

However, it is our strong belief that the long-term impact of an effort such as ours is not one that can be objectively measured. In the most basic sense, the long-term impact, the reward in the struggle for success is felt each and every time someone turns around a formerly destructive life against all odds. They're all stories like Shirley's. Before Delancey Street, Shirley spent 20 years with violence, drugs, and prostitution, homeless on the streets and in and out of jail. She was a third generation prostitute. She never knew her father and she barely knew her mother and grandmother except that they taught her the life on the streets early. She was repeatedly beaten and sexually abused, not only as a child by people her mother and grandmother brought into the home, but later by pimps and people on the streets where she lived. Horrifically, she taught her children to follow in her footsteps as fourth generation drug addicts, prostitutes and criminals.

She came to Delancey Street as an alternative to a fifteen-year prison sentence. She had enormous guilt and vengeful anger. She had no skills, no education, and no hope. She stayed in Delancey Street four years where she lost a grandson to the streets, murdered in gang activity, but slowly gained back her children and grandchildren; and she gained a high school equivalency, a diploma from vocational college, computer and secretarial skills, sales skills, and an incredible ability to love and help others. After she graduated from Delancey Street, she worked to turn around the lives of her children and grandchildren and recently proudly watched a granddaughter spurn prostitution, the streets, drugs, and crime, and become the first in the family to graduate from high school and go on to college. Shirley has run a Safe and Sober Living Home for formerly homeless people with mental health and drug problems. She developed and currently runs a county jail program for substance abusers that is modeled after Delancey Street. She has a thriving career, a full and happy family with her children and grandchildren and still volunteers with troubled folks. Mostly, she instills in others a sense of belief and goodness and hope.

When we look at the individual stories of the more than 18,000 graduates, the long-term impacts are not only their successful lives, but also the new and exciting lives of their children and grandchildren and the generations to come. The rewards of the struggle for success and the long-term impact of Delancey Street is the broken cycle of poverty, drugs, violence and crime, and a new cycle of learning, caring, economic, personal and family stability for many thousands of families once without hope.

The long-term impact of our work is also realized when Delancey opens a new door through which hundreds more can follow to gain access to opportunity. From the beginning, Delancey has opened many new doors. Like the door that let the first ex-felon be admitted to practice law. Or to serve on a school board. Or to get a real estate license. Or to vote.

The long-term impact is seen every time a new entrepreneurial venture is successfully developed and managed by former unskilled residents. We opened our first restaurant run by residents 30 years ago, over 50 restaurants have followed suit by including in their workforce such populations as developmentally disabled, homeless, and troubled youths. Recently, famed chef Jamie Oliver visited the restaurant to study the model so that he could open one like it for street kids outside of London. The fact that there are thousands of residents who have not only broken the cycle of poverty, drugs, and crime, but who have gone on to start their own businesses in communities throughout the world, each employing others who were once in poverty, is to us an immeasurable and unstoppable impact.

The long-term impact and struggle for success at Delancey Street is also rewarded by the acknowledgement of others that although these social problems are pervasive, they can be solved, and they can be solved without high costs or hired professionals; they can be solved by the very people with the problems. Every time a customer eats at our restaurant, reads the back of the menu, and shows pleasant surprise to learn that their friendly waiter once

had such problems and that indeed the entire venture is conducted by former felons, drug addicts, and homeless people, an attitude is changed. Every time our movers enter someone's home, pack their valuables, help them with a difficult move with a sense of caring, an attitude is changed. Every time an article is written nationally or internationally or a TV program is shown about Delancey Street, and it teaches people that former felons and former substance abusers, that people from poverty with multiple social problems can have high achievements and can help others, an important long-term impact has occurred on the public's attitude towards these problems. To solve these problems, society needs a positive public will. Giving the public hope for change is, we believe, an important long-term impact of our work.

In summary, we have had positive long-term impact by creating communities of hope and change, by graduating thousands of productive and decent citizens who then reunite and turn around the lives of their families and children and grandchildren, and all work together to move society forward. Our struggle for impact and success is rewarded every time a life is saved, a negative cycle is broken, a social entrepreneurial venture has begun, a door is opened, and a public attitude is changed. These impacts are immeasurable but real and important. But we know that as rewarding as these successes are, the true struggle for a just world where the people in it can all lead lives of health and purpose and integrity, can live together without violence, and can make impossible dreams happen; that is a never ending struggle for us and for so many others working so hard together. In that sense, all of our successes have not made a major dent. We hope in the future to show that, against all odds, hitting bottom can begin the climb to new heights for generations of people trapped in poverty and failure and abuse and neglect throughout the world.

4. What is Your Organizational Structure?

Delancey Street Foundation (DSF) is a California nonprofit public benefit corporation governed by an independent Board of Directors. Mimi H. Silbert is its President and CEO. DSF is the parent corporation of four nonprofit corporations that operate the six Residential Educational Communities that are the heart of Delancey Street. Delancey Street California operates Residential Educational Communities in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Brewster, New York. Delancey Street North Carolina operates a Residential Educational Community in Greensboro, North Carolina, Delancey Street New Mexico, Inc. operates one on a small ranch in the San Juan Pueblo in New Mexico, and Delancey Street South Carolina operates one in North Charleston, South Carolina. Each of the operating nonprofit corporations is a Section 501(c)(3) charity under the federal tax law.

The second DSF division is entitled Delancey CIRCLE: Coalition to Implement Revitalized Communities, Lives, and Economies. Under this division, Delancey seeks to make coalitions with other agencies, cities and countries to teach its unique model to others. Delancey CIRCLE, begun in 1996, aims to demonstrate that the complex social problems associated with severe generational poverty, drugs and crime can be successfully addressed through the basic Delancey Street principles.

5. How Are You Funded?

Financially and operationally, the six Residential Educational Communities operate in identical fashion. The residents manage day-to-day operations under the direction of President Mimi Silbert and subject to oversight by the Board of Directors. Typically, between 55%-65% of the operating funds come from pooling the incomes from the resident-run training schools such as moving and catering; 25%-35% of the funds come from donations of product or services primarily from corporations; and about 5%-15% of the funds are provided by financial donations from individuals and foundations. On our most recent audited statement 99% of our expenditures were allocated to programs, and less than 1% to administration and funding.

6. What Are the Biggest Obstacles and Challenges for You?

The increasing horrors of the social problems with which we deal have been repeatedly documented. Articles, studies, books, films, and even music depict the tremendous loss to society in terms of human lives and financial costs of drug addiction, crime, violence, entrenched poverty, illiteracy, lack of job skills or work habits, domestic violence and child abuse. The numbers of people with the problems are growing. The depth and breadth of the problems are increasing.

The social attitudes toward the target population provide an additional obstacle. There is a growing belief that

these problems can't be solved and that the people who have the problems cannot change. The vast majority of people believe we have already "lost the war on drugs." There is a growing fear of the target population and an increasing sense that they should be removed from society. For example, when Delancey Street bought our first home in a nice neighborhood in San Francisco, we fought a 3-year "NIMBY" battle to stay. In New Mexico, neighbors came to our gates with guns when we first moved in. In New York, picketers protested us, the realtor who sold us the property, and the bank involved in the sale.

The constituents themselves provide perhaps the most difficult obstacle and challenge. Because of their repeated failures in life, they have developed a sense of learned helplessness, psychological paralysis. Because they have so many social problems and are several generations into hardcore crime and drugs and violence, they are truly defined by despair. It's difficult to teach them to change because they have never experienced or seen another way. They feel powerless, are deeply dominated by self-destruction and self-hate and understandably without motivation or belief or trust. A separate set of challenges arises with the target population not only out of their personal problems, but also because of their violence and bigotry and hatred towards one another. Since a large portion of our population is gang involved, they have spent years dedicated to committing violence against gangs of other races or other neighborhoods. They need to overcome not only their own self-destruction, but also their vengeful hatred geared toward destroying one another. They need to develop not only skills and new behaviors, they need hope.

Finally, the very model that we employ provides its own obstacles and challenges. The problem of our model is that we rely on the people with the social problems to be the solution to those problems. What that means is that we are relying on people who have failed in school to be teachers; we are relying on people who have never worked and have no skills to run our restaurant, our moving company, to earn our money, and to manage our entire organization. We are relying on self-absorbed people to care for others. And because our residents graduate once they have gained the attitudes, values, skills, talents and strengths they need, we are always relying on new people to keep the organization going.

Delancey Street
South Carolina
Located on the old
Navy base in North
Charleston.



Residents live in 3
restored historic
buildings.

Living in and taking
care of a beautiful
home is part of
“reframing” what is
normal.





Residents learn multiple trades using the “Each One - Teach One” method.

Every few months, residents get “called off” to a different position, learning a new trade.



Residents gain a strong work ethic and take pride in a job well done by the time they graduate.

Acceptance Criteria

Q: Who can Delancey Street accept?

A: Unfortunately, Delancey Street cannot accept everyone that needs help. Delancey Street is ran completely by the residents, we do not have any medical or professional counseling staff on premises. Because of this, people in certain circumstances would be better served in a different setting.

When considering Delancey Street as an option, please remember that residents must:

Not have been involved in, arrested for, or convicted of any sexual offense, molestation or rape.

Not have been involved in, arrested for, or convicted of arson.

Not be dual-diagnosed.

Getting Interviewed

Q: How do you get in?

A: The first step in getting accepted into Delancey Street is writing a letter requesting an interview. By writing a letter themselves, prospective residents are starting to show that they will put forth effort to make a change. Send all correspondence to:

**Delancey Street Intake
2510 N. Hobson Avenue
North Charleston, SC 29405**