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## **FISHHERMAN'S MARK**

Barbara Petty can keep a secret. In fact, confidentiality and respect for clients' privacy is crucial to the success of Fisherman's Mark, a private non-profit social service agency based in Lambertville, NJ.

“A little while ago I was driving in our van with four other women from our agency, and as we were talking we realized none of the women knew which of the others were employees and which were clients,” says executive director Petty. “That's exactly the way we want to keep it.”

Fisherman's Mark is open to anyone, of any faith, and has no government funding to limit its scope. There are no geographic barriers either: With a staff of nine full-time employees and 15 regular volunteers, the agency serves both New Jersey and Pennsylvania and reaches out beyond local communities to surrounding urban areas as well.

The agency sees making good referrals as a primary goal, getting clients to the community service organization that can best assist them. But if a referral can't be made, Fisherman's Mark itself will provide help for individuals and families. Petty says all collect calls are accepted, no one is turned away, and clients who visit the agency deal face to face with a staff member.

Fisherman's Mark came into existence 22 years ago when The Reverend Richard W. Townley, rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, responded to the need for social services in the area. He and Petty created a separate organization to serve the community. The name is a nod to St. Andrew, the fisherman, and to the belief that people are placed on earth to “make their mark.”

“The mission was to do what many other social agencies don't want to do. We work with existing agencies and don't duplicate offerings,” says Petty.

In a cluster of buildings immediately adjacent to the church, people benefit from counseling, food and nutrition programs, tutorial services, vocational and educational referrals. The agency also operates Lambertville Academy, a childcare program for kids ages 2-1/2 to 14. With low teacher-to-student ratios and beautifully renovated facilities, the Academy delivers really superior service, 12 hours a day.

Fisherman's Mark is currently completing construction and renovation of its buildings in Lambertville. The agency relies on the support of individuals, foundations and corporations. As Petty admits, advertising is difficult because the agency's staff is so sensitive to clients' anonymity they don't put labels on grocery bags or give out tee-shirts or other promotional tools.

“It's such fun, and wonderfully creative,” Petty declares. “The relationships we build take the burn-out out of social work.”

Visit Fisherman's Mark on the web at [fishermansmark.org](http://fishermansmark.org) or call them at (609) 397-0194.