CATHY BENN, BSN’84

Cathy Benn is the program therapist for the Homeless Youth Initiative for Alternative House, a transitional housing program located in Dunn Loring, Va. The program provides case management, therapy, life skills, and support for homeless youth aged 18 to 22 who are struggling to finish high school or hoping to attend community college.

After raising three children and working many years as a nurse, Benn decided to pursue a new career as a counselor, enrolling at Loyola University in Maryland in 2007. She joined Alternative House soon after earning a master of science degree in pastoral counseling in 2011.

Since then, Benn has worked with homeless teenagers in Northern Virginia, an area comprising some of the country’s wealthiest communities but where affordable housing is scarce. She provides initial assessments, individual counseling, and crisis intervention, eventually helping the teens find stable housing in apartments, group homes, or the private homes of host families. She also spends a significant amount of time triaging the teens’ health care, in the hopes of saving them from insurmountable debt from emergency room visits for routine health issues.

Prior to her work with Alternative House, Benn spent many years in hospital and clinic settings treating children and adolescents, including children with end stages of cancer. After earning her BSN degree from Duke, she worked at Children’s Hospital National Medical Center in Washington, D.C., for a year before returning to Durham to work at Duke University Hospital. In 1987, she relocated to Northern Virginia.