



## A special thank-you

*The following letter was received from one of IHN's first families. If any of you should ever wonder, or question whether your efforts are worth it, then read on.*

After a year of reflection, a big THANK YOU is owed to all of the volunteers and staff of IHN. After spending days trying to find a place for a family of five to stay together, and being totally stressed out, our family was blessed to be welcomed into the IHN.

Walking into Kelsey's office was a relief. She listened to our family history, whether it was good or bad. She spoke to me about options for our family and asked where we were going for the night. With nowhere else to turn, Kelsey welcomed us into the program. What a relief. My family was going to be together and take the steps of being homeless together.

We walked in not knowing much about the program, only to find that IHN has a lot of wonderful volunteers and staff who really do care about helping families being homeless. The volunteers at each church listened to our situation, listened to us whether we had a good or bad day, assisted with our needs, and made sure we were well taken care of each and every night and morning. Most importantly, they made us feel like we were *somebody*.

Each night we walked into the church, they welcomed us with smiles, pats on the backs, and hugs. Each morning, we were greeted at the IHN day center with a big smile from Mary Jo. Each day our family was faced with a challenge,

but with each of these people by our sides, believing in us, we made it through the Interfaith Hospitality Network better people.

Mary Jo made sure each morning was happy, even if it did not feel like a happy morning. She

offered a big smile to bring happiness to our faces. If we needed anything, she was there. If she could not help us out, she made sure to leave a note for the next person to help us out.

Kelsey worked with our family each day to make sure we were meeting our goals. Sometimes she had to raise her voice at our decisions or comments, but

she never gave up on our family.

We were blessed to find a home in February 2005. We walked into our home with some Rubbermaid containers, but after Kelsey put the word out, our home was blessed daily with beautiful items. Without the help of everyone involved in the Interfaith Hospitality Network, our home would not be a home today and our family would not be a family today.

To this day, we are still in our home and doing well. Our family is doing a lot better because of wonderful people like each one of you.

Thank you to each and every one of you who believes and participates in the IHN. Each one of you has made a difference in our lives and, without each of you, our family would not be the same today.

Kelsey, THANK YOU so much for believing in and sticking by our family. Without you by our side, pushing our family a little harder to achieve our goals, we would never have made it. To this day, you are still by our side and I can never thank you enough for everything.

*'What a relief. My family was going to be together... Most importantly, they made us feel like we were somebody.'*

# Director's notes...

by Kelsey Parker

This article is for the network's many dedicated and wonderful volunteers. Our congregations have sheltered 26 families with 13 now living in permanent and transitional housing. Our volunteers have served more than 11,000 meals and provided 3,600 nights of lodging. Most awe-inspiring, our IHN volunteers have worked a total of 20,000 hours.

As most of you know, safe sleeping accommodations are only the beginning of what you do for our families. You welcome them into your congregation home; you feed them, support them, listen to them, laugh with them and cry with them. You treat them with kindness and love and you do not judge them. You accept them for who they are - families in need - and you open your doors and your hearts to them.

I often hear from our guests, both past and present, of the many acts of kindness they were shown, unexpected love so freely given.

Our program truly is different from other shelters in the city and it is because of you - you who give so freely of yourselves to people who are strangers on Sunday, but become friends long before Saturday arrives.

Any act of kindness always touches someone's heart. You may not always hear it, but all that you do is truly appreciated. You are thought of often and with love.

*May God bless each and every one of you.*

## Contacting IHN:

Kelsey Parker  
Network Director  
director@dsma-ihn.org

Day Center  
4114 Allison Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50310  
(515) 277-7051 (phone)

Or on the web at:  
www.dsma-ihn.org

# Wish list

The IHN Day Center becomes a home to our families. Therefore, we are in constant need of everyday living supplies to be successful. They still have many needs... and you can help. Your gifts can help make the difference between just getting by and not getting by at all. If you can help, please call Kelsey Parker at the Day Center, (515) 277-7051 or drop off your gifts at 4114 Allison Avenue in Des Moines. Thank you for your support.

## Needed supplies:

Laundry Detergent	Baby Shampoo
Fabric Softener	Shampoo and Conditioner
Pledge	Body Soap or Bar Soap
Room Deodorizer	Hand Soap
Dish Soap	Razors
Floor Cleaner	Shaving Cream
Window cleaner	Deodorant
409	Toothpaste/Tooth brushes
Spray Carpet cleaner	Hand and Body Lotion
Tall kitchen garbage bags	Feminine Products (maxi pads, tampons)
Flash lights	Pillows
Paper Towels	Pillow Cases
Napkins	Blankets (twin)
Paper plates	Batteries
Diapers (all sizes)	Computer Paper
Pull-ups (all sizes)	Stamps
Wet wipes	Envelopes
Baby Soap	

To make a donation to the Des Moines Interfaith Hospitality Network, please mail your gift and the completed form below to:

Des Moines IHN  
4114 Allison Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50310

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Gift Amount \_\_\_\_\_

**Thanks for your support!**

# IHN News

by Angie Arthur

## A note from Windsor Heights Lutheran Church

Another IHN Week at Windsor Heights has come and gone as quickly as the holidays! But, for the families we extended a kindness to, it will be a memory to reflect on with joy and pleasure.

Four families benefited from your thoughtfulness and willingness to share your holiday with them. You touched the lives of seven adults and seven children (from 3 months to six years old) and all of us have benefited.

Thanks to the generosity of so many member volunteers... setting up and tearing down sleeping quarters, providing food, serving meals and sharing smiles and conversation with these families as they found comfort and shelter during a difficult period in their lives.

In holding with the spirit of giving, our congregation gave a special holiday gift to our guests; an overnight stay at the Wildwood Lodge and dinner at Chili's on New Year's Eve. Thank you to all who gave a financial gift to make this happen.

One of the volunteers had this to say:

*"Meeting the families IHN serves, eating the evening meal with them and getting to know them as God's dear children is a very joy filled and humbling experience. It brings home to me in a very powerful way how much I have to be thankful for and how easy it is to take for granted even the very basics of life. The little children are delightful and the families usually express such appreciation. I realize now that these families are not so very different from those of us who have been fortunate to have more opportunities in life. Most of the guests, which I have met, were hopeful and sincere about making changes in their lives and are so grateful for the help they receive from IHN. Also, another aspect I enjoy is working together with other members of the WHLC family and getting to know them better."*

## 7th Annual National Conference

Family Promise, the parent organization of IHN, hosted its national conference in October. As board president, I was fortunate to attend the conference in Savannah, GA. The focus of the weekend was "Turning Lives Around".

Over 110 IHN organizations sent their directors, board members and volunteers to the conference. It was a wonderful time to meet people from all over the United States that are working to help homeless families with children. We had the opportunity to share program ideas and experiences.

The conference had working sessions on homeless and interfaith advocacy, volunteerism, fundraising, board development, transitional housing, family mentoring, program aftercare and staff development. We also discussed how several IHN organizations had responded to hurricanes Katrina and Wilma. The conference speakers brought many years of experience and wisdom to the event.

It wasn't all work. The conference attendees spent Saturday evening on the Savannah River Queen for a dinner cruise and dancing. To wrap up the conference, we had Sunday worship. The beautiful service included liturgical dance, a reading from the Qu'ran, a Hebrew blessing, Buddhist chimes, spiritual songs, meditations and a wonderful sermon. Everyone left feeling inspired to bring back the shared caring and passion to help homeless families.

## IHN receives Sunshine Coach from Variety

Des Moines Area Interfaith Hospitality Network was one of ten organizations in Iowa to receive a Sunshine Coach from Variety. This 15 passenger van will transport our guests back and forth from our host congregations to our day center daily as well as help transport guests to medical appointments, job interviews, and other activities.

Variety – The Children's Charity of Iowa - has provided funding for capital projects, essential medical equipment and special programs to more than 300 charities throughout Iowa and neighboring states. In addition, over 260 Sunshine Coaches are transporting kids across the state.

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## DES MOINES AREA INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK

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Windsor Heights Lutheran, Windsor Hts.  
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Grace West, West Des Moines  
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Our Lady's Immaculate Heart, Ankeny  
St. Stephen's Lutheran, Urbandale  
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Urbandale UCC, Urbandale  
Ankeny First UMC, Ankeny

### IHN Support Churches

Jordan Creek UMC, West Des Moines  
Easton Place UMC, Des Moines  
Cornerstone Family Church, Des Moines  
College Ave. Christian Church, Des Moines  
Tifareth Israel Synagogue, Des Moines  
New Hope UMC, Des Moines  
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Valley Evangelical Free, West Des Moines  
Sacred Heart Catholic, West Des Moines  
Westminster Presbyterian, Des Moines  
St. John's UMC, Des Moines  
Hope UMC Parrish, Yale  
Oakwood UMC, Pleasant Hill  
Granger UMC, Granger

# Reminder:

The next coordinators' meeting will be held April 13, at 7 p.m., at Westminster Presbyterian Church. See you there!