



ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATE

TRANSFERRING ENERGY *Phil Holman Co-Chair*

On Monday, February 26th at 7:45 a.m. the IHN Advisory Board will be sponsoring a Breakfast Social at Christ the King Parish in Worcester. After introductions, the breakfast will begin with a presentation outlining IHN's unique role in addressing the needs of *families* who are homeless in Worcester County. The presentation will include national, state and local statistics on homelessness, and will contrast the IHN program with other programs

within Worcester County. In essence, where IHN fits in the puzzle and why its services are critical to meeting families needs in our community.

The intent of the breakfast is to raise awareness for IHN and to generate enthusiasm for the program through a "Transfer of Energy", from the IHN Advisory Board members and current volunteers, to those who are attending the meeting.

After the presentation, attendees will be encouraged to ask questions and discuss ways that *energize* their participation in this important program.

Please plan to attend to learn more about IHN, our local safety net for families.

"Get Energized"!

R.S.V.P. by 2/22: IHN 508-798-6732 or

www.ihnworchester.org;
ihnworchester@verizon.net

**Co-ordinator's
 Corner**

February

2/4 – 2/11 Trinity Episcopal, Shrewsbury

2/11 – 2/18 First Unitarian, Worcester

2/18 – 2/25 All Saints, Worcester

March

2/25 – 3/11 Mt. Olivet, Shrewsbury

3/11 – 3/18 UCC, Worcester

3/18 – 3/25 Trinity Lutheran, Worcester

3/25 – 4/1 Wesley United Methodist, Worcester

April

4/1 – 4/8 St. James, Grafton

4/8 – 4/15 First Congregational, Princeton

4/15 – 4/22 First Church, Sterling

4/22 – 4/29 First Congregational, Holden

May

4/29 – 5/6 Our Lady of Good Counsel, W. Boylston

5/6 – 5/20 Christ the King, Worcester

5/20 – 5/27 St. Bernard's, Worcester

Current Guests

Mom and Dad with 4 year old daughter

Mom and Dad with 3 month old daughter

Mom and Dad expecting their first child

Mom with 2 sons, ages 3 and 1 ½ years

FINANCIAL UPDATE

WHEN ONE INSPIRES ANOTHER - ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE! *Janet Madison, Co-chair*

The challenge was on! Phillip Holman, president/owner of Fourstar Connections, Hudson and Remo Rossi, president/owner of Image Diagnostics, Sterling, recently partnered in helping to inspire the greater Worcester community in support of the Interfaith Hospitality Network. It all began when Holman, a Sterling resident and Co-Chair on the Advisory Committee for IHN, committed to matching personal and corporate charitable donations to IHN up to \$20,000 total. Rossi, heard of the challenge and offered to extend Holman's matching pledge up to

\$5,000. Congregations and individuals came through with enthusiastic fund-raising matching not only Holman's \$20,000 but Rossi's \$5,000. Rossi was inspired by Holman's initial effort and then by the response of the greater Worcester Community, he upped his pledge to \$10,000. When all was said and done the community went over and above the pledge amounts by the December 30th deadline. Rossi stated, "I think it's important for people to know that IHN is not a handout, it's about getting people back on their feet after they have been knocked down,

regardless of how they got there, and helping them to help themselves. I think if people stop and consider what it means to not have a home and the impact that it has on a person or worse, a family, they will see the need to support programs like IHN and the benefits to both the recipient and society as a whole." Rossi ended up matching to the penny the community's fund-raising against the combined pledges. His final contribution being \$14,456.31. Between Holman and Rossi, they matched \$34,456.31 in donations, resulting in an



A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

OUT OF REACH? *Joanne Marhejka, Director*

Has the cost of housing become out of reach? The answer for many, especially in Massachusetts, is yes! The National Low Income Housing Coalition has recently published their annual "Out of Reach" report for 2006 and, as many who are struggling to keep their families safe and warm already know, the numbers are not good.

In Massachusetts, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,178. In order to afford this level of rent and utilities, without paying more than 30% of income on housing, a household must earn \$22.65 per hour (based on working 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year).

While it is better in Worcester where a household needs only to earn \$17.12 per hour, many working families still don't come close to reaching the \$35,600 annual salary that number translates into.

On average renters in Worcester earn only \$11.41 per hour; at that rate to be able to afford rent at \$890, which is the FMR of a two-bedroom apartment in Worcester, a single parent would have to work 60 hours per week. Someone earning minimum wage would have to work 101 hours per week.

The largest single barrier to reducing homelessness is the lack of permanently affordable housing.

Since 2000 rents have increased 41% in Worcester, but for people in the lower income brackets their earnings have not increased accordingly. In 2001 the minimum wage was \$6.75; it did not change until this January when it was raised to \$7.50. Compounding the issue, state and federal funding for subsidized housing has decreased dramatically over the last 20 years.

This is NOT just a problem for IHN families; it is a problem for MANY

families across the state and across the country, as many who are struggling to keep their families safe and warm already know.

Program update



Since our last newsletter went out we have had four families leave the program and move into apartments. Tom, Charlotte and Juli have all moved into

apartments and Yanilka recently moved into the Worcester Housing Authority's Transitional Housing Program. We are truly grateful to all who donated household goods to help these families get settled into their new homes. They couldn't have done it without your assistance!

SECRET SANTA ELVES - THANK YOU!

The outpouring and enthusiasm for providing gifts to the IHN children was outstanding this holiday season. Support of the Interfaith Hospitality Network helped make the holidays more festive and joyous for the IHN families and children.

All gifts and donations were sincerely appreciated and given to deserving children. They are a valued and appreciated aspect of ongoing giving and support to the IHN program.

Special thanks to the following groups;

First Church of Sterling and Karen Bebka for coordinating the First Church Christmas tree giving. Jennifer Moulton is also to be commended for her efforts to transport gifts to the Interfaith Hospitality Network Day Center in Worcester.

Village Green Preschool at the First Church in Sterling for their generous contributions to two families moving into new apartments and Meredith

Quinn of Sterling who coordinated this gift giving.

Sterling Houghton School teachers, staff and children who raised monies to purchase gifts for the IHN children and Gail Miller for coordinating this Houghton gift giving.

The Interfaith Hospitality Network is a network of 31 churches and synagogues throughout the greater Worcester area that provides shelter for families that are homeless. There are also advocacy and life skill support programs for the families at the IHN Day Center located at Wesley Church in Worcester.

Many thanks to the generous members of our community to support the IHN children and families at this magical time of the year.

My Best Regards,
Pam Guild
First Church, Sterling

WISH LIST

- Blankets
 - Towels and face cloths
 - Deodorant
 - Razors
 - Body lotion
 - Shampoo and Conditioner
 - Cleaning supplies
 - Trash bags
 - Laundry detergent
 - Bins for families' belongings
- Please call Joanne - 508-798-6732 to donate. God bless and thank you in advance!

The hardest math to master is that which enables us to count our blessings. *Eric Hoffer*



INFLUX - cont'd from page 1

influx of \$68,912.62 to IHN, significantly helping to financially (get us out of the red) stabilize the IHN program and the families it serves.

IHN Director Joanne Marhefka commented "I am so moved by the generosity of the community and the inspiration instilled by Mr. Holman and Mr. Rossi. The families are safer, and the program more stable as a result of the community's generosity. Thank you so much, to everyone!"

Network Rises to the Challenge!

Folks put their best effort forward in order to take advantage of the matching fund campaign this past Fall. Fund-raising took on many faces, congregations:

- sewed
- sang
- played instruments
- cooked
- created custom holiday cards
- contributed Thanksgiving offerings
- contributed Holiday offerings

to name just a few!
Thank you!

Save this date!

WALK for the Homeless

Sunday May 20, 2007

The beneficiaries of this year's WALK are Central MA Housing Alliance, IHN & Friendly House.

www.cmhaonline.org

Thank you Liz!

Many of you have had the tremendous pleasure of meeting Liz Gustavson, an active member of the IHN Advisory Committee for the last 3 years. Other commitments draw her away from us but not from her interest in IHN. Liz has served the committee and the families well over the years. She has participated as a coordinator within her congregation, occasional case manager at the center, creator and host of coordinators' meetings, an impassioned advocate for families faced with homelessness, storage landlord, and was even known to feed us occasionally when meetings ran through the dinner hour. We will miss her presence and loving spirit, yet wish her well. Many thanks Liz!

You are cordially invited to attend a Breakfast Social sponsored by the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN).

A presentation will be made outlining IHN's role in addressing the needs of families who are homeless within Worcester County. The theme:

Transferring Energy!

At the conclusion of the presentation we are encouraging a discussion on the role you can play in supporting the IHN mission program.

Monday, February 26, 2007

Christ the King Parish

1052 Pleasant Street - Worcester, MA

R.S.V.P. by 2/22: IHN 508-798-6732 or

www.ihnworchester.org; ihnworchester@verizon.net

- 7:45 - 8am Light Breakfast Social
- 8 - 8:15am Prayer & Introductions
- 8:15 - 9am Presentation
- 9 - 9:15am Q&A
- 9:15 - 10am Elective Discussion



**Interfaith
Hospitality
Network**

Where people of faith work together to support families who are homeless.

IHN of Greater Worcester is a nonprofit affiliate program of Friendly House



Interfaith Hospitality Network of Greater Worcester

IHN

*Where people of faith work together
to support homeless families
throughout the greater Worcester area.*

Newsletter

The IHN newsletter continues to be made possible by:

Phil Holman, president and owner of **Four Star Connections, Inc.**, Hudson printing and mailing

Janet Madison, Editor

Contributing Reporters: Janet Madison, Kevin Kirwan, Joanne Marhefka, Pam Guild and guest reporters from our network. Thank you!

The Interfaith Hospitality Network is an organization that unites the religious community in an effort to serve and nurture homeless families regardless of income and family structure. Thirty-one congregations, many with assistance from additional congregations, provide meals, shelter and hospitality. Families receive individualized advocacy for housing, employment, and financial issues at the IHN day center. Massachusetts is the 3rd least affordable state in the country for housing and about 20,000 children live in emergency shelters each year. Greater Worcester's IHN has helped 211 families, a total of 629 individuals, since its formation in 1997. IHN makes a difference!



Interfaith Hospitality Network of Greater Worcester

IHN

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TO:

*Where people of faith work together
to support families who are homeless
throughout the greater Worcester area.*