



Interfaith Hospitality Network of Greater Worcester

IHN *Where people of faith work together to support homeless families*
news

Volume 5, Issue 3

September 2006



A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

THE PROCESS IS FULL CIRCLE *Joanne Marhejka, Director*

It's been a busy summer at IHN with a lot of families exiting the program and new ones coming in to take their places.

Finding a Place to Call Home

Six families left the program and six new families entered. **Hope's** family and **Jose & Celine's** have moved into apartments

through Worcester Housing Authority. (More good news: Jose also obtained employment, he is working full-time at the YMCA.)

Laura and her son found an apartment that they are sharing with a friend to help cut down on the expenses. **Juli** and the children have also temporarily moved into a shared living environment,

until she can afford an apartment for her family. She too is starting a new job in Upton. **Dave** has been reunited with his mom. They are both doing well and temporarily living in Orange.

And we are currently full with 4 families, so the process starts all over again!

Continued, page 2 HISTORY

Co-ordinator's Corner

Host Sites

September

- 8/27 – 9/3 Blessed Sacrament, Worcester
- 9/3 – 9/10 UCC, Worcester
- 9/10 – 9/24 First Congregational, Shrewsbury
- 9/24 – 10/1 All Saints, Worcester

October

- 10/1 – 10/15 First Church, Sterling
- 10/15 – 10/22 First Congregational, Princeton
- 10/22 – 10/29 First Unitarian, Worcester

November

- 10/29 – 11/5 Wesley, Worcester
- 11/5 – 11/12 Immanuel Lutheran, Holden
- 11/12 – 11/26 St. John's Episcopal, Worcester
- 11/26 – 12/3 First Congregational, Holden

Current Guests

- Dad with 7 year old son
- Mom with 14 year old son
- Dad with 17 month old son
- Mom and Dad with 2 girls, ages 5 and 4

FINANCIAL UPDATE

FALL BACK TO REALITY *Phil Holman, Interim Co-Chair, Treasurer*

As I was contemplating my return to the fall schedule and all the logistics of getting kids back to school, I started feeling sorry for myself that I didn't get in all the fun I wanted during the summer months. Some of the reason was the wet, cool weather but mostly it was because I had such high expectations.

My thoughts then drifted to the IHN program and it was then that I realized how fortunate my summer has been. I didn't need to worry about where I could find shelter for my family. I always knew that my next meal was waiting for me in the cabinet or refrigerator. I wasn't being moved around from host site to host site, and wondering if or how I would be able to get back on my own.

Summer or not, there is no good season for being homeless. As the fall and winter approaches, the need for decent, affordable housing becomes even more of an imperative. Besides food and shelter, the IHN program gives hope, and warmth, and love to families who are in need, with no expectation other than that it is the right thing to do.

The ability to deliver this service in the greater Worcester area relies on hundreds of volunteers, donating thousands of hours at the host sites. In addition to giving time and resources such as home cooked meals, the program relies on donations and fundraisers to pay the cost of staffing and running the day center. The financial stability of the IHN

program is essential to allow this wonderful program to continue.

Over the next few weeks, our board will be contacting host sites to determine their financial support for the IHN program. At the upcoming Coordinators meeting we will be presenting ideas for possible fundraisers; from simple collections such as "Family to Family" to more elaborate fundraising events like the annual "Community Treasures Auction".

Please consider how your faith community can help. No matter how simple or how elaborate your fundraising contribution, it will be greatly appreciated. All we ask is for you to make a commitment to help in any way that you can. Thank you for your continued support for IHN.





HISTORY, Continued from page 1

History Repeats Itself

The summer months' once again demonstrated bleak contributions to the program. We enter the Fall with families in continued need of your support. We remain humble as we walk in solidarity with our families empathizing greatly to their financial struggles as they strive to stabilize their lives.

Please keep IHN in your prayers as we continue to be as creative as possible in managing the program. Please know that you are always in our prayers and that we are truly grateful for your continued generosity and support. God Bless.

Power of Prayer

I also ask for your prayers for a past family. Three years ago **Felicia** and her 9-year-old son, **Ja' Kwan** were guests in our program. While most kids spent a carefree summer playing with their friends and going to camp, Ja has spent the last 2 months in Intensive Care Unit at U Mass Hospital. He has a very large cancerous tumor in his chest. It had blocked his airway and for the first few days doctors weren't sure that he would even survive.

I'm happy to report that Ja has come a long way since then, but he is not out of the woods yet. With chemotherapy the tumor is shrinking,

but not as much as they had hoped, so he will have to stay in ICU for two more months. He will then go through two years of chemotherapy and radiation as an out-patient. He is currently receiving physical therapy to help rebuild his muscles and his strength, and there is much he has to relearn. His immune system has also been significantly compromised.

While it's true that Ja has received excellent medical care, he is in need of more; this family is in need of more. They desperately need your prayers. So I ask you to please remember Felicia and Ja in your prayers. Pray that they both have the strength to get through this ordeal.

SPOTLIGHT I

INSPIRED *Cynthia Spellane, IHN Advisory Committee*

It is with pleasure that I share the story of how I became involved with IHN. Four years ago, my daughter **Sarah Sadowski** and her husband **Brian Welch** volunteered to help with IHN through Trinity Lutheran Church. At the time, Sarah was teaching at Notre Dame Academy and didn't have children. Sarah and Brian served as IHN overnight at both TLC and Blessed Sacrament. The program, the families, and especially the children made such an impact on them that IHN became part of their daily conversation. Being Sarah's mom and spending a lot of time as a family, we discussed how fortunate we are to have homes and each other to fall back on in times of crisis.

In August 2005, **Keller Williams Greater Worcester Real Estate** opened on Grove Street in Worcester. I was an agent in the Westboro office but live in Holden, so it made sense for me to support the new office by moving to the Worcester location. Keller Williams strongly believes in giving back to the community and has a program, KW Cares, through which each office raises money for a local charity and/or fellow agents in need of help. As a member of the KW Cares committee, I suggested we choose a

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charity for which we could make a real difference, preferably one that also had to do with housing since we are realtors. I remembered how moved my daughter was by the IHN and called her for information and a contact person, and she connected me with Joanne Marhefka. The KW Cares committee met with Joanne, and then with Joanne and Phil Holman. The relationship evolved with our first fundraiser in March, with proceeds of \$7,000 going to IHN. Keller Williams Greater Worcester is committed to this charity and we have future fundraisers planned.

I hope that, as more people find out through word of mouth about this effective and much-needed organization, the more involved they will become, just as I did. We can all help make a difference.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU

The impact that the network volunteers and host sites make within our communities is significant.

We love to tell the IHN story.

Please invite a board member to speak in your community.

Call us – 508-798-6732.

CHECK IT OUT!

www.ihnworchester.org

A few things have changed. Special thanks to Dan Keohane and Carol Woodman for all their creative efforts!



IN OUR CORNER

Gas

Our heartfelt thanks goes out to the many congregations and individuals who responded to our plea for gas for the IHN van ... **Seth Bernstein**, Temple Sinai; **Roger & Judy Bohn**, Bethel Lutheran; **Sr. Mary Duffy**, Blessed Sacrament; **Immanuel Lutheran, Holden**; **Patty Gould**, Temple Emanuel; **Phil Holman**, 1st Church In Sterling; **Robert & Mary Elizabeth Houskeeper**, United Parish in Upton; **Dwight Hubbard**, Trinity Lutheran; **Mary Hurlburt**, United Parish in Upton; **Janet Keeler**, United Parsih in Upton; **John Kirwan**, St Mary's; **Kevin Kirwan**, Shrewsbury; **Dave & Celeste Lionett**, Christ the King; **Kelly Luetkemeyer**, United Parish in Upton, **Clarence and Betty Phipps**, United Parish in Upton; **Zoe Richman**, Temple Emmanuel; **Wendy Scharen**, St. Stephens; **St. Stephens; Trinity Lutheran Church; United Parish In Upton, United Vacation Bible School.**

Thank you for reaching out to help us in our time of need. We never would have gotten through this crisis without your assistance!

Mattresses

Through the generosity of **First Congregational, Shrewsbury, Mt. Olivet, Shrewsbury, Trinity Episcopal, Shrewsbury, and Union Evengelical, Hopedale**, 16 new mattresses were purchased for our families' cots.

Newsletter

We haven't expressed our thanks lately but this newsletter continues to be made possible by the generosity of **Phil Holman**, president and owner of **Four Star Connections, Inc.**, Hudson. He has continued to reproduce and coordinate the mailing of each IHN newsletter. Thank you Phil and staff for your generosity in helping to get the word out there!

WISH LIST

Pillows

Blankets

Towels and face cloths

Deodorant

Shaving cream and razors

Bath-size soap bars

Shampoo and Conditioner

Cleaning supplies

Trash bags

Laundry detergent

On call pickup truck and volunteer driver

Please call Joanne - 508-798-6732 to donate. God bless and thank you in advance!

CO-ORDINATOR'S MEETING Liz Gustavson IHN Advisory Committee

Coordinators meetings are held quarterly to inform, support and encourage the people who give so much of their time and energy to our homeless guests when they arrive at their congregations. IHN staff and advisory committee members attend the meetings to troubleshoot problems, praise the hard and important work done by each church and synagogue and share ideas and techniques for getting the work done.

The quarterly meeting held in June at the **Our Lady of Good Counsel Church in West Boylston** was blessed by positive energy about the Interfaith Hospitality Network. **Dave and Terri King** generously hosted the evening. This is a congregation which is coming up on completing its first year of involvement with IHN and the board is grateful to them for their eager participation.

IHN runs on a very tight budget and time is taken at these meeting to give an update on the financial state of the organization. **Cindy Spellane**, who is a new advisory committee member as

well as a Realtor with **Keller Williams**, spoke about a couple of fund raisers the Keller Williams company is willing to sponsor. One seems wonderfully appropriate for an organization that helps homeless families: if all the agreements can be reached, a house will be raffled off, and any surplus in ticket sales will go to IHN. Many other ideas were batted around about raising money. Our September coordinators meeting will also address fund raising topics and ideas. Please come to our next meeting on **September 25 at 7:00 at Christ the King Church, Pleasant St. in Worcester**. Please feel free to include any member of the congregation who might have the time and talent to organize a fund raiser (you folks do enough already!).

The advisory committee would like to thank all of you who have taken on the role as coordinator for your place of worship. Without you taking the lead, the IHN program could not work. Thank you very much. - Liz

CO-ORDINATOR'S MEETING

Monday, Sept. 25 - 7pm

Christ the King

Johnson Room
1052 Pleasant Street,
Worcester
(toward Tatnuck Square)

St. Theresa Prayer

May today there be peace within. May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities born of faith. May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you. May you be content knowing you are a child of God. Let his presence settle in your bone, and allow the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. It is there for each and every one of us.



Interfaith Hospitality Network of Greater Worcester

IHN

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

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 202 families, a total of 606 individuals, since its formation in 1997. IHN makes a difference!



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114 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608

Phone: 508-798-6732
FAX: 508-798-8286
www.ihnworchester.org

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TO: