



A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

A REMINDER OF WHY WE'RE HERE *Joanne Marbejka, Director*

A warm, safe place to live, a place to call home, is a right that is being denied to far too many families in this country simply because they cannot afford the exorbitantly high cost of rents. Affordable housing is crucial for families to survive and thrive; yet there is nowhere near enough for the number of families in need. So many people have applied for subsidized housing that many of the lists are either closed or

they have long waiting periods, in some cases as long as 5 – 10 years! The Section 8 voucher program has not been issuing new vouchers, nor has the MRVP program in Massachusetts. Low income families have no where to turn.

**Some startling facts:**

Did you know that...

- Massachusetts is the 3<sup>rd</sup> least affordable rental state in the Nation?

- 3.5 million Americans work full-time yet still live below the poverty line?
- In order to afford a two-bedroom apartment in Worcester you must earn \$16.48 per hour, while the mean renter wage is \$11.17?
- A couple of decades ago one full-time minimum wage earner could keep a family of three above the poverty line. Now that worker

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**Co-ordinator's  
 Corner**

**June**

- 5/28 – 6/4 Wesley, Worcester
- 6/4 – 6/11 Blessed Sacramento, Worcester
- 6/11 – 6/18 Immanuel Lutheran, Holden
- 6/18 – 6/25 United Parish, Upton
- 6/25 – 7/2 St. Stephen's, Westborough

**July**

- 7/2 – 7/9 Union Evangelical, Hopedale
- 7/9 – 7/16 First Baptist, Worcester
- 7/16 – 7/23 Pakachoag, Auburn
- 7/23 – 7/30 Evangelical Congregational, Grafton

**August**

- 7/30 – 8/6 First Congregational, Auburn
- 8/6 – 8/13 Bethel Lutheran, Auburn
- 8/13 – 8/20 St. Peter's, Worc.
- 8/20 – 8/27 St. Mary's, Grafton
- 8/27 – 9/3 Blessed Sacramento, Worcester

**Current Guests**

- Mom with 2 daughters, ages 16 and 14
- Dad with 14 year old son
- Mom with 11 year old son
- Couple with no children
- Mom with 2 year old daughter and twin girls 4 months old

BOARD BRIEFINGS & FINANCIAL UPDATE

OUR FINANCES WILL GO DOWN TO THE WIRE

*Phil Holman, Interim Co-Chair, Treasurer*

As the fiscal year-end of June 30<sup>th</sup> approaches, the IHN Advisory Board is holding their collective breath that the program will be able to finish at a financial break-even. This year has been an emotional roller coaster. We started the first few months of our year in July, August and September with virtually no revenue and then slowly throughout the balance of the year we began chipping away at our deficit. At one point in early October the program was over \$30,000 in the red. We are currently forecasting a potential \$10,000 to \$15,000 deficit, but we have high expectations that money will

come in to put us in the black. Some of the anticipated revenue will come from a charity benefit sponsored by First Church in Sterling in May. In addition, we expect to have proceeds from the **Walk for the Homeless, which will be held in Worcester on Sunday, June 4<sup>th</sup>**. That in conjunction with other smaller donations may be enough to get us "over the hump".

As we approach the end of this fiscal year we would like to ask you to consider making one final contribution to help us meet our goal. If you are unable to make a financial contribution, can you solicit

your friends, family and neighbors to be sponsors and participate in the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Walk for the Homeless on Sunday, June 4<sup>th</sup>?

In addition, we are asking host sites that have made a financial commitment to our program to make sure that checks are sent and received by the IHN office on or before June 30<sup>th</sup>. Anything that you can do to help out financially is greatly appreciated.

**Thank you for your continued support.**





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cannot even keep a family of 2 out of poverty?

- There is no state, county or metropolitan area in the country where you can work 40 hours a week at the minimum wage and afford a two-bedroom apartment?
- A person earning minimum wage in Worcester would have to work 98 hours per week in order to afford a two-bedroom apartment?
- Overall federal support for low-income housing has declined 51% in the past 25 years and state support for affordable housing has been reduced by 52% since 1989. And little to no

new affordable units are being built?

**All the while economic inequality in the United States is growing.**

- The top 1% of households own nearly half of all the financial wealth in the United States.
- In 1980 the average CEO in Business Week's annual survey made 42 times the pay of the average factory worker. Now the average CEO is making 411 times as much as the workers.

What does the future hold?

IN OUR CORNER

The IHN Board of Directors would like to express a sincere welcome to two new board members. Their duties assume immediately. Please welcome:

**Cynthia Spellane, Keller Williams Realty**

**Kevin Kirwan, Millbrook Distributors**

We would also like to acknowledge **Janet Rauptis**, Clerk of the IHN Board as Hanover's Chairperson for the 21st Walk for the Homeless. Hanover is the primary sponsor of the walk.

SPOTLIGHT I

THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM AT THE "INN" *Terri King, Host Co-ordinator Our Lady of Good Counsel, West Boylston*

This past December our parish had the joy and privilege of hosting families through the Interfaith Hospitality Network for the very first time. When our pastor, Father Ken, introduced the program to the parish, I felt drawn to learn more about it and I definitely wanted to become involved in some way. So, after prayer and reflection, I felt called to volunteer as primary coordinator for our parish. I volunteered my husband to help with me, as we are usually a husband/wife team in ministry. When Father Ken and I met with Joanne Marhefka for the first time, she gingerly asked if we would host the week before Christmas, as this is a difficult time to fill. Father Ken felt we might have difficulty recruiting volunteers at such a busy time of the year. But I felt it actually was the perfect time to host. Do we turn away our homeless brothers and sisters as the Holy Family was turned away that first Christmas? Do we tell them there is no place at our "inn"? Opening our "inn" (parish) to this family was welcoming the Holy Family into our home and hearts and truly a way of putting our faith and discipleship into action.

Although we had only one family for the week, it was a week we will never

forget. Prior to the week, we had almost 50 parishioners of all ages attend a training session. The attendance was only a small sign of

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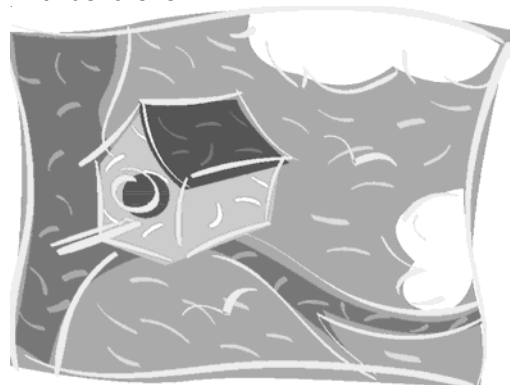
how our parishioners embraced this new ministry. Donations of money, food, furniture, toys and Christmas gifts for our family poured in. We had so many volunteers that we had to put them on a waiting list for our next host week.

Quite unexpectedly one day, I received a call from Bertucci's Restaurant asking if I knew of a family they could help for Christmas. To my surprise they wanted to donate money, not Christmas presents. I told them of the expected arrival of our family, but referred them to Joanne Marhefka who I felt knew more about the confidentiality issues involved. Joanne informed me after our family departed that Bertucci's donated \$900 to help

our family and another IHN family as well. A real Christmas miracle, indeed! .

It was truly an incredible week for all of us at OLGC. Not only did it enable us to put our faith into action, but was a tremendous community building experience as well.

Individuals, couples, youth groups, Brownies and Cub Scouts all contributed to the success of our first host week. The week ended with the arrival of Santa Claus, Christmas caroling, the reading of the Polar Express and gifts for the family. God's presence was everywhere that week – in the family we hosted, our volunteers who gave of their time, talents and money, and in the unexpected gift from Bertucci's Restaurant. The warmth, love and caring shared that week will remain with us forever.





SPOTLIGHT I

**DOUBLE YOUR RESOURCES** *Dan Keohane, Prince of Peace, Princeton*

They say “two heads are better than one.” When it comes to serving as an IHN host site, you could also say, “two faith communities are better than one.” Nine years ago, First Congregational Church in Princeton joined the IHN family. A year later, they invited neighboring Prince of Peace Catholic Church to join them. Today both parishes work as one unit, twice a year as hosts for IHN families. Not only has this doubled their pool of volunteers, but the arrangement has made it possible for five IHN coordinators to share responsibility of organization and recruitment.

First Congregational has a larger facility and serves as the physical location for housing. Prince of Peace’s church is too small for hosting, but its congregation is able to provide half the volunteer work force for dinners, activities, etc. Volunteer signups are held simultaneously at both churches, with coordinators communicating changes via email during the week.

As mentioned, two parishes working together allows Princeton the manpower for five primary coordinators - two from Prince of Peace and three from First Congregational, specializing in a specific area of responsibility: Annette (FCC) coordinates groceries and is on-site for dinners, Dan (PoP) works with activity volunteers and is onsite early evenings, Bob (FCC) coordinates overnight volunteers and is onsite until volunteers and families are have settled in for the night, Brian (PoP) arrives on-site every morning to send home the overnight hosts and handle issues with the families before they leave for the day, and Debbie (FCC) coordinates setup and takedown and fills in for coordinators who can’t make their shifts any given day. For Princeton, five heads have been much better than one.

If becoming a host site, or handling the work you do now, seems too daunting a prospect for your faith community, try doubling your capacity by asking a



neighboring community to join you. Putting aside any differences in ideology and dogma, together you can work as one official “host site” team. Doing His work for those who so desperately need our help becomes twice as easy and twice as rewarding when you put those heads together!

**Current Teams:**

**Princeton:**

Prince of Peace supports First Congregational

**Worcester:**

St. George’s supports St. John’s

St. Luke’s supports Christ the King

Unitarian Universalist supports First Unitarian

**Holden:**

First Baptist supports First Congregational

WHAT’S HAPPENING IN YOUR NECK OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

**21<sup>st</sup> Walk for the Homeless**

**June 4<sup>th</sup>**

*Join hundreds of others help build awareness of the plight of our families in our community!*

*Be part of the solution!*

*Gather and walk!*

Kick off: Worcester City Hall  
Registration: 1pm Walk: 2pm

**CO-ORDINATOR’S MEETING**

**Tuesday, June 6 @ 7pm**

**Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish**

**111 Worcester Street**

(corner of Rtes. 12 & 140)

**West Boylston**

**The IHN Mission - What’s right for our families? Do we hear the message?**

WISH LIST

Pillows

Plastic storage bins for families’ belongings

Blankets

Towels and face cloths

Deodorant

Shaving cream and razors

Bath-size soap bars

Shampoo and Conditioner

Cleaning supplies

Laundry detergent

On call pickup truck and volunteer driver

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



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 196 families, a total of 592 individuals, since its formation in 1997. IHN makes a difference!***



Interfaith Hospitality Network of Greater Worcester

IHN

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TO: