

# 2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT

THE RIPPLE EFFECT: HOW YOUR SUPPORT CHANGES EVERYTHING



# Friends of the Family Business Profile

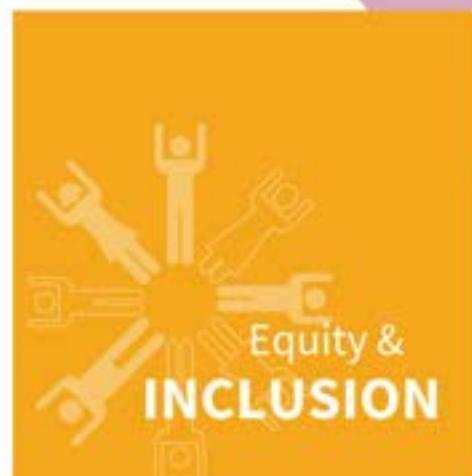
## *Our Mission:*

We are ending homelessness by leading with the Housing First approach, driving systemic change through strong community partnerships, and providing individualized support that prioritizes client choice.

## *Our Vision:*

Everyone Has a Home

## *Our Core Values*



# A Message from our Board President

As Board President of Friends of the Family, I am deeply honored to serve alongside a team so passionately committed to ending homelessness and supporting those facing housing insecurity right here in our Iowa communities.

My name is Michele Knaack, and I've had the privilege of serving on the Friends of the Family board for over five years. During that time, I've witnessed firsthand the incredible impact this organization has on individuals and families who are often overlooked. When people think of homelessness, they often imagine it happening somewhere else, some other city, some other place. But the reality is, it's happening here in our communities. And that makes the work we do not only urgent, but deeply personal.

What continues to humble and inspire me is the unwavering dedication of our leadership and staff. They live out our core values every single day. Leading with empathy, acting with integrity, and caring intensely about the mission and the people we serve. Their tireless efforts ensure that Friends of the Family remains a safe, welcoming, and effective resource for those in need.

As we reflect on the progress made over the past year, I want to thank every supporter, volunteer, donor, and partner who has stood beside us. Together, we are not only responding to crisis, we are building hope and creating long-term solutions.

Thank you,



*Michele Knaack*

Board President

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# Making an Impact Through Programming

If there is one thing we know, it's that housing is the only solution to ending homelessness. At Friends of the Family, getting people housed, permanently, is what we do every day. You may not know it, but we have 12 different programs that those seeking our services may qualify for. Although these programs continue to ebb and flow as funding does the same, we continue to provide opportunities to move people from homeless to housed.

In this past year, we saw the end of an impactful program called ERA, or Emergency Rental Assistance. This program existed for three years in our communities and served hundreds of households from Waterloo up to Mason City. Across the three years of service, we were able to exit 81% of program participants to successful housing destinations. Although this program has ended, we are thankful for its success and that so many in our communities were able to secure permanent housing through it.

As one program ends, we always hope to have more programming on the horizon. This year is no different in that regard. Friends of the Family has begun work on multiple new programs. Safely Home 2, in North Central Iowa, serves people who are homeless because of domestic violence. In Black Hawk, Tama & Grundy counties, we have our BTG Permanent Supportive Housing project serving those who are chronically homeless and have a documented disability. There is a new homeless prevention program kicking off, along with a youth homeless demonstration project coming in the near future, serving those 24 years and under with housing programming. Across these new programs, we are expecting more than 65 program spots to continue our vision of ***Everyone Having a Home.***

Finally, Friends of the Family was honored to present our "Encampment to Housed" project at the Iowa Housing Conference's "Innovation in Housing" pitch competition. This project focuses on serving individuals in encampments, creating access to housing, and then working with volunteers to get the encampment cleaned up to alleviate that burden from the city and to ensure that people's belongings are not lost. Friends of the Family was selected for an award of \$100,000.

Friends of the Family continues to see success across our programs as we focus on using resources efficiently to provide meaningful, lasting support to those we serve. To learn more about all 12 of the programs available, visit our website at [www.fofia.org](http://www.fofia.org).



# Finding Home Again: Carl's Second Chance

How low-barrier housing and human connection helped one man rebuild his life.  
"Vulnerability isn't weakness. Share who you are with those around you."  
—Carl, Friends of the Family Client

Before connecting with Friends of the Family, Carl's world had narrowed to survival. He was living on the streets and in abandoned row houses in the inner city, trapped in a cycle of addiction that had stripped away everything good in his life, a loving family, a promising career, and a sense of purpose. "I didn't want to die," he said, "but I sure as hell didn't want to live."

A violent robbery was the turning point. After being drugged and left unconscious in an empty lot, Carl woke up to find every possession gone, his wallet, phone, even his glasses. That moment of desperation led him to call his mother, who helped him begin treatment in Iowa. While attending a community health fair, he learned about Friends of the Family, a name that would soon become a lifeline.

When Carl first connected with Friends of the Family, he admits he wasn't ready to change. "I treated my housing advocate like a real estate agent," he said. "I was selfish and entitled." But even when he was difficult, his advocate never gave up on him. She remained patient, compassionate, and consistent, proof that support at Friends of the Family isn't conditional on perfection.

That's the heart of low-barrier housing. It means there are no impossible hoops to jump through, no requirement to be sober first, no need to prove worthiness. It's housing first, grace first, understanding first. Because stability begins with a home, and everyone deserves that chance, no matter where they're starting from.

Over time, Carl's life began to rebuild itself piece by piece. "Things got worse before they got better," he said, "but as soon as I admitted what I was doing wasn't working, everything changed." Today, he's a proud member of Alcoholics Anonymous, working for a small family-run business, and serving on two local nonprofit boards in the Cedar Valley.

What stands out most in Carl's story isn't just how far he's come, it's how much he now gives back. He's found purpose in community, joy in service, and pride in connection. "Embrace your community," he said. "Say hi to your neighbor. Volunteer. Find the organization that's promoting the change you want to see, and ask how you can help."

For Carl, recovery isn't just about what he gained, it's about what he rediscovered: belonging, compassion, and home. His story is a living reflection of Friends of the Family's vision that Everyone Has a Home. Because when people are met with empathy instead of judgment, and with housing instead of hurdles, they don't just survive, they start to *thrive*.



## Because Everyone Has a Home

Stories like Carl's remind us why our work matters. When we remove barriers and meet people where they are, lives change, not just for our clients, but for our entire community. Every success begins with a single open door, and together, we're making sure those doors stay open for everyone.

# TOP WORK PLACE RECOGNITION

## Recognized as an Iowa Top Workplace — Two Years in a Row!

For the second consecutive year, Friends of the Family has been honored as an Iowa Top Workplace, a recognition that reflects the heart of our organization, our people. Each year, staff participate in a survey measuring engagement across six key themes: Engaged, Closely Aligned, Empowered to Execute, Respected & Supported, Enabled to Grow, and Fairly Valued. These results help guide our growth and strengthen the foundation of our workplace culture. In September, a group of eight staff members proudly represented Friends of the Family at the Top Workplaces Celebration held at Prairie Meadows Event Center. We are deeply grateful for this recognition and for the incredible team that makes our mission possible every day.

Together, we continue to build a workplace where compassion leads, collaboration thrives, and our shared vision that Everyone Has a Home shines through in all we do.



Des Moines Register  
Based on the 2024-2025 survey



# Community Impact Data

## **Shelter**

4,059 nights of safe shelter: 380 served, 202 adults & 178 youth

**4,059**

## **Survivor & Housing Contacts**

3,538 total requests for help

1,687 housing assistance referrals

1,851 survivor calls for shelter & victim services

**3,538**

## **Housing**

25 day average from intake to housed

85% successfully exited to permanent housing

613 people served: 356 adults & 257 youth

**85%**

## **Client Assistance**

\$1,646,748 spent on direct client assistance

**\$1,646,748**

## **Street Outreach**

350 individuals served: 262 adults & 88 youth

**350**



## 2024-2025 Highlights

### *A Night in Aspen*

Our largest fundraiser of the year, A Night in Aspen, transported guests to a cozy mountain escape filled with warmth, laughter, and generosity. Guests enjoyed a delicious meal from Blue Barn BBQ and were serenaded by the enchanting holiday music of Dave Woods, setting the perfect festive tone. Together, we raised over \$45,000 in support of our mission! This is testament to the incredible compassion of our community. We're filled with gratitude and excitement for the year ahead as we continue working toward a future where *Everyone Has a Home*.

### *Chefs Take a Stand*

In April, Chefs Take a Stand brought together incredible local talent, delicious flavors, and a community united for a cause. With 300 tickets sold and a sold-out crowd at the Hilton Garden Inn, the event raised over \$34,000 to support our mission. Here'z 2U Restaurant & Bar and Ten Wasp Brewing Co. took home the honors for Best Dish and Best Beverage, both earning their first ever wins! We're so thankful for the chefs, guests, and sponsors who make this event a success year after year.

### *Putt an End to Homelessness*

We teed off August with our 5th annual Putt an End to Homelessness golf tournament at Gates Golf Course. Though a surprise thunderstorm cut the day short, spirits stayed high thanks to delicious food from Rodney's 1st Base BBQ, Hy-Vee, and Village Inn. Together, we raised over \$19,000 in support of our mission, rain or shine! Congratulations to this year's champions, Sam Dvergsten, Sam Slight, Andrew Zinn, and Austin Gaffney, for taking home the trophy. We can't wait to hit the greens again next year!

**525 TOTAL** donors gave **\$267,709.66**

179 NEW donors gave

**\$29,043.82**

# Volunteer Impact

Every hour, every effort, every act of service makes a difference. Volunteers are the heartbeat of Friends of the Family, helping us extend our reach, deepen our impact, and move closer to our vision that Everyone Has a Home. In the past year alone, **351** volunteers dedicated **8,688.77** hours to our mission, providing direct support to clients, assisting with administrative work, maintaining facilities, and so much more.

- Client-Facing Hours: 6,475.6
- Administrative Hours: 2,213.17

## Point-in-Time Census (January 2025)

In a single evening, **22** volunteers contributed more than **170** hours to help facilitate our annual Point-in-Time Census, an effort to document and better understand homelessness across our communities. This year's turnout was the largest in recent memory, reflecting the growing compassion in our community.

## UNI Spanish Translation Project

A class of **10** students and their professor partnered with us to make our work more accessible by translating key materials, including our core values, safety plans, and client flyers, into Spanish. Over the course of the semester, they invested **75** hours in bridging language gaps and ensuring everyone feels seen and supported.

## Friendsgiving in Mason City

This heartfelt event served **120** guests a warm meal with **31** volunteers donating nearly **100** hours to make the evening special. It was a reminder that when we gather in gratitude, we build not just tables of food, but tables of belonging.

## Adopt-a-Family

For 17 years, our Adopt-a-Family program has embodied the spirit of giving. Clients and their families share their holiday wish lists, and community members "adopt" them by purchasing, wrapping, and donating gifts. This program brings joy, dignity, and hope to households in need, reminding us all that generosity is the truest gift of the season.

- 249 clients supported by 77 Donors



# Volunteer Integration

This certification recognizes Friends of the Family's excellence in volunteer engagement, confirming that our programs meet the highest national standards for mobilizing volunteers effectively.

2025 | 2028

alive

ACCREDITED  
SERVICE  
ENTERPRISE



"From day one, I've felt welcomed and supported and truly part of the team. Volunteering here has opened my eyes to just how many people are affected by homelessness, domestic violence, and other forms of victimization."

— Sara H. (Volunteer)

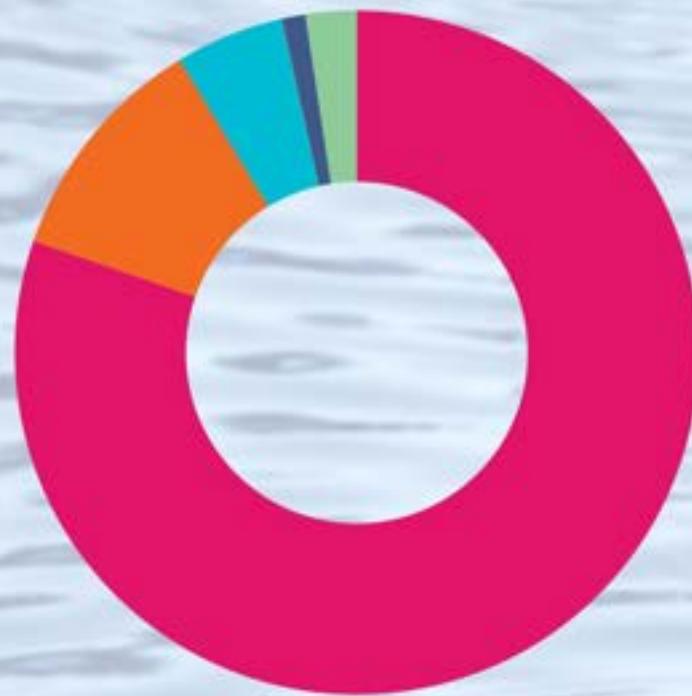
At Friends of the Family, volunteers aren't just helpers, they're an essential part of our team, dedicating weekly hours and taking on specialized tasks. Over the past year, Friends of the Family has identified key roles where volunteers make the greatest impact:

- Administrative Support – Keeps our offices organized and efficient.
- Maintenance – Ensures our spaces are safe, clean, and welcoming.
- Donations – Sorts and distributes items so families receive what they need most.
- Housing Retention – Assists staff in supporting past clients to maintain stable housing.
- Audit & Compliance – Helps ensure accuracy and accountability across programs.
- Communications – Supports storytelling, events, and community outreach.

Volunteers free up time for staff to focus on innovation and long-term goals, helping bring our mission to life and ensuring that, together, we create a community where *Everyone Has a Home*.



# Income Overview



- █ FEDERAL/STATE/COUNTY GRANTS
- █ LOCAL GRANTS & FOUNDATIONS
- █ EVENTS & CONTRIBUTIONS
- █ INVESTMENT INCOME
- █ UNREALIZED GAIN



## Income

Federal/State/County Grants	\$3,373,423
Local Grants & Foundations	\$480,653
Events & Contributions	\$267,710
Miscellaneous Income	\$418
Investment Income	\$47,256
Unrealized Gain	\$100,476
<hr/>	
Total Income	\$4,269,936

# Expenses

Category	Amount
Client Assistance	\$1,646,748
Payroll	\$1,640,206
Employee Benefits	\$143,828
Payroll Taxes	\$131,093
Travel & Training	\$102,915
Contract Services	\$111,025
Rent	\$105,449
Supplies	\$96,570
Repairs & Maintenance	\$14,055
Insurance	\$38,803
Communications/Phone	\$43,210
Utilities	\$28,263
Advertising	\$5,951
Fundraising/Outreach	\$31,703
Other Operating Costs	\$38,679
Depreciation Expenses	\$40,968
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>4,219,466</b>



# Our Leadership Team



**Ben Brustkern**  
Chief Executive Officer/  
Visionary



**Kelley Schmitz**  
Integrator



**Will Bird**  
Director of Operations



**Candi Lanning**  
Director of Finance



**Danielle Vance**  
Director of Development

# Board of Directors



Michele Knaack  
Board President



Melissa Haberstich  
Vice President



Jeff Conrey  
Secretary



Tyler Mahncke  
Treasurer



Roshawn Berry



Heidi Solheim



Jazzlyn Douglas



Andrew Bell



**FRIENDS**  
of the FAMILY  
Everyone Has A Home

# PROUD TO BE A *TOP* WORKPLACE!



“I love the work culture and what the organization stands for. Everyone has the same vision and we all work together to help people experiencing homelessness.”

- Friends of the Family  
Staff Member

Friends of the Family serves **25** counties,  
employing **58** staff members,  
at **2** offices in **Waterloo** and **Mason City**



## HOTLINES

### WAYPOINT CALL CENTER

**833.739.0065**

\*All calls are originally answered by Waypoint Call Center staff and then transferred to a Friends of the Family advocate.

### 24/7 VICTIM SERVICES HOTLINE

**319.352.0037**

\*All calls are originally answered by Iowa Victim Call Center staff and then transferred to a Friends of the Family advocate.

### EMAIL

**admin@fofia.org**

Friends of the Family is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency providing victim services and homeless programming to 25 counties across Northeast and Northcentral Iowa.

Serving the following Iowa counties: Allamakee, Benton, Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Cerro Gordo, Chickasaw, Clayton, Delaware, Dubuque, Fayette, Floyd, Franklin, Grundy, Hancock, Howard, Jones, Kossuth, Linn, Mitchell, Tama, Winnebago, Winneshiek, and Worth.



**fofia.org**

Follow us!



## CONTACT US



**319.234.0232**



**319.349.1001**



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Mason City, IA | 50401**

Join our annual giving campaign,  
Circle of Friends

