



FRIENDS of the FAMILY

Take Back Tomorrow. Today.

WINTER NEWSLETTER

HAPPY NEW YEARS! WHAT'S YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION?

A Note from Ben Brustkern, Executive Director

Our new year resolution continues to be the same from 2022. Everyone Has a Home!

We continue to strive for something called “functional zero”. This means that people are no longer waiting to receive services and that new people entering the homeless system receive services immediately. Imagine a world where people have immediate access to shelter and housing services. No longer needing to sleep on the streets or hidden away in the woods. It also means shorter shelter stays and allowing people to restore dignity and heal in their own home.

I am asked all the time how you will know when this goal is reached. One measurement that we look at is the prioritization list which tells us the number of people who are homeless and waiting to receive a housing intervention. The prioritization list is a community wide response in which all service providers complete the same assessment and share real time data on who is homeless in our community. Friends of the Family monitors the prioritization list across North Central Iowa, Northeast Iowa, and Black Hawk/Tama/Grundy Counties.

In January of 2022, our communities had 260 households on the prioritization list.

Today we have 127 households on the prioritization list! This is a significant decrease of 51% less households waiting for services. Over the past year, Friends of the Family has added over 75 new housing interventions through rapid rehousing and homeless prevention. Housing solves homelessness and we can see it working right here in your community.

Want to learn more about Friends of the Family and our vision reach out to me at ben@fofia.org or 319-576-2241, and let's meet for coffee.



THANK YOU

Our staff is so grateful for your participation in our 15th Annual Adopt-a-Family project! Your support brightened the holidays for so many families. What a joy it was to deliver your generous bundles of cheer!

Because of your compassion, 263 people in 134 households were given the sweet gift of Christmas and a sprinkle of hope.

These families have expressed such gratitude, sometimes accompanied with tears. There are so many stories that we can never know. I know how blessed all of us who were involved in this project feel. We would like to share that feeling of warmth and a smile with all of you. Deepak Chopra reminds us that if you want to feel happy, make someone else happy. It works! It's contagious.

TERESA'S STORY

Teresa, a mother of three, endured six years of violence that often-included strangulation. Last year, she was finally able to get her abuser removed from the home. But without him there to watch the kids while she worked, she struggled to keep up and fell behind on her rent. On the verge of eviction, Teresa allowed her abuser to move back in.

Things quickly escalated to violence occurring almost daily, and Teresa knew they could not continue to live like this and would have to find a way to leave. Teresa reached out to Friends of the Family to see what her options were. After an assessment, it was determined that Teresa and the children could not stay in this dangerous situation. They were offered safe shelter at Friends House and accepted. As soon as they arrived, she worked with an advocate to plan how they would move forward.

Soon Teresa was placed into a housing program and began to work with staff to prioritize her debt. It was clear that childcare expenses and late fees were her greatest strain. She was able to qualify for childcare assistance and reorganize, which allowed her to stabilize her bills and create a budget that allowed for financial growth and stability. We were able to support Teresa by connecting her with a landlord and she soon signed a lease. We assisted her with rental assistance, financial literacy support, child advocacy, legal advocacy, medical advocacy, and tenant rights/responsibility education.

Through this journey, Teresa talked about the consistent pain she had in her neck. After several months, the pain worsened, prompting her to see a doctor. It was discovered that during one of the many violent episodes she endured, a vertebra was broken in her neck, and surgery was necessary to remove bone fragments that were pressing into her spinal cord.

Today, Teresa is healthy and pain free. She no longer lives in fear and her children are growing up safe and supported in their home and community. Most important, Teresa is starting to recover her dignity and self-worth. She now knows that the violence she experienced was not her fault.



THINGS QUICKLY ESCALATED TO
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CONTINUE TO LIVE LIKE THIS...

TOP NEEDS:

- WOMEN'S UNDERWEAR (ALL SIZES)
- SOCKS (ALL SIZES)
- SHEETS (TWIN XL)
- PILLOWS
- TOWELS
- AIR MATTRESSES
- GIFT CARDS

Please connect with office manager, Monique, with donation questions or to schedule drop off at 319-576-2200 or Monique@fofia.org

FUNDING PARTNERS

Friends of the Family relies on funding from local partners to meet the needs of people affected by violence and homelessness. **Thank you!**

- | | |
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GOOD THINGS HAPPENING IN OUR PROGRAMS

1. Over the holidays, I was able to take some time to reflect and appreciate the importance of our work and just how awesome the people I get to work with are. While there are tons of hard days - almost every day I get to hear about a **staff who worked alongside someone who has gone from being homeless to housed**. These stories consist of people who have conquered so many obstacles in their lives to get to the point that they are at today. To be around staff who are playing a part in those great stories is such an awesome opportunity.
-Will, Director of Programs
2. This quarter, we were so lucky to continue to receive support from private and community foundations, the state and federal government, and United Ways across the communities we serve. This amazing support we receive allows us to continue working towards our vision of everyone having a home. It's so great to see **so many funders being dedicated** to ensuring that all people in our communities have access to a safe, stable home. What we do and what we are working towards would not be possible without all the support received by funders and donors. You are all making it possible for us to end homelessness!
-Alyssa T, Grants Manager
3. We have established a partnership with Willis Dady Shelter in Cedar Rapids which allows us to shelter individuals who cannot leave the Cedar Rapids area, allowing us to **serve more individuals**. I also had the chance to train their staff on Victim Services and how to provide victim advocacy, and it was well received!
- Bailee, Crisis Services Manager
4. In the last 3 months we have been able to get to full capacity for all our Continuum of Care programs, which is amazing because we are able to **help a ton more people with housing**. We have also been able to add two new staff to the team who are amazing assets for the agency.
- Amela, Case Operations Manager
5. In November, our new Outreach & Diversion Specialist was out doing some street outreach while he was in his training phase. During the week we were out on the street trying to **connect with people who are experiencing homelessness** on the street. We ran into a couple of people who had recently been pulled for programming. We got them connected with their caseworker and gave them some food and supplies. They told us where they were sleeping and that there was a couple other individuals there who were also homeless. Later that week, we went to look for them to see if there was anything we could help with, and we discovered their encampment. We were able to make contact, get them reassessed, and placed on the list for housing. The next week, both individuals were pulled for housing programs in the area. It is always cool to see the process from that initial contact of doing an assessment to seeing that the client gets pulled into housing.
- Caitlin, Housing Projects Manager
6. Our bi-annual PIT (Point in Time) Count was on January 25th! We had 25 volunteers and 30 staff go out into our communities and search for people experiencing homelessness. This year we **partnered with other community agencies**, did pre-emptive outreach at locations where individuals might be staying, and connected with law enforcement and medical services in all of our counties. We are looking forward to the next PIT Count this summer!
- Caitlyn, Service Access Manager

STREET OUTREACH PROGRAM

FOF's street outreach program got up and running a little over a year ago with it being a brand-new program to us. We have two Outreach specialist. One located in Black Hawk County and the other who covers North Central & Northeast Iowa. The purpose of the street outreach program is to meet individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness where they are. This could be living in their car, encampments in the woods, and on the street.

Why are we doing this? Street outreach work can help us to reach clients who we normally would not be able to connect with. They might not have phones and cannot call housing hotlines, have access to resources, or do not know how to access them or if it is something they would qualify for. The outreach workers can help connect people experiencing homelessness to resources to help stabilize them and get them off the streets. This could be connecting them to food stamps, community meals, food banks, helping them fill out SSI/SSDI paperwork, obtaining ID's, and other things to get the ready for housing and hopefully meet their needs to the best of our ability.

When we are going out and connecting with people who are actively in crisis and not safe on the street, we are trying to build a

connection with them. **We want to build trust.** Reducing barriers to services for them so if they can access housing, reconnect with family, or self-resolve it is easier for them to do so. Trauma-informed care, being respectful, and creating a safe, open, and friendly space is how we try and do this.

Since starting this program, we have connected with so many people. In North Central Iowa, we have been able to do several nighttime outreach events where food has been donated from local pantries and pizza places. As well as getting soda donations from Pepsi, and community members cooking hot meals. FOF can go out, connect with people, meet them where they are, assess them and get them placed on the list. As well as giving them some food and other hygiene items, blankets, and other donations we must get them by.

This program has had several successful outcomes over the past year. We had one individual who was sleeping where they could. Park benches, under bridges, ect. They got a job and started working while they were still on the street, got clean, and ended up only needing a one-time assistance to help with a deposit and could afford their rent ongoing. We connected with others staying in their car, got them assessed, and pulled them within weeks of the assessment, and the housing support specialist housed them within days of being pulled. These are just a few examples of these individuals' successes. We are glad to be a small part of their story and to get to be a support to them.



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THANK YOU to our third quarter donors! It is with your support that we are able to ensure that **EVERYONE HAS A HOME.**

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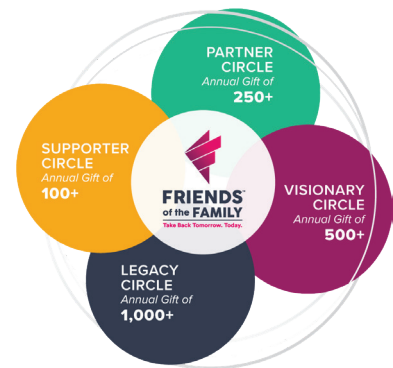
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April 6 | 6-9pm Hilton Garden Inn, Cedar Falls

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