

# I nterfaith Shelter Network



Our Interfaith Shelter Network is unique to our community. When we opened our doors in 1996 we were the only shelter program that could keep parents together in the same room with children with no separation by gender. We can provide services to single parents with children, especially single fathers. We are one of only two existing shelter programs in our community that can provide shelter for single fathers. Dual parent families for us are defined as two parents in partnership to provide a nurturing and safe environment for their children. We have welcomed grandparents with their grandchildren through our doors as well.

The heart of our shelter program is the partnership from over 26 interfaith congregations across Clark County; Catholic, Jewish, Muslim Protestant, and Unitarian Universalist. We began our network with 12 congregations and over the past 17 years have grown to a network of 26 interfaith partners. All with a common goal to provide shelter and hospitality to families that need a place to call home while they work on goals to get back to work and into their own home again.

Our staff at the Day Center consists of our director, two case managers, an office assistant and two van drivers. The nearly 2,000 volunteers within the interfaith congregations comprise the bulk of our staff. It is this great group of volunteers that together give approximately \$300,000 of in-kind services each year that truly are the "heart" of our program. Each partner congregation signs up to host families about four times a year. They provide a safe and secure room for the families to sleep in and nutritious meals for a week at a time right in their congregation. Classrooms are converted to family rooms. Volunteers prepare wonderful meals and families are treated with compassion.

Our Day Center is a place to call home during the day. From 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, case managers work with each family to develop a personal plan. Children go to school, daycare or the Boys and Girls Clubs. Our Day Center looks and feels like home. There are showers, a laundry room, closets for personal belongings, access to internet, phones and fax. Our van drivers transport our families to the evening host site around 4:30 p.m. daily to be greeted by the host coordinator and the evening volunteers. Annually we serve over 100 parents and children in our shelter program alone (approximately 30 families). Our success rate of families graduating from our program employed and back into housing is usually in the 75% range.

The partnership of faith houses with Family Promise is a model that gives volunteers an opportunity to serve others within the walls of their own congregation. Families say "I never knew that people were as caring as the people that help us at night in the congregation".

The kindness and compassion that is woven throughout this program is what connects volunteers, families in need and our staff to become a sheltering place that is very special in so many ways.