



Making places to come home to.

April 6, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:
Sandra Gaddy
V.P. of Advancement
616-336-9333 x408
or sgaddy@iccf.org

West Michigan Family Homeless Shelter for Families Turns 25

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. – The Inner City Christian Federation’s homeless shelter, The Family Haven, took in its first family on March 30, 1990. Since that day, The Family Haven has given 1,852 homeless families including 5,585 children a safe, clean and private place to stay while they stabilize their lives.

ICCF opened The Family Haven in response to the shortage in Grand Rapids of facilities for families who suddenly find themselves homeless. It was designed to be non-dormitory style emergency housing featuring five fully-furnished apartments, a laundry room, a community room, a playground and offices. Families stay free of charge for up to 30 days during which time, staff members work with them to identify the cause of their homelessness, connect them with other resources in the city and help them find permanent housing.

Sue Ortiz, Director of Housing and Family Services at ICCF, recently reflected on the impact she has seen the shelter make in our community, “The ICCF Family Haven has been called to meet the needs of families who have no place to go and no place to call home by offering hope and services that enable life transformation throughout its 25 year history. Witnessing the healing power of God’s love in the lives of the families who undergo these traumatic experiences is very inspiring.”

For 25 years, families staying at Family Haven have benefited from a number of learning opportunities and helpful resources including:

- Budgeting Classes
- Parenting Classes
- Financial Counseling
- Employment Assistance
- Clothing and Food Pantry
- Bible study
- Children’s Activities

Family Haven also offers additional services to families through ICCF’s Supportive Housing Program. A Supportive Housing Specialist follows up with families for six months after their

stay at the Haven to help ensure that families remain stable and avoid the situations that led to their homelessness. The Specialist helps parents pursue educational opportunities, locate affordable, reliable childcare and the funding for it; find employment and transportation to and from work and apply for Medicaid.

Other services include helping families acquire food, clothing, and health care following their stay, creating or finding existing social support networks, offering informal counseling and addressing budgeting and physical and mental health issues. Since 2009, families can also take advantage of ICCF's Rapid Rehousing Program which helps provide funds for first months' rent and security deposits.

Today, the need for emergency housing for homeless families is still very real as families can become homeless for many reasons. Unemployment, lack of affordable housing, house fires and/or landlord tenant judgments are times when families need help to stabilize their lives.

“Access to housing that is safe, warm and affordable is fundamental to success in all dimensions of life, but when a family is homeless, rootedness is gone and despair can quickly prevail,” said Jonathan Bradford, President and CEO of ICCF. “For 25 years now it has been a true privilege to come alongside thousands of families in Grand Rapids who are confronted with homelessness. But none of the caring and advocacy that ICCF has provided could have happened were it not for this community. We are humbled and honored by the generosity and compassion shown by our supporting partners. School groups, individuals, churches and business have stopped at nothing to ensure that all Family Haven residents have a loving and safe place where despair is replaced by hope and confidence. When hope is nurtured we then see housing stumbling blocks become stepping stones to life success.”

For more information about Family Haven or other ICCF programs and services please contact the VP of Advancement, Sandra Gaddy, sgaddy@iccf.org or visit www.iccf.org

ICCF is the oldest non-profit affordable housing provider in the state of Michigan. Active in the Grand Rapids area since 1974, the agency serves more than 2200 families a year through its programs and services. Program offerings include Family Haven emergency housing located at 701 Prospect SE (Grand Rapids), 168 units of affordable rental housing, newly constructed homes for purchase, home ownership education and financial counseling. All services are provided in Spanish and English. Visit www.iccf.org for more information.

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