

GALA 2017

Houses to Homes

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A woman with long dark hair, wearing blue scrubs, is kneeling and kissing a young girl on the cheek. The girl is wearing a blue and white striped dress with a yellow hem. They are standing in front of a window with a pattern of small white houses. The text 'PLEASANT PROSPECT HOME' is visible on the window. The background shows a brick wall and a window with a pattern of small white houses.

PLEASANT  
PROSPECT  
HOME

# Blueprints

INNER CITY CHRISTIAN FEDERATION

SPRING 2017

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

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Dear ICCF friends and partners,

*“There are days that I don’t want to be here anymore...”* That’s what she said to me as we sat and talked, this woman in her twenties who had come into Family Haven with her little girl to get help.

Up until a year ago, she was working full time and living in a two bedroom place. It wasn’t perfect, but it was a safe place to raise her daughter. Then a year ago, her landlord sold the house. Bad news: a rent increase of \$400 by the new owner.

And if that weren’t enough, not long after that she got a layoff notice from work. Now there was just no way for this unemployed single mom to pay the rent. After staying in a series of shabby hotels, scraping up whatever she could come up with to keep a roof over her head, she wound up “couch surfing” at friends’ places. But that could only go on so long before she wore out her welcome.

Here is the challenge for our community. Times are good for a lot of us. The economy is thriving and home values are on the rise. But, as the city becomes a desirable place to live for those with privilege and access to capital, those of us with low or fixed incomes who have lived here for a long time are struggling to pay the rising rents.

We’re convinced that God’s justice calls us to strive to be a community in which people of all walks of life can have a place that is safe, beautiful and affordable to call home, a place where they have the opportunity to thrive. In this Blueprints newsletter you will learn about some of the steps we are taking toward that end.

Our team at ICCF will not give up until Sara and her daughter have found a new home. Believing we can make a difference together, I hope you too will feel called and inspired to take some intentional action.

Shalom,



**Ryan VerWys**  
President and CEO  
[rverwys@iccf.org](mailto:rverwys@iccf.org)



# THE IMPACT OF YOU: *The Storey Family*

Greg and Linda Storey began volunteering at Family Haven in 1995 as a young couple with two children, Scott (5) and Brittany (3). Twenty+ years later, the Storey family has returned to a regular volunteer commitment at Family Haven – but now they include their church family as well.

“Back then, we saw young homeless families with children the same age as ours and wanted to help,” says Linda. “We visited Family Haven weekly to do crafts and play with the kids. Pretty quickly, these families became part of our lives. We shared the sorrow of an immigrant family as their young son died of cancer. We also shared the joys of life together like celebrating birthdays, swimming in the summer and numerous playdoh dates.”

For the past year and a half, Greg and Linda, with Scott and Brittany now in their mid-20’s, and with the help of dozens of others from St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Church, have made Saturday morning breakfast once a month, bringing joy to Family Haven families by sharing a meal, chatting, and playing with kids.

“It has been special to bring new people to Family Haven and watch as new connections are made,” says Greg. “Our church’s involvement at Family Haven includes people

of all ages. As a result of hearing about Family Haven at church, the third grade Church School class decided to give up candy for Advent and save their money for Family Haven. This past month, Scott and Brittany went to Family Haven with the Young Adult Group to make breakfast and donated the money from the third grade class.”

Greg and Linda were drawn back to Family Haven because of the relationships they’ve built with the people there. “Our faith directs us to share our wealth and do works of mercy as a necessary part of our responsibility to others and for our own spiritual formation,” says Greg. “Family Haven offers a wonderful opportunity to do these things.”



## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### LUNCH AND TOUR

April 27, 2017 | May 25, 2017 | June 29, 2017 | July 27, 2017

CHERRY  
STREET  
*music series*

### ADMISSION IS FREE!

*All donations benefit Family Haven, ICCF’s emergency shelter for homeless families.*

6:30pm to 8:30pm | 920 Cherry Street SE

### ENTYCE | JUNE 15

Entyce is a multi-talented band fronted by two phenomenal vocalists, Michelle Covington and Deb Alexander. As a cover band they perform many of your jazz, R&B, blues and pop favorites. Their music will take you back, relax your mind and soothe your soul.

### TO BE ANNOUNCED | JULY 20

### VOX VIDORRA | AUGUST 17

Vox Vidorra is an indie/soul quartet led by vocal phenom Molly Bouwsma Schultz. The band combines rich, Motown-worthy vocals with an underbelly of indie rock, soul, and jazz.



Global Supply Solutions - Amway Corporation

ABC Moms - Ada Bible Church

Bill Byl



# HOUSES TO HOMES

## GALA 2017

More than 500 guests once again gathered at the JW Marriott in downtown Grand Rapids to celebrate the work ICCF is doing to create opportunities, demonstrate respect, and foster shalom in our area.

Gala guests responded to God's call for justice in a powerful way. Their generosity, together with the sponsoring contributions of 91 sponsors, provided \$207,000 in support of the work ICCF does with our neighbors.

We are so grateful.

Ryan VerWys, CEO of ICCF, invited guests to consider how the ideas of home and heaven are closely linked, and expressed the organization's belief that it's possible for all of our neighbors to have a safe, beautiful, and affordable home and the opportunity to thrive.

Jason and Jennifer Wimbush shared the story of how they experienced God's faithfulness through ICCF, empowering them to become homeowners after experiencing the pain of job loss and foreclosure.

### EBENEZER AWARDS

*"Ebenezer": "Thus far the Lord has helped us." 1 Samuel 7:12*

The Global Supply Solutions Group of Amway Corporation and the ABC Moms of Ada Bible Church were awarded the Ebenezer award at this year's Gala. Both groups have been exceptional in their service to the neighbors ICCF serves.

Since 2014 when the partnership began, the Amway Global Supply Solutions team has contributed more than 600 hours of service. They have worked on virtually every type of property, from painting and cleaning apartments to building a playground at Family Haven.

The ABC Moms have been volunteering at ICCF's emergency shelter, Family Haven, for over seven years in multiple capacities, including cleaning and restocking apartments, making and serving meals, and landscaping.

ICCF also presented a special Ebenezer Award to Bill Byl, who was one of the founding board members of ICCF and remains a faithful friend and inspiration to the organization.

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Anonymous

# RENT THIS WAY CLASS HELPS MOM AND DAUGHTER FIND HOME

Bobbie and her 4-year-old daughter, Dyllan, had been experiencing hardship and homelessness for several years when they came to ICCF in October of 2016.

They had moved from state to state, sometimes being told they hadn't stayed long enough to qualify for aid, other times being told that they made too much money to qualify for shelter. At one point, they spent 90 days in New York City going back and forth from friends' places to the hospital at night.

After Bobbie and her daughter moved to Michigan, they were referred to ICCF. Veronica, a Caseworker at ICCF, set Bobbie up with resources that she qualified for and partnered with her to get her housing search underway. One suggestion she offered was for Bobbie to enroll in the new Rent This Way class. "Ms. Veronica said this class would give me information on how to find and keep my apartment, so I was all for it," noted Bobbie.

When she arrived, she was warmly greeted by the team. "I knew I was at the right place and that they were going to help."

Bobbie attended every class and received her certificate. Soon after, she received a call that there was a vacant apartment and that she qualified.

"Rent This Way gave me the knowledge I needed to get into my own apartment - what the landlords wanted and expected from me, as well as my rights as a tenant. They also helped me budget and told me what my options were,



even though my credit wasn't the best," Bobbie says.

"I can say that it is not an easy road, and you may feel like you're at the end, but there is hope. Keep pushing, have faith. And most of all, help ICCF and Rent This Way help you. Putting in the work will help you get to your goal much faster. Thank you to everyone at ICCF and Rent This Way - my dream of a home came true, now my daughter and I are safe and so happy."



## ABOUT RENT THIS WAY

ICCF recently began offering the Rent This Way class series that Bobbie participated in to our Family Haven shelter residents as well as the households at risk of homelessness that we are assisting with short-term rent assistance. The Rent This Way series is offered in partnership with the Kent County Housing Commission and educates participants about rental responsibilities, lease agreements, landlord expectations and communication, and the budgeting responsibilities essential to being a good tenant. Participants create their own housing stability plan to help ensure that past mistakes are not repeated and earn a certification which can be presented to prospective landlords.

# HOUSING PIPELINE

## PROSPECT AVE SE COMPLETED PROJECT

ICCF recently completed work on this single-family home on Prospect Avenue, SE which has now been sold to an eligible low/moderate income household who participated in ICCF's home ownership training and counseling. The house was vacant and deteriorating when it was purchased out of tax foreclosure from the Kent County Land Bank Authority. Construction is also underway on four other vacant and deteriorated homes on the near SE side.

We are excited about this opportunity to redeem a housing asset for this neighborhood and provide another affordable homeownership opportunity.



## 435 LAGRAVE PROJECT UPDATE

Construction began on 435 LaGrave in mid-October and the project is taking shape! The project, which complements the work ICCF has already done in the Tapestry Square neighborhood, will feature 24 apartments, and includes mixed income apartments, as well as six units reserved for youth aging out of foster care, thanks to ICCF's recent partnership with Bethany Christian Services. The individuals living in these units will receive additional support from both ICCF and Bethany Christian Services. The project is currently on schedule and is expected to be completed in October of 2017.

# UPCOMING PROJECTS

## STOCKBRIDGE APARTMENTS

Set on the Westside, this new five-story development will feature 64 housing units with 51 units reserved for low-income households and 13 units provided at market rate. Unit types will range from studios to 3-bedroom apartments. 15 of the apartments will be supported through Project Based Vouchers issued by the Grand Rapids Housing Commission. Along Stocking Avenue 11,000 sq. feet of ground floor commercial space will be developed, owned, and managed by Rockford Construction. Construction should be complete by the spring of 2019.

## 501 EASTERN AVE.

ICCF expects to begin construction on this new four-story development in the spring of 2018, which will include 65 total residential units, 61 of which will be reserved for low-income households. This development will also feature 17 units of permanent supportive housing for homeless youth, with services coordinated with ICCF staff and Bethany Christian Services, as well as 10 units supported through Project Based Vouchers issued by the Grand Rapids Housing Commission. Six live/work units will be incorporated on the first floor that will face Eastern Avenue.

# ICCF

Inner City Christian Federation

920 Cherry Street SE

Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

## OUR MISSION

In response to God's call to justice, the Inner City Christian Federation provides housing opportunities and services that encourage family responsibility and independence, thereby helping to build stable communities.



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