Dear ICCF friends and partners,

As I was preparing my remarks for our Houses to Homes Gala on March 15, I knew that I wanted to share a quotation from Father Greg Boyle, the founder of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles. Here’s what it looked like on the big screens at the JW Marriott that night:

“Here is what we seek: a compassion that can **STAND IN AWE** at what the poor have to carry rather than stand in judgment at how they carry it.”

– Father Greg Boyle

As the evening progressed, these words on the screen were replaced with videos of neighbors who’ve carried heavy loads and found a way through incredible challenges. People like Kelly, whose story is also told on page 6 in this newsletter, and others, like Veronica and Amber and Shakelle, who allowed us to share their stories on those big Gala screens.

Their stories demonstrated much of what we have seen over and over again at ICCF – that when a family’s home is stable, other aspects of their life improve as well. Family relationships are strengthened. Parents can get to work and kids can get to school. Financial situations improve because families can make plans and look ahead instead of wondering about where they will sleep tonight. And people whose attention was focused on meeting their own pressing crisis are empowered to help their neighbors at the point of their need.

In addition to these stories, I had much more to report that evening. Over the past 12 months it has felt like we’ve been front row to a series of miracles. At a time of unprecedented need for affordable housing, ICCF is grasping unparalleled new opportunities, made possible through incredible generosity.

And here’s what we seek: a compassionate justice founded not in judgment, but in respect, even admiration, for those who are on the margins and whose housing is vulnerable. That’s the kind of “neighbor-care” that Jesus put right at the top of the list of what is important ... right up there next to loving God.

Thank you for your compassion, your commitment to justice, and for your support!

Ryan VerWys
President and CEO
rverwys@iccf.org
John Carman joined the ICCF team in 1994 as Program Director and then eventually moved into the role of Vice President of Operations. But, whatever the title, over the years John’s job always seemed to be doing whatever most needed doing.

John took the lead when new opportunities presented themselves; John filled the gaps when positions were vacant; John was the glue that held things together in challenging times.

John was well-equipped to work with people of any age and disposition. Prior to ICCF he’d done social work in both an Adolescent Crisis Facility and in an Alzheimer Care Unit. He had an MSW from MSU and a Master’s of Management degree from Aquinas College.

John’s capacity as both a people-person and a nuts-and-bolts problem-solver was unique. His deep concern for people was coupled with a ready comprehension of all things technical, and that made him the “go-to” person for all the behind the scenes stuff like building security and our sometimes touchy heating/cooling system, as well as the ins and outs of ever more complex information technology.

John was and still is all about development – people development. His greatest pleasure was seeing people grow and thrive. Over the years, John served as the supervisor and mentor for numerous ICCF staff as well as a steady stream of MSW student interns working both for ICCF and other non-profits.

When ICCF moved to our current building at 920 Cherry, John’s route home from work no longer took him through the neighborhoods in which so many ICCF houses were located. Asked what he missed most, John says that it was that daily sight of kids playing and adults on porches that showed him the difference ICCF was making for people.

ICCF thanks God for John Carmen’s legacy of service and his commitment to justice.

**THE IMPACT OF YOU**

**JOHN CARMAN RETIRES AFTER 24 YEARS OF DEDICATED ICCF SERVICE**

For more than 40 years, ICCF has sought to make places to come home to. Want to learn more about our mission and vision? And how you can make an impact in neighborhoods throughout greater Grand Rapids? Join us for a Lunch and Learn event from noon to 1PM to learn more and get involved.

RSVP to Katie Brower at (616) 336-9333 ext 411 or kbrower@iccf.org.

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**LUNCH & LEARN:**

**April 26, 2018 | May 24, 2018**

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From a 1994 issue of Blueprints.

John Carman receives a special tribute Ebenezer Award at the 2018 Houses to Homes Gala
“Here is what we seek: a compassion that can stand in awe at what the poor have to carry rather than stand in judgment at how they carry it.” Father Greg Boyle

More than 525 guests gathered at the JW Marriott in downtown Grand Rapids in mid-March to celebrate equitable opportunity, affordable homes, and thriving neighborhoods. It was a powerful evening sharing the work ICCF has done alongside so many friends and supporters. And, gratefully, more than $190,000 was raised to continue that good work.

Ryan VerWys, CEO of ICCF, shared various challenges the greater Grand Rapids community is facing and how ICCF is working to address each one. Issues like youth becoming homeless after aging out of foster care, rising cost of housing with salaries not keeping pace, and families experiencing homelessness with nowhere to turn are being met through projects like mixed-use housing at 435 LaGrave, the Community Homes Initiative, and Family Haven.

Many thanks to the VanLente Family, Veronica Arvizu, Amber McCoy, Kelly Ferguson, and Shakell Mitchell for sharing their stories as well. It takes courage to speak about our personal journeys, and each of them did so with both truth and grace.

Ebenezer Awards

“THUS FAR THE LORD HAS HELPED US.” 1 SAMUEL 7:12

The Ebenezer Award was presented to Doretha Ardoin and LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church at this year’s Gala. Both Doretha and LaGrave Avenue Church have been championing the mission and vision of ICCF for more than 10 years.

ICCF also presented a special Ebenezer Award to John Carman, who has served ICCF for more than 20 years and who is retiring this Spring. John has been a longtime friend, advocate, and close partner. He will be greatly missed.
THANK YOU to our 2018 gala sponsors.

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Anonymous Friends
Imagine a life-changing accident that forces your husband out of work and sends your life into a tailspin. Imagine losing your job. And your home. Imagine living in a van with your young family and wondering, every night, where your children will brush their teeth before heading to school.

Kelly found herself in this position a year ago... and then her husband had two heart attacks.

“Our family bounced from place-to-place. Some nights we stayed with friends. Others we stayed in hotels. There were so many dead ends, so many brick walls. And then we ended up at Family Haven,” she says.

Kelly and her family came to ICCF’s emergency shelter in July 2017. She connected with counselors who helped her breathe, helped her keep steady. These individuals assisted her with paperwork and connected her with housing resources. They gifted her time, time to get back on her feet. It was “the best stepping stone” she’d had.

"I felt normal here. I felt like my life had settled down long enough for me to achieve something. If this hadn't been here, I really don't know where we would be."

Kelly is now employed, and she and her family live in an apartment. "I have stability. I have a whole new life. We fought so hard for so long to get where we are. I refuse to let anybody or anything take that."

ABOUT FAMILY HAVEN

Family Haven is a five-unit emergency shelter for families experiencing homelessness in the Grand Rapids area. The shelter keeps mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters – entire families – together in clean and private housing units, with the hope of moving them to permanent housing in 30 days.

ICCF believes all persons are created in God’s image and exist in the light of His love. Because of this, all families are treated with respect and dignity.
415 Franklin

ICCF is now planning for the redevelopment of the former Grand Rapids Christian High School building at 415 Franklin in partnership with Madison Square Church: Ford Campus. The first floor will include worship and activity space for the church as well as a nonprofit office. The second and third floors will be repurposed as residential, providing 40 affordable apartments funded primarily through Low Income Housing Tax Credits. Construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2019.

Community Homes Initiative

The Resident Engagement team is developing relationships with these new ICCF tenants to connect them to other opportunities and resources. Rehab work is underway on 45 of these properties, and ICCF is partnering with churches and nonprofit organizations to assist in some of these construction projects. If your church, service club or group of employee volunteers would like to find out more about partnering with ICCF on one of these houses, please call Michelle Covington at (616) 336-9333 ext. 408.

Eastern Elementary

The city’s Planning Commission approved ICCF’s Special Land Use request to convert the former Eastern Elementary School into 50 apartments. The current plan for this four-story building includes 8 studio apartments, 31 one-bedroom apartments, 10 two-bedroom apartments, and 1 three-bedroom unit. ICCF continues its work toward a funding solution for this development with the goal of creating a mixed income community for a diversity of families.
"When a family's home is stable, other aspects of their life improve..."

Read more inside.