



Blueprints

Winter 2026

“It’s a Big Deal”

**THE IMPACT OF FIRST GENERATION
HOMEOWNERSHIP**

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Dear friends,

When the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) held its conference in Grand Rapids recently, ICCF Community Homes had the privilege of leading a “Go & See” site-visit. As we walked eight blocks around Tapestry Square near the corner of Wealthy and Division, we were able to show visitors some of the transformation taking place in our neighborhood. We saw families putting down roots, new homes next to longtime neighbors, and signs of stability and hope.

One unexpected gift of this tour was seeing ICCF’s work through the eyes of other people. It’s a bit like the holidays, when a guest notices an unusual decoration or feature of your home. Something you see everyday looks different when someone else points it out. Their perspective helps you see that what surrounds you is, in fact, a big deal.

In this issue of Blueprints, you’ll read stories that do the same thing. Through the words and experiences of our neighbors, you’ll be reminded that safe, stable, affordable housing is anything but ordinary. It shapes health, education, family life, and faith. It is, without question, a very big deal.

Likewise, you may feel your own prayers, financial gifts, and volunteer hours are just part of your routine, simply “normal.” But seen through the eyes of a child who can finally sleep in the same bedroom all year, or a parent who can plan for the future, your support is very much a big deal.

We give thanks to God for the stories in these pages, for the neighbors who share them, and for you. Your partnership is part of what makes this good work possible.



To God be the glory.

Ryan VerWys
President and CEO
rverwys@iccf.org

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Gifts in Honor of:

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**Impact of You
How Volunteers
Transformed
Family Haven**

When a family comes to stay at ICCF Community Homes’ shelter, Family Haven, they often arrive having lost not only their home, but many of their belongings. To help meet immediate needs, Family Haven offers a donation center where families can choose clothing at no cost during their time of crisis. Volunteers play a vital role in keeping the space stocked and organized. Marny Danz, Juli Priolo, Diane Hartung, and Patty Dekker volunteer every Thursday afternoon.

“The ladies make things a lot easier and more visible for families looking for what they need,” said Family Haven Manager Veronica Arvizu. “They also organize the food pantry and track expiration dates. It has been such a help for our small staff.”

All four women have volunteered with ICCF Community Homes for years but recently focused their efforts on the donation center. “I’ve volunteered with ICCF for almost 20 years,” said Marny. “Since retiring, I’ve wanted my time to make a difference, and ICCF has been a great fit. There are always ways to help.”

Patty volunteers because ICCF has left a lasting impression. “I love that it’s personal and marked by integrity,” she said. “The life skills classes offered are invaluable for helping people move toward a successful future.”

Juli Priolo says her own experiences motivate her to serve. “I went through an unexpected and difficult divorce,” she said. “As a single mom, I understand life’s twists and turns. Everyone deserves respect, dignity, and sometimes a little help.”

Before volunteers stepped in, keeping up with donations had become overwhelming. “Donations were piled on



Diane Hartung, Patty Dekker, and Marny Danz

tables and sagging racks, which must have been daunting for families,” said Volunteer and Project Manager Sheryl Baas. “They brightened it up with new lights, tackled the piles of clothing, and separated everything by size and gender. It’s so much more welcoming and much easier to find what’s needed.”

Houses to Homes

2026 GALA

JOIN US MARCH 5, 2026

Join us as we celebrate accomplishments that advance equitable opportunities for affordable housing at this year’s Houses to Homes Gala. Come celebrate, dream, and construct a stronger community with ICCF, your neighbors, and friends.



Find tickets and sponsorship opportunities at iccf.org/events/gala-2026





“It’s a Big Deal” The Impact of First Generation Homeownership

Yvonne Jones never stopped trying to find a place where she could feel secure and at home, even when the doors kept closing. Finding a place to rent became a constant source of stress and heartbreak. Renting an apartment shouldn’t feel impossible, Yvonne thought, even though it often did. Time after time, she was turned

away, often without clear expectations or reasons. “I was dealing with discrimination from complexes,” she says. “They would wrongfully deny me, and it was hard.”

Each rejection took an emotional toll, leaving her discouraged and questioning whether stable housing was even possible. It was then Yvonne decided to call ICCF Community Homes, following a referral she’d received from the Grand Rapids Housing Commission several years prior. This time, however, she came back more determined than ever. ICCF paired her with a housing counselor, and together they took practical steps toward something she’d long thought out of reach: a home of her own.

The road to homeownership is rarely straightforward, but ICCF walked beside Yvonne the entire way. Staff helped clarify the process, introduced her to a number of trusted realtors and lenders, and connected her with a variety of partner organizations that provide down-payment assistance. “Every part was vital,” she says, “I honestly believe ICCF counseling is necessary for anybody who wants to buy a home.”

Yvonne left each meeting a little more energized and confident. With her ICCF counselor, Yvonne better navigated the obstacles that often trip up first-time buyers. “People can get you in so many ways: overcharging or pushing you into something you can’t actually afford,” she says. “So I took things slow, and checked every decision with ICCF first. Everything just seemed to fall into place.”

Even as the pieces fell into place, Yvonne kept her guard up, wary from so many previous setbacks. “I didn’t believe it was real until I had the keys,” she says. The day she closed, reality sunk in, and “It was awesome!”

Keys in hand, Yvonne felt the immense impact of this realization: “I’m a first-generation homeowner.” Life looks different now. “I feel secure. I’m not paying those high apartment rents anymore. The mortgage is lower, and every payment builds equity.”

“And,” she adds with a smile, “I can do what I want here! Paint, hang pictures, start a garden.”

News gets around, of course. “A lot of people say, ‘For real?’” Yvonne says. “But when they see me in the new

house, they know it can be done.” Best of all, Yvonne started her daughter on a mission to build her credit, so ‘first-generation homeowner’ can become second-generation, and beyond.

When friends and family ask how she did it, she gives the same answer: “Go through ICCF. I’m the type of person who’s going to tell everyone. I’ve

become an ICCF evangelist.” While Yvonne gladly sings ICCF’s praises, she’s always clear to add: “God is so good. He brought it all together.”

When she thinks about what those keys represent—stability, equity, and a clear sign of God’s care—she returns to that profound realization: *first-generation homeowner*. “It’s a big deal,” she says gleefully! ■



From Faith to Foundation

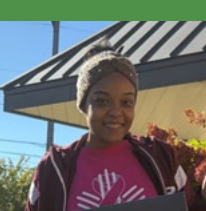
**BUILDING WITH FAITH SURPASSES
\$12 MILLION GOAL**

The Building with Faith campaign has officially surpassed its goal, thanks to the generous support of community members like you! In October 2024, ICCF Community Homes launched an audacious goal to raise \$12 million dollars to empower congregations throughout our city to become active partners in addressing the growing need for affordable housing. As of December 2025, the goal was exceeded, **reflecting a shared commitment to stewarding land in our community and caring for our neighbors.**

With the more than \$12 million dollars raised, **ICCF Community Homes will help create 100 affordable rental units, enabling churches to develop high-quality housing on their own land. Another 100 affordable homes will be built through the Community Homes Land Trust, providing subsidized homeownership opportunities for qualified, first-time buyers.** Together these efforts will strengthen housing stability, support generational wealth building, and demonstrate God’s grace and justice for our neighbors.

By transforming under-utilized church property into vibrant, stable homes, the campaign equips churches to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our community in a tangible, lasting way. “Our faith calls us to be stewards of the resources we have been blessed with and to extend a helping hand to our neighbors in need,” shared campaign co-chairs Adam and Mary DeYoung and Kevin and Lori Einfeld.

Because of this collective effort, families across our community will experience the dignity, hope, and opportunity that come with a safe, stable place to call home. **Thank you for helping ICCF make a difference, one home at a time!**



Celebrating Yvonne at the annual Homeowner Celebration in 2025



Touring The Seymour

ICCF Homes & Hope Legacy Luncheon 2025

The annual ICCF *Homes & Hope* Legacy Luncheon in September began with a presentation at Tabernacle Community Church. CEO Ryan VerWys shared his enthusiasm about ICCF’s “Building with Faith” vision to partner with and equip area churches to re-purpose their unused property into 200 affordable community-based homes. Then Rev. Artie Lindsay, Tabernacle Church’s Pastor, shared how his congregation has been blessed by its partnership with ICCF in the restoration of what once was the Seymour Christian Elementary School building.

After that presentation, attendees took a walking tour of The Seymour condominiums right next door, seeing for themselves how these 27 beautiful new homes will meet the needs of their income-qualifying buyers. Along the way, Legacy Society Members also heard brief presentations from ICCF staff about the history of the school and the neighborhood as well as some of the restoration’s design and construction features.

After the tour, attendees returned to Tabernacle Church for lunch, along with a Q&A session and closing

ICCF *Homes & Hope* LEGACY SOCIETY

remarks by Planned Giving Specialist, Hank Kroondyk, who summarized the day’s significance with the words: ***Restoring old buildings is a tangible reflection of God’s redemptive work in our world.***

The annual ICCF *Homes & Hope* Legacy Luncheon is one of the ways ICCF Community Homes shares our gratitude with donors who have included (or are considering) a legacy contribution to ICCF in their estate plans. For more event photos, visit iccf.org/planned-gifts and click on “Legacy Luncheon and Tour 2025”. ■



Luncheon attendees visit The Seymour

Working and Waiting Reflections on the CCDA Conference

The 2025 Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) Conference brought thousands of practitioners to Grand Rapids under the theme of *Shalom*, a word meaning peace, or “nothing broken, nothing missing.” Throughout the week, this shared time served as a call to pursue wholeness, justice, and well-being in our neighborhoods. Through workshops, plenary sessions, and local “Go & See” site-visits, participants explored how faith, practice, and place come together in tangible ways within real communities.

ICCF Community Homes served as a “Go & See” site, welcoming visitors into local developments and inviting them to consider how housing can be a pathway toward shalom in our

community. Though we don’t live in a place and time where perfect peace is present, developments like Tapestry Square and Southgate Senior Living reflect a holistic commitment to addressing real needs, responding not only to housing insecurity, but also a need for belonging.

“An unexpected gift of this tour was seeing ICCF’s work through someone else’s eyes. Like welcoming a guest into your home, their perspective reminded me that what we see every day is, in fact, something truly meaningful,” said ICCF CEO Ryan VerWys.

In the closing moments of the conference during his plenary speech, Ryan named the sacred tension of working for peace while also waiting for peace on earth to take hold. He urged attendees to steward the abundance entrusted to them, to share the Good News generously, and to remain rooted in the person of Jesus as we labor toward a world that more closely reflects Heaven.



Ryan VerWys presents at CCDA

Thank you to all of our ICCF supporters who share the vision for vibrant communities with connected neighbors, housing justice and abundant opportunities. ■

Housing Stability Services A Step Forward for Six Families



ICCF’s Linsey Holverson

This past November, something extraordinary happened at ICCF Community Homes: six families found permanent homes just in time for the holidays. Through ICCF’s Housing Stability Services program, *Step Forward*, Housing Resource Specialist Linsey Holverson walks alongside referred individuals and families who are unhoused or at risk of homelessness, developing personalized housing plans and providing financial assistance when eligible.

One woman’s journey, Linsey shared, captures the heart of this work. After the devastating loss of her child, she lost her job, her home, and eventually her sense of hope. A prior eviction made securing housing nearly impossible.

After years without stable housing, she reached out for help and refused to give up once she knew support existed.

With persistence, the support of the ICCF team, and a landlord willing to advocate for her, she was finally approved for an apartment of her own. Through the Step Forward program, ICCF provided her the stability she needed to begin rebuilding her life.

“When someone has a home, they gain more than shelter,” Linsey shared. “They gain space to dream. And every day becomes a true step forward.”

Join us in celebrating this milestone and the powerful step forward taken by six families toward stability, hope, and a place to call home. ■



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