



Blueprints

Spring 2026

Toward a Place of Peace

BRENDA'S JOURNEY TO HOMEOWNERSHIP

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Dear friends,

At this year's Houses to Homes Gala, I shared an embarrassing confession: I recently got lost in my own neighborhood.

I was trying to meet Brenda, a new Seymour homeowner whose story you'll read in this issue. As the CEO of ICCF, it felt especially humbling to be wandering around, unsure where I was going. Thankfully, I soon spotted the familiar and welcoming face of Barb, a Seymour resident and neighborhood expert. Barb laughed kindly, explaining that I had simply swapped the house numbers in my head and pointed me in the right direction.

When I arrived at the correct door, I was greeted by two more smiling faces: Brenda and her daughter, Ara.

Moments like this remind me that our work is about people and relationships. Barb's eagerness to help reflected the pride she has in her new home and her growing leadership in this community. Brenda welcomed me into a home she worked hard to make her own, which she achieved through determination, patience, and perseverance. And Ara's wide smile carried the unmistakable joy of a child with a place to belong.

Each of these faces tells a story. Each reflects dignity, resilience, and hope.

For people of faith, moments like these also carry a deeper meaning. Scripture reminds us that Christ is present among us, that each of us reflects His face. In Brenda, Barb, and Ara, I was reminded again of that powerful truth.

As you read Brenda's story and explore the updates, events, and opportunities in this issue of Blueprints, I hope you, too, catch glimpses of Jesus in the lives of our neighbors and in the work we share together.

Thank you for your continued prayers, support, and partnership in opening doors.



Ryan VerWys
President and CEO
rverwys@iccf.org

Houses to Homes

2026 GALA

THANK YOU FOR
JOINING US!

Taking the Next Step with Confidence

In their senior years, many people of faith ask the question: *In this season of our lives, how can we be the best stewards of the resources we have been blessed to accumulate? How can we give now and after we've gone?*

Finances and family dynamics can be complex, often creating challenging decisions for those seeking to care for loved ones while also supporting the ministries they value.

- How much of our estate should we contribute to ministries we care about?
- Are there beneficial tax provisions we should consider?
- Are there particular assets or funds from which we should give a legacy gift?
- How can we give legacy gifts that affirm our family's values in ways that our children will appreciate and share?

Gary and Carol Burge were both working through these questions. As a New Testament scholar and author

(Gary) and a Spiritual Director (Carol), they wanted to navigate the way forward in positive, life-giving ways. However, they knew they didn't have the tools they needed to answer questions like these with confidence.

Gary and Carol found the assistance they wanted through Barnabas Foundation, ICCF's philanthropic partner. At no cost, they talked confidentially with Lindsay Canan, a Barnabas Planning Director, who gave them good advice and recommended a local, experienced estate attorney they could retain to implement their wishes. Their experience reflects how ICCF's trusted partner, Barnabas Foundation, provides confidential, third-party guidance to help donors navigate complex financial and charitable decisions.

ICCF
Homes & Hope
LEGACY SOCIETY

To learn more about including ICCF Community Homes in your will or trust, visit iccf.org/planned-gifts or contact Hank Kroondyk, ICCF Planned Giving Specialist at hkroondyk@iccf.org.



"We didn't begin thinking about charitable giving until we were in our late 60's. Our trust was in place, but we realized that it would no longer implement what we desired. Now, after talking with Barnabas Foundation, our estate can accomplish the things we want. We have plans to provide for our family and have a list of non-profits, including ICCF, who share our values. Expert advisors understood us and helped us along the way."

GARY AND CAROL BURGE



ICCF.ORG/
GET-INVOLVED

Get Involved

INVEST YOURSELF

Use your time, trade, or skill set to help your neighbors.

INVEST WITH YOUR PEOPLE

Build strong company or church culture through volunteering, philanthropy, and investing back into community.

INVEST WHAT YOU HAVE

Your generous gifts invest in people and your community.



Toward a Place of Peace

Brenda's Journey to Homeownership

On the first day in their new home, it wasn't quiet for very long. The silence was quickly replaced by the sound of four-year-old Ara's feet racing up and down the stairs, her excitement bouncing through every room. Brenda recalls lingering at the bottom of the staircase, soaking it all in. For so long her focus had been on reaching her housing goals that there hadn't been time to stop and think about what it all meant. At that moment, it became clear. "This was really all for Ara," she thought.

Brenda has spent most of her life building toward that moment. After moving from the Dominican Republic to Grand Rapids as a child, she grew up in the city, put down roots, and started a family of her own. She managed the day-to-day responsibilities independently while her partner remains in the Dominican Republic. **As rent and home prices steadily increased, so did the pressure to find something more stable.** Over time, the goal of

homeownership became a necessity to provide a life characterized by peace and stability.

"I was tired of renting," she said, "and I needed something more stable. The older I get, the more I crave peace."

Not every step forward came easily. **At one point, a lender told her that because of her income and student loans, buying a home would be impossible. But Brenda didn't accept that answer.** She pressed on, determined not to let that moment define her future.

Alpha Women's Center, where she had taken classes during her pregnancy, referred her to ICCF Community Homes' Homeownership Program. There she met Karen, a housing specialist who helped her chart a path forward. "She told me everything I needed to do," Brenda said. "ICCF was very transparent and kind. They prepared me for the whole process."

Together, they took a close look at Brenda's finances and laid out steps that would move her toward homeownership. This included taking on a second job and paying

off her student loans. For two years she worked seven days a week. Reflecting on her efforts, Brenda said that when it's important enough, "you just do it."



As her finances improved, so did her credit score. Through the Individual Development Account (IDA) program offered at ICCF, Brenda was also able to save toward a down payment. Still, the journey took patience, and often felt slow. **But Brenda kept working, and most importantly, praying because she believes, "things don't happen on our timing. They happen on God's timing."**

In 2025, an opportunity appeared. Through ICCF's *Building with Faith* campaign, new condominiums were being developed at The Seymour in Alger Heights. Thanks to the additional support from *Building with Faith* which helped make the homes more affordable, Brenda was able to purchase a condo.



Brenda and Ara loved the home and quickly fell in love with the neighborhood.

"People are friendly," she says. "They say 'hi' when they see me." Some neighbors even welcomed her with baskets and gift cards to local businesses. "I've never had that before," Brenda reflects. "I thought it was wonderful." **The gestures made the new neighborhood feel like home and affirmed that she had found the kind of peace and stability she had been praying for and working towards.**

When Brenda reflects on what this home really means, her thoughts go to what led her here in the first place: peace.

Brenda continues to maintain a full schedule, and even with her many commitments, she's intentionally carving out time for herself. Four days a week, she prioritizes her well-being by working out at a neighborhood gym.

"That's my 'me' time," she says, loving the fact that the gym includes childcare for Ara.

For now, Brenda finds herself between arrival and anticipation. She has reached her housing milestone while still hoping for another: the day she can be reunited with her partner Juan, who remains in the Dominican Republic. The visa process has taken nearly two years, and Brenda continues to wait patiently for their family to be together in their new home.

While she continues to wait and work, Brenda is still learning how to pause and take in the reality of her new home. She admits she hasn't fully had time to comprehend it all. "I even told my mom I haven't really sat down to enjoy it," she says. "But

once we moved in, **I finally had a moment to stop and realize what happened, and what God has in store for me and my daughter.**"



Her realization comes through small, but profound, moments: hearing Ara play upstairs in the bedroom she raced to on that first day, sitting in the living room her father helped her set up, or standing in the doorway of the home she worked so hard to reach. In those moments, Brenda finally takes in and understands what she's feeling: peace. ■

Everyone deserves a safe, stable home. Through ICCF's Home Base Giving Club, your monthly gifts help provide a strong foundation for affordable housing and vital services. Consistent support sustains our mission for housing equity across Grand Rapids.

IN 2025

FAMILIES HOUSED	669
HOME BUYER ED. GRADUATES	498
FIRST-TIME HOME BUYERS	56
HOMES BUILT	29
RENTAL HOME MOVE-INS	141

Houses to Homes

2026 GALA

On March 5, 2026, ICCF Community Homes hosted the annual Houses to Homes Gala at the JW Marriott. The evening gathered supporters, partners, and neighbors to celebrate the ways God has been faithfully preparing the way for affordable housing in our community.

The evening included powerful stories from Brenda, Amber, Vida and Barb – neighbors whose lives have been changed through housing, reminding us that when doors open, new futures begin and “the best is yet to come.” Guests also joined in celebrating those who embody ICCF’s mission through their time, skill, and generosity.

Time and again, ICCF has seen doors open through partnerships with committed people who believe that everyone deserves a safe and stable place to call home.

Thanks to the incredible support of those who attended, sponsored, and gave generously, the evening was a meaningful step forward in creating more equitable opportunity, affordable homes, and thriving neighborhoods across West Michigan.

Together, we continue to ask, seek, and knock; trusting that the best is yet to come. View the program and photos from the evening at iccf.org/gala-program.



IMPACT OF YOU Ebenezer Awards

Samuel set the Ebenezer stone as a monument of remembrance, expressing gratitude for the help God had provided. In the same spirit, the Ebenezer Awards honor those who support connected neighbors through housing opportunities.

Pastor Artie Lindsay, Pastor of Spiritual Formation at Tabernacle Community Church, is unwavering in his commitment to building thriving neighborhoods in Southeast Grand Rapids. Through deep community involvement and faithful stewardship of resources, Pastor Lindsay helped transform the former Seymour Christian School into homes for 27 families. His partnership and leadership have strengthened ICCF Community Homes’ mission and made a long-term community impact.

LMCU is deeply dedicated to affordable housing across West Michigan through multiple, meaningful initiatives. Its support of ICCF’s Homeownership Program reinforces the belief that first time homeownership can become more attainable with the right tools. LMCU has also invested in new affordable apartments in Southeast Grand Rapids and supported ICCF’s *Building with Faith* campaign.

Longtime supporters, Brian & Luella Van Haren, have made a lasting impact on neighbors and neighborhoods through faithful partnership with ICCF Community Homes. Their support spans the *Building with Faith* campaign, hands-on business involvement through Van Haren Electric, and generous in-kind support, especially contributing to ICCF’s Community Homes Initiative. Through personal investment, they helped bring rehabilitated homes and safe shelter to life.



Pastor Artie Lindsay

LMCU

Brian & Luella Van Haren

Thank You!

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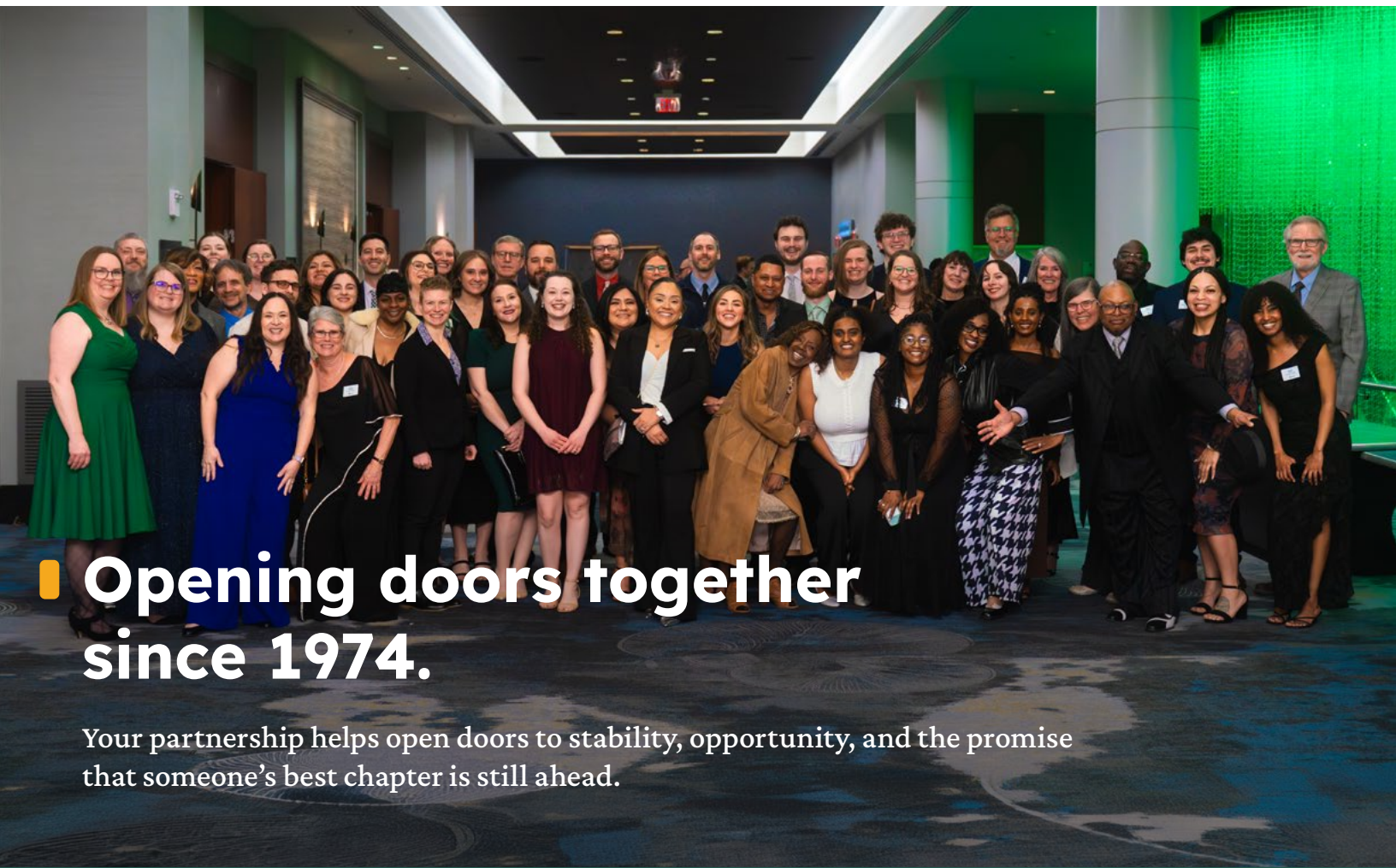
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since 1974.**

Your partnership helps open doors to stability, opportunity, and the promise that someone's best chapter is still ahead.

Equitable opportunity. Affordable homes. Thriving neighborhoods.

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