Saint Paul Mayor Melvin Carter visited our Project Home Day Center and talked with families about the challenges of finding affordable, stable housing. He spent time playing with the children and learning about all the center offers families experiencing homelessness.

Ramsey County Extends Contract for Interfaith Action to Operate Day Center

Ramsey County has awarded Interfaith Action of Greater Saint Paul a one-year contract, renewable each year for up to four more years, to operate a day center for families who are guests in Interfaith Action’s Project Home overnight shelters.

Last fall, when the day center serving guests in Project Home overnight shelters announced its closing, Interfaith Action stepped in quickly to make sure families experiencing homelessness didn't experience any disruption in services. “These families have so much stress in their lives already, they didn't need to worry about one more thing,” said Sara Liegl, program director of Project Home.

Liegl quickly assembled a committed and experienced staff, and an AmeriCorps team from Reading Partners in the Twin Cities reorganized and rejuvenated the center to make it warm and welcoming. Within a few days, Project Home Day Center was up and running at full speed. In early December 2019, Ramsey County announced that it would award Interfaith Action a one-year contract, renewable each year for up to four more years, to continue operating the day center.

“We now can provide services to our Project Home families 24/7,” said executive director Randi Ilyse Roth. “This seamless expansion of our programming allows us more ways to harness the power of the interfaith community to move people out of poverty.”

Project Home engages faith communities to provide emergency shelter space for Ramsey County families facing homelessness.

Continued on page two.

HOW TO HELP

Is your faith community interested in becoming a Project Home overnight shelter site or volunteer partner? Contact Sara Liegl, sliegl@interfaithaction.org.

Want to help our Project Home families? We always need feminine hygiene products, towels and washcloths, disposable razors, deodorant, games, craft supplies, and coloring and activity books. Drop off your items during business hours at our offices at 1671 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul.
BRINGING FAITH TO LIFE BREAKS RECORDS

More than 225 volunteers, donors and faith and community leaders gathered on a chilly November morning at Mount Zion Temple for Interfaith Action’s 15th annual “Bringing Faith to Life” breakfast. We were so grateful to have Elona Street-Stewart as our emcee and to hear inspiring words from executive director Randi Ilyse Roth and former Project Home guest Tou Vue. We broke our previous fundraising record, a testament to the commitment of this community to create a better Saint Paul for all.

Continued from page one.

Church social halls, synagogue classrooms, and school cafeterias become home for a short period of time for families, allowing families to stabilize. Each month, two area faith communities host 20 emergency shelter beds each.

With the new Project Home Day Center, located in First Baptist Church in downtown Saint Paul, Interfaith Action expands its support to the day-time hours, providing:

- Breakfast, lunch and dinner plus an after-school snack for hungry children
- Home base for Interfaith Action’s rapid exit case workers, who work with families to find stable and affordable housing
- Central location where children can meet buses to take them to their schools
- Lockers, showers, and basic hygiene supplies
- Educational opportunities to build employment skills

“Project Home is a model of effective interfaith engagement, providing transformative volunteer experiences,” says Roth. “Our newest Project Home partner, Beth Jacob Congregation, recently posted this on Instagram: ‘Finding sacred space in a synagogue is usually associated with a sanctuary. But it is truly possible to find the SACRED in a classroom housing a family of 6 spending their first night in a shelter.’ What a beautiful reflection on Project Home.”

Interfaith Youth Gather for Day of Service

Every year, more than 200 interfaith middle and high school students come together for a day to increase cultural awareness and religious understanding, and to address community needs through service projects. The event starts with inspiring comments from youth followed by short workshops, entertainment and afternoon service projects in the neighborhood. Breakfast and lunch are provided. This event, held at Augsburg University, is free for students in grades 6-12 from all religious and cultural backgrounds. We encourage youth groups to attend; visit interfaithaction.org/youthservice to learn more and register.
How Can We Respond?

A recent New York Times article explored the decline of the middle class and the related increase in “deaths of despair”—from drugs, suicide, alcohol, and reckless accidents. For many families, the article suggested, the economy has stopped delivering.

The MIT Living Wage calculator explains separately for every county in America how much money a family would need to just cover the basics – food, child care, health care, housing, transportation, and taxes. For example, a living wage for:

• a single parent with two children is $31.18 per hour;
• two adults (one working) with one child is $24.24 per hour;
• two adults (both working) with two children is $16.97 per hour.

Many of the families in Greater Saint Paul are working families – but their wages are lower than these levels. So, how can we—the faith community—respond? We know we can’t just wait for government or private industry to fix this situation. We, the interfaith community, have a role.

First, Interfaith Action faith communities help stabilize families who are in crisis, a crucial first step to moving out of poverty. We provide shelter through Project Home and healthy food and clothing through our Department of Indian Work (DIW). Our Power-Up legal clinic offers free help to resolve costly, job-impairing issues such as child custody, expungement, and access to public benefits.

Second, Interfaith Action helps families weave a web of opportunity to build their economic mobility. Our rapid exit case workers pound the pavement to help families find affordable, permanent housing. Our case workers and DIW referral desk help people identify jobs and job training to increase their income. Opportunity Saint Paul volunteers tutor children and provide job coaching for adults. And our Community Power-Ups provide practical education so that families learn how to take good care of their legal and financial concerns, boost their ability to solve problems in their lives, and form a community of supporters.

Our faith community is here with our sleeves rolled up. We are here to create pathways of hope, to help all families in Greater Saint Paul get a real economic foothold.

Falcon Heights UCC: Committed to the Department of Indian Work

Many years ago, a member of Falcon Heights United Church of Christ (UCC) encouraged the outreach team at the church to host a food drive for Interfaith Action’s Department of Indian Work. That first drive turned into an annual event, and now, nearly every month, Falcon Heights members deliver food and clothing to DIW. According to Nancy Duffrin, a long-time volunteer with the outreach ministry, the church collects food year-round, as well as winter mittens, hats, sock and other warm clothing. In addition, Falcon Heights participates in Interfaith Action’s annual School Tools drive, which provides backpacks full of school supplies for children from low-income households.

Rev. Rick King, lead pastor at Falcon Heights, says this work matches the focus of the church. “Our mission emphasis is on marginalized groups. We seek to be part of the solution.”

King says Falcon Heights is a progressive Christian Church with an intergenerational congregation and a strong focus on music and the arts, community outreach, and social justice. The church is located at 1795 Holton Street in Falcon Heights. To learn more, visit falconheightsucc.org.

Join Our Faith-Based Movement

We invite your faith community to become a member of Interfaith Action of Greater Saint Paul. Membership is just $100 annually. You join a group of more than 100 congregations who are committed to building a better Saint Paul, plus you’ll get carefully vetted volunteer opportunities, a free security assessment of your house of worship, an interfaith calendar and much more. Visit interfaithaction.org/membership.

FROM RANDI ILYSE ROTH

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Let’s Be There For Each Other

Who can be sure that they won’t need help?

No one. In fact, every single one of us will need help—somewhere, sometime. We at Interfaith Action of Greater Saint Paul believe that together we can make sure people have access to safe shelter, healthy food, educational support, and the career-building opportunities they need to move out of poverty. Learn how you can invest in the important work we do. Visit interfaithaction.org/donate.

NEWS

- We are deeply proud of Interfaith Action executive director Randi Ilyse Roth, who received the 2019 Sidney Barrows Lifetime Commitment Award from the Twin Cities Cardozo Society. Randi was recognized for her commitment to the well-being of the Jewish and general communities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, her professional accomplishments, and her devotion to lifelong learning.

- Singer/songwriter Andy Grammer hosted a meet and greet in the Twin Cities and asked fans to bring a donation for the Department of Indian Work Food Shelf. Those fans donated 440 pounds of food!

- Laura Sioux Roberts and Rachel Busse hosted their 3rd annual feminine hygiene products drive for our Department of Indian Work, doubling their goal of 20,000 items with a donation of 42,000 products. Our thanks to them and Kayla Kranitz at the University of St. Thomas for this tremendous donation.

EVENTS

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<tr>
<th>FOODSHARE MONTH</th>
<th>March</th>
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<tr>
<td>POWER-UP LEGAL CLINIC</td>
<td>Feb 6, 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY POWER-UPS</td>
<td>Feb 6; Mar 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPPORTUNITY SAINT PAUL LEARNING COMMUNITY EVENT</td>
<td>Mar 19</td>
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Lunds & Byerlys donated $1,000 to our Department of Indian Work food shelf, sharing this sentiment: “Every day we are humbled to be part of the Highland Park community and we know that it requires resources of all manner to create the quality of life that exists here. We want to express our gratitude and support for the good work you do to enrich and support the lives of this community.”