

The Net



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The Story of Holly Wood

Things began to fall apart for Holly Wood around Christmas time. It shouldn't have, for Holly had everything going for her: more than two decades in the workforce, a college degree, a positive attitude and loving 8-year-old daughter.

"Then I got sick," she said. "And when I got out of the hospital, I lost my job and couldn't find another one. In Florida, there are no jobs to be found."

Her savings dwindled, her daily structure collapsed. Packing everything she owned into her truck, she and her daughter Faith drove all day to Atlanta, and then onto Chattanooga, where a friend made extra room in her tiny apartment for the desperate pair.

"Then the landlord found out we were sleeping on her couch," Holly said. "He told my friend that if she didn't kick us out, we were all going to be homeless. He would kick us all out."

Running out of all options, Mary Rodriguez at the Homeless Health Care Clinic introduced her to someone Holly says saved her life: "Mrs. Mildred at Interfaith Homeless Network."

"At IHN, It Felt Like We Were Finally Home"

Within hours, Holly and Faith were accepted into the IHN program, and given refuge at the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Collegedale.

"It felt like we were finally home," Holly said. "It was amazing. The people were amazing. They went above and beyond to help me and my daughter."

Holly eventually found work, and her daughter – an honor roll student in Florida – maintained her excellent grades at her new school, Brown Academy. "She loves it there. She's got great friends and was back on the honor roll in two days.

"And an IHN volunteer referred me to a job at the Johnson Group, a marketing firm down-



Ruth Votava

town," said Holly, who has 22 years of accounting work. "And I love it, and the people there are great."

On March 25, the Woods moved into transitional housing on East 11th Street. "It is a wonderful apartment for us. We are comfortable, Faith has her own room, and she is ecstatic. We are home and safe. Without IHN, I'd be homeless and in tears, on the verge of collapse. We would be on the streets."

Additionally, Holly is continuing her online work towards a masters degree in Psychology. She is quick to point out the false stereotypes that exist towards homeless people.

"I've got a degree and experience. Some places didn't want to hire me because they said I had too much experience. People need to change their misconceptions of who the homeless are. Nowadays, there are more and more children, and more families who just can't find any work," she said. "My first paper this semester will be about homelessness and life spans, and focus on the populations of children and the elderly among the homeless."

And along with being a mother, student and employee, Holly also has another goal in

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From the Director

DEAR FRIENDS,

What a year IHN experienced in 2009! Let me share some highlights:

- o Increased the numbers of homeless families served by 41% from 2008 to 2009; IHN served 193 homeless individuals in 67 families in 2009; There were 109 children served; 62 were 5 years old or younger;
- o Reduced shelter stays by 26%;
- o 80% families transitioned to housing;
- o 90% exited IHN program with employment or income supports;
- o 95% received supportive services;
- o 95% received follow-up contact;
- o More than 2,000 volunteers contributed 31,200 hours;
- o Opened new family day center in October with a visit from Karen Olson, founder of the 22-year-old Interfaith Hospitality Network, now Family Promise;
- o Implemented a new program Centralized Intake where IHN is now the centralized intake agency for homeless families; 209 families were interviewed and referred for services;
- o Expanded educational programs for homeless families such as Kid's Café; financial management; group counseling; nutrition, shopping and cooking on a budget; Baby Basics; individual parenting classes; bible study; knitting; and a new class introducing art as a language and means of communication presented by local artists in various mediums through Hart Gallery;
- o Welcomed new hosting churches, St. Paul's Episcopal Church and First Christian Church, and new support church, Life Church of Mountain Creek;
- o Welcomed UTC social work intern Nicole Conway.

Helping homeless families find employment, enrolling them in education, training and benefit programs, securing transportation and housing, providing access supportive services and follow-up – This is the daily work of IHN at the new day center. The delivery of these comprehensive services is only possible through the IHN congregations and volunteers who provide temporary, safe and secure overnight housing and food to homeless families 365 nights a year. This gift enables the IHN staff the opportunity to provide the assistance required to return homeless families to the community housed, successfully reintegrated and independent. I am very grateful for the dedication, service and support of all our congregations and volunteers.

I want to extend a very special thank you to the IHN board of trustees, Dr. John Hayes for his service as 2009 board president, and to Gary Critser as vice president, Jason Underwood, treasurer and Lee Anne Werner, secretary. Their leadership and service have been a gift to me and IHN.

There are too many people to thank for the multitude of generous financial and gift-in-kind donations. We have made every effort to account for all donations. If anyone was omitted, please accept my apology. My gratitude is immense. IHN would not be sustainable without YOU.

Sincerely,

Mary Ellen Galloway, M.ED., LPC

IHN Executive Director

Holly Wood (cont.)

life: to help IHN in any way she can.

“There are families out there who need to know about this. There are churches out there that need to join, and people who can help. Without IHN, I don't know where I'd be. All I can say is thank you, thank you, thank you.”

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Please send us your email address so we may keep you up-to-date on the latest happenings with IHN!

Camp Out to Stamp Out

WHAT? Camp Out to Stamp Out Family Homelessness

WHO? Interfaith Homeless Network (IHN), a 12-year-old transitional shelter program for homeless families with children

WHEN? Friday, Oct. 8, @ 5 p.m. - Saturday, Oct. 9, @ 7 a.m.

WHERE? First Tennessee Pavilion

WHY? To promote awareness of family homelessness, the fastest growing segment of the homeless population, and to assist IHN with their mission to help homeless families

WHAT ELSE? Cost is \$25 per person for up to four people. Groups of five or more people, \$10 per person. Children under 10 are free. All proceeds benefit the IHN program to assist homeless families become stable, employed and housed.



MOM TAKES THE CAKE

IHN is sponsoring a Cupcake Taste Off at the Chattanooga Market on Mother's Day, Sunday, May 9, from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.. Vendors will donate 1,500 miniature cupcakes to IHN for sale at \$5 for five cupcakes. Tasters receive a ballot and vote for Chattanooga's best cupcakes. The event is sponsored by KZ106, Talk 102.3 and the Chattanooga Market.