



INTERFAITH CONNECTION

Partners in faith. Changing lives.

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW IS LOVE, SWEET LOVE...



In the still darkness of a winter morning that song rose in my mind. I was reading an article about the growing need for housing people who are without adequate shelter. There were references to the variety of responses: tiny houses, Covid-safe shelters, safe parking lots for those living in cars or RVs

and the need for affordable permanent housing options.

All of this is true. The need is growing and there is a broader acknowledgement that there is not a simple, one size fits all solution.

Interfaith Coalition of Whatcom County is a provider of solutions grounded in a conviction found in most, if not all, faith traditions around the world. This conviction compels us to 'love' the most vulnerable in our community, the marginalized, and those with the fewest resources. Our work is supported by some who are compelled by their faith tradition and some who are compelled by our mission. All join us because they understand our



The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members."

-Gandhi

society is stronger and our human community is more resilient when no one is left behind without adequate shelter, food, or relationships of support.

What the world needs now is love, sweet love... This is a call to action.

What Whatcom County needs now, is love. Active love, a busy love, a love that reaches out to others, even to strangers, to make a positive difference in their lives.

The action of love is manifest in our work to provide emergency shelter and housing to families and in your financial gifts which allow us to maintain safe places for families and staff to manage our programs. Love is embodied in volunteers who provide meals, connection, and mentoring. The love for neighbor is experienced in case management and tools to equip families to move forward from the crisis of homelessness into a permanent home.

*"What the world needs now is love, sweet love
No, not just for some but for everyone."*

- Burt Bacharach and Hal David

Blessings,

Deanna

In my November newsletter article, I included a prayer that I believe held true and honest words about the journey of the unknown we have been traveling throughout the past year. However, in hindsight I realize that I included words that were distinctly Christian. We are a multi-faith organization and my words were not respectful of other faiths. For that I apologize and am grateful for this opportunity to learn.

HOW INTERFAITH'S FAMILY PROMISE CHANGES LIVES

By Cheryl Stritzel McCarthy

The young mother who came to Family Promise was highly motivated to achieve a better life for herself and her middle-school child. She and her child had been homeless for many weeks, couch-surfing here and there, landing wherever they could.

She came seeking what her old support systems had not been able to provide: healthy community, positive connections, meals, shelter, mentorship. She was seeking a path out of poverty. Interfaith and Family Promise of Whatcom County volunteers and donors provided it.

Today Ashley*, who was born and raised in Whatcom County, and her child are at home in their own apartment. They have options and a future because of the stepping-stones that were offered to her while she was in Interfaith's Family Promise program.

How does Interfaith and Family Promise transform lives? Fifteen hundred volunteers and more than 600 donors make it possible. "We have a unique, dedicated volunteer base," said Carolyn Roy, program director of Family Promise of Whatcom County and Family Housing. "We reach out and ask, or volunteers tell us what they have to offer, and we match that with someone in need."

When a family enters Family Promise, they work with Case Manager Marikka Matheny to draft a plan, identifying steps toward independent living and goal setting. Weekly, they meet with Marikka, addressing accomplishments, roadblocks, and strategies. "Most stay until they achieve secure housing," Carolyn said. "With Covid, it's harder to get into housing. There's



not much available, and people aren't moving."

Carolyn and Marikka advocate for the families with landlords, employers, state agencies, the schools' homeless liaisons, Opportunity Council, Brigid Collins Family Support Center, and legal advocates. When it became clear Ashley needed transportation, Marikka helped her get a driver's license, and Carolyn rustled up a car: a volunteer's neighbor, Lennie Hawley, had a car to donate, and longtime Interfaith volunteer Rick Congdon detailed it, no charge.

All Family Promise families take the Whatcom Dream's 8-week course on financial literacy, and access Unity Care NW for health needs and parenting classes through Brigid Collins.

"For Ashley, we were able to identify an apartment for her," Carolyn said. "We knew the landlord and learned an apartment

would soon be available, so she got her application in quickly." Family Promise's wrap-around care includes vouchers for furniture at Habitat for Humanity in Whatcom County, move-in help, and household necessities via First Congregational Church of Bellingham's Fresh Start program.

"When people donate, when they provide time or a hot meal or groceries or a car, it all adds up," Carolyn said. "When volunteers put together groceries or craft supplies, or they read stories and do songs via Zoom for the little ones, that's creating community for people who are isolated or estranged from their own families.

"If our families lack relationships, our volunteers can provide that."



**Name has been changed*

GIVING FOR THE FUTURE

Interfaith Coalition helps homeless families in Whatcom County get out of poverty and into homes – and stay there. Our niche is keeping families together, children with their parents, which often isn't the case with other shelter models. We provide homes for families in Ferndale and Blaine, where options for families experiencing homelessness are scarce. Additionally, we provide emergency shelter through our Family Promise program.

Throughout the years, donors have used planned giving to provide Interfaith with stable funding in the future. That practical and tangible foresight guarantees that Interfaith Coalition's mission will flourish and grow. Planned giving is also a wonderful example of philanthropy for children and grandchildren.

Let's take a look at planned giving so you can determine if there's an option that works for you.

A gift in your will or living trust

A simple charitable bequest can provide very meaningful support to our mission as well as reduce the amount of estate and inheritance taxes paid.

A gift of retirement benefits

Naming Interfaith Coalition as primary, partial or contingent beneficiary is a simple, practical gift idea.

A gift of a life insurance policy

Many people have life insurance policies that exceed their current needs. Such policies can be given to Interfaith coalition and an income tax deduction may be possible.

A gift of stocks, bonds, or other investments

Increase the benefit you receive when you donate stocks, bonds, IRA distributions, or mutual funds to Interfaith.

Contribute to the Interfaith Endowment Fund

Our endowment fund is held in trust by Interfaith Coalition of Whatcom County and is professionally managed locally under the direction of the Endowment Committee.

If you have any questions about any of this, please contact Deanna Wildermuth, deanna@interfaith-coalition.org, or Andrea Hausner, office@interfaith-coalition.org.

We believe that if everyone does their share, miracles happen.



Because of the opportunity that Interfaith Coalition has given me, I don't have to worry about what we're going to eat, or where we're going to eat, or how we're going to prepare a meal, or if we're going to be warm enough, or be a burden on somebody."

- Family Housing Guest

A FOND FAREWELL

For over 15 years, Mary Ann O'Hara has run the CAST (Coffee and Sandwiches Together) program. She is stepping down as coordinator but will remain involved in helping serve our hungry neighbors. Mary Ann coordinated hundreds of volunteers, solicited donations, and knew guests by name. CAST nourishes guests, physically and emotionally, and Mary Ann

urges us to be welcoming, nonjudgmental, and generous. Although she empathized with volunteers standing in the cold rain, she reminded us that we were able to go home to a hot shower and warm bed.

THANK YOU, Mary Ann, for your generosity, the love you brought to guests and volunteers, and for the work that has created a community of caring.



**INTERFAITH COALITION
OF WHATCOM COUNTY**

910 14th St.
Bellingham, WA 98225

Return Service Requested

Nonprofit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Bellingham, WA 98226
Permit No. 212

SAVE THE DATE
April 10, 2021

Join us for
Interfaith Coalition's
Virtual Hope-full Event!

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF SERVICE TO OUR COMMUNITY!



This year Interfaith Coalition of Whatcom County celebrates its fortieth anniversary. The true measure of Whatcom is seen in the extraordinary love you have

offered to the most vulnerable in our community. This is a labor of love and we give thanks for your partnership.

Celebrate with us!

- Make a \$40 one-time or monthly donation: interfaith-coalition.org/donate
- Commit to 40 hours of volunteering with us this year: interfaith-coalition.org/volunteer
- Tell 40 others about Interfaith Coalition and our mission to help families experiencing homelessness in Whatcom County

Vision: Interfaith Coalition is a community of many faiths working together to eliminate homelessness and poverty on Whatcom County.
Mission: Our member congregations collaborate to fill gaps in human services and to meet housing and other needs of marginalized people.

**LIKE INTERFAITH COALITION
OF WHATCOM COUNTY
ON FACEBOOK!**



**AND NOW FOLLOW US
ON INSTAGRAM!
@INTERFAITHCOALITION**