



# FRIENDS™ of the FAMILY

Everyone Has A Home

## FALL NEWSLETTER

### BEN'S LETTER

*A Note from Ben Brustkern, Executive Director*

As the leaves change color and the crisp chill in the air signals the arrival of fall, it's essential for us to remember those who are most vulnerable during the cold winter months – our homeless neighbors. The drop in temperatures can pose life-threatening challenges to individuals living on the streets, making it all the more crucial for us to come together as a community and extend a helping hand.

Homelessness is a persistent issue, and the onset of cold weather magnifies the hardships that those without shelter face. As temperatures plummet, the risk of hypothermia, frostbite, and other cold-related illnesses significantly increases. Many homeless individuals struggle to find warmth, adequate clothing, and a safe place to sleep, making it a daily battle for survival.

As we prepare for the colder months ahead, let's remember that homelessness is not just a problem for society to solve; it's an issue that calls for our collective compassion and action. By working together, we can ensure that everyone, regardless of their housing situation, has a safe and warm place to turn to during the winter.

Your support, no matter how small, can make a significant difference in the lives of those experiencing homelessness. Let's come together to create a community that cares, uplifts, and protects its most vulnerable members.

Thank you for your ongoing support and generosity.



### GOOD THINGS

Nicole, Outreach and Diversion Specialist in Mason City, shared Jeremy's story with us about his transition from homeless to housed and how he is maintaining and staying successful. (Read the full story on page 4)

Office Manager, Monique shared that Grace Fellowship church in Waterloo recently donated 32 bags filled with essentials for those who are experiencing homelessness in the community. These will be used for clients we work with and our street outreach program.

Ashley, our Safely Home Housing Support Specialist, shared about a client in the Safely Home housing program who left a domestic violence situation. The client worked hard, got a job, and worked their way up to an assistant manager position. They started making enough money to support themselves and their kids and was able to graduate off the program!

# DAY OF CARING

This year, Friends of the Family was able to be a part of not one but TWO Day of Caring events, one in Mason City and one in Waverly. Wondering what Day of Caring is? It's an amazing opportunity for local businesses to come together and give back to non-profits in the area as well as provide them with service projects that can be accomplished in a day.

Our first Day of Caring was celebrated in Mason City. Eleven hours were given between five Mason City Target members who put together kits for our street outreach program. These kits are filled with necessities and taken out into the community and given to those who are experiencing homelessness.



Our second Day of Caring was spent in Waverly and was organized by Waverly-Shell Rock Area United Way. Two different organizations spent their time volunteering for Friends of the Family. TruStage Brokerage raised over \$1,600 and spent the day shopping for much needed items for our crime victim shelter. Waverly Nestle gave their time to refinish two picnic tables as well as landscape. And we cannot forget our incredible individual volunteer Bev, who spent time organizing donations and items for us! Collectively, 66.5 hours were donated to Friends of the Family.

The day ended with FOF staff participating in the wrap up celebration. The team raised \$170 in tips during the celebrity bartender face-off and we were given recognition for participating in our FIFTH Day of Caring!

We are so grateful all the people and organizations who gave of their time and treasures to Friends of the Family. It's through this kind of support that we can continue to work in the communities we serve and get closer to our 10 year vision: Everyone Has A Home.

## FUNDING PARTNERS

Friends of the Family relies on funding from local partners to meet the needs of people affected by violence and homelessness. **Thank you!**

- Black Hawk County Community Foundation
- Veridian Credit Union
- Women's Fund
- Emergency Solutions Grant
- Shelter Assistance Fund
- Wahlert Foundation
- Emergency Food and Shelter Board Program (Cerro Gordo)

## TOP NEEDS:

- FITTED SHEETS (TWIN XL)
- SLEEPING BAGS
- TOWELS
- HEAVY BLANKETS
- HAND/FOOT WARMERS

Please connect with office manager, Monique, with donation questions or to schedule drop off at 319-576-2200 or [Monique@fofia.org](mailto:Monique@fofia.org)

## 3rd Annual Putt An End to Homelessness

This year marked our 3rd Annual Golf Tournament, Putt An End to Homelessness and it was a beautiful day to raise funds to ensure our vision: Everyone Has A Home!

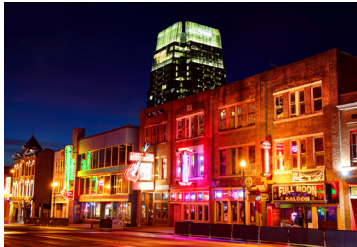
With your support, we were able to make it the best one yet, raising \$30,000 to support ending homelessness in our community.

We are thankful for our presenting sponsors, GreenState Credit Union and Scheels (who just so happen to be the 2023 winners pictured on the middle right!) as well as all the sponsors who were a part of this years event.

Make sure to mark your calendars for next year's tournament, Monday, August 5, 2024 at Sunnyside Golf Course!



## WHERE WE'VE BEEN WHERE WE'LL BE



## A Night in Nashville

This year we are celebrating our 10th annual A Night In... Nashville! November 10 at Prairie Links Golf and Event Center in Waverly from 6pm to 9pm.

Mark your calendars, grab your boots and join us for a night of toe-tapping music from David Woods, dinner from Blue Barn BBQ, and raising funds to end homelessness to get us even closer to our vision of everyone has a home.

Every \$40 ticket also gets you a 1 in 500 chance to win a trip to Nashville! (QR code for tickets is on the back of this newsletter) This event is limited, so grab your tickets now before they are sold out. If you can't attend the event, no worries! You do not need to be present to win!

And sponsorship opportunities are available as well. Reach out to our Development Director at [erin@fofia.org](mailto:erin@fofia.org) for info.

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## JEREMY'S STORY

One of our Outreach and Diversion Specialists, Nicole, met Jeremy (pictured right\*) on a cold night in March. He shared his story with us about his journey from homeless to housed.

While conducting street outreach on a snowy night earlier this year, Nicole met Jeremy in the parking lot of Casey's. He was cold, hungry, tired and struggling with health issues due to diabetes. She explained that she was with Friends of the Family, out in the community doing street outreach and asked if he was interested in doing an assessment or at that very least, if he wanted something to eat and a backpack of supplies.

After agreeing to do an assessment, Nicole found out that Jeremy was a veteran but he didn't believe he would qualify for any vet services and wasn't interested in pursuing them. She left that night but later saw him three more times during outreach. During their third meeting, Nicole was persistent and suggested that they at least try and see if he qualified for any services. She would connect him to Veterans Affairs (VA) as well as help with any paperwork needed.

Jeremy finally made the decision to move forward with Friends of the Family that night and two months after their initial meeting on that cold winter night, he was accepted into VA programming! He started working with a case manager and through work and determination, Jeremy was successfully excited from the homeless system.

Nicole ran into Jeremy several months later at an event. He walked up to her beaming with pride and let her know he has been housed for five months and had everything he had every hoped for. He thanked her excitedly and shared that if they had not met that night during outreach, and had she not continued to check-in with him, he would have probably died on the street.

He also told her he has been sober since the first time they spoke and that he couldn't be happier with his life now. Jeremy continued to thank Nicole and said, "Friends of the Family IS making a



difference for people on the street at their lowest and I could not be more grateful for the work you do."

After this meeting, Nicole followed up with Jeremy one more time. She met his granddaughter, whom he now gets to spend time with and be a caretaker for, now that he is sober, in a stable place and safely housed.

*\* Image, name and story have been shared with client's permission.*

**Friends of the Family has two Outreach and Diversion Specialists working in 15 counties in Iowa. If you are homeless and in need of housing services, call out Housing Services Hotline at 319-233-3094 or reach out to one of our Specialists:**

Northeast Iowa: Mo  
morris@fofia.org

North Central Iowa: Nicole  
nicolej@fofia.org

## BOARD HIGHLIGHT

Get to know our newest Board Member, Jeff Conrey.

We love our board members here at Friends of the Family. They give of their time, talents and treasures to support our vision of everyone has a home. We would like to take a moment to highlight one of our latest members, Jeff Conrey.

Jeff comes to us from First Bank where he is a Vice President and Trust Officer. As a Wartburg Alumni, Jeff has roots where Friends of the Family all started, in Waverly. He is also a certified trust and financial advisor with over 25 years of trust and investment service experience.

When asked why he joined the friends of the Family board, he said, "I have as always been aware of the very important services that FOF offers to domestic and sexual assault victims as well as their mission and focus of ending homelessness. Over the years, I have either attended or supported several of Friends of the Family's various fundraisers and felt compelled to volunteer and get more involved so that I could do more to help with their mission!"

Pictured below is our current board of directors who spend their time and efforts to raise awareness for Friends of the Family and ending homelessness.

### MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS



MIKE ISAACSON  
PRESIDENT  
VGM & Associates



MICHELE KNAACK  
VICE PRESIDENT  
Lincoln Savings Bank



TYLER MAHNCKE  
TREASURER  
VGM & Associates



MELISSA HABERSTICH  
SECRETARY  
CUNA Mutual Group



ROSHAWN BERRY  
SEL Consultant



JEFF CONREY  
First Bank



JAZZLYN DOUGLAS  
Bill Colwell Ford



JORDAN SHANKS  
Locknet



HEIDI SOLHEIM  
Waverly Health Center

If you are interested in joining our board, please reach out to Development Director, Erin Langenberg at [erin@fofia.org](mailto:erin@fofia.org).





Prairie Links Event Center 19 Eagle Ridge Dr., Waverly



Get your tickets now, scan the code.

Your \$40 ticket give you a 1 in 500 chance to win a trip to Nashville! Need not be present to win.

**Friday, November 10, from 6 to 9  
Prairie Links Golf and Event Center in Waverly.**

# A Night in Nashville

*Join us for the 10th annual*



**FRIENDS**  
**of the FAMILY**  
Everyone Has A Home

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