President’s Page

By David Yelton

Linda asked me to prepare a letter for the spring 2020 newsletter and I wondered what I could share would help others understand why IHNWC exists and what help we need to sustain this effort. I recalled a promise I made to Linda over 20 years ago. That I would continue to work with her to grow this shelter program to serve Warren County homeless families.

When we started down this road together I really had no idea what to expect. It was only in retrospect that I realized what a leap of faith that a group of Warren County people who care took in order to help homeless families. I have never regretted making that commitment. However, it was good thing that I did not know all the challenges we would face, nor the investment of time and effort required to support this homeless family shelter program. Nor did I know all the benefits that would come from assisting homeless families as they worked to achieve sustainable housing for their children.

As we worked to introduce others to this shelter program we often heard this comment: “... there cannot be homeless families in our country, that just cannot be true.”

Early on we found out that not only was it true but that the most frequent age for homelessness in Warren County is a child age 6 or younger! That data-point has remained fairly constant and it motivates me to continue to volunteer my time to work with the network staff and volunteers to help those children “go home” to a more secure and sustainable future. However, in this 22nd year it is also time to recognize the necessity to ensure that this network is sustainable and can grow for another 20 plus years.

To that end the network’s board of directors is working on a long-range plan. One of the many items to be addressed is the recruitment and retention of the next generation of leadership for both volunteer board and compensated network staff. I ask you to pray with us that the same Spirit, who encouraged the people of Warren County to respond in the 1990’s, will help us find the people we need who will step forward to serve on board committees and have a willing heart to lead this organization through and beyond the 2020s.
One morning a few months ago, I was visited by a very exuberant 3-year-old Jonathan. He ran into my office and jumped onto my lap, car in hand. He had just arrived from Our Lady of Sorrows Church with his mom, sister and other families, a car in his small hand and a very important thing to tell me! “...play cars!”, he said. “What fun,” I tell him and then moving on, “What did you eat for dinner?” Quite aggravated with me, he once again says, “...play cars!!” I cannot tell who or what “play cars” means and helplessly look to his mom and ask for help.

Mom tells me that he is saying “Pap play cars” and he was referring to Tom, a seasoned volunteer at the church. Come to find out, that for a good part of that night after dinner and before bed (and the nights to follow) Tom entertained Jonathan (and I am going to guess that Jonathan entertained Tom!) by rolling matchbox cars across the table. Time and time again. They laughed and I am told that there may have even been some tickling involved – on both parties! More importantly, a relationship was built and little Jonathan began to call Tom “Pap,” as in “Papaw,” “Grandpa,” as in that special person in his life.

This is indeed the essence of the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Warren County. Relationships, those made with the children, parents and volunteers. Relationships where children feel comfortable, away from the stresses of not having a home. Relationships where a homeless mom can speak freely to a caring volunteer about her situation, sharing her fears, her concerns for her children or the joys of her new job and new home. Relationships, it’s all about relationships.

And, as I plan ahead for the next few months, I think about other relationships that are important to this program. On July 4, we will hold our 14th annual Run4Home 5K and Kid’s Fun Run.
This event was built around the need to have funds that would get this program through the summer months. And, in these 14 years we have built some wonderful relationships with local businesses, churches and organizations that sponsor this important event. Then, in turn, we build relationships with those who attend the event. Relationships develop with runners, walkers and volunteers who year after year begin their Independence Day holiday by giving of their time and their funds so that IHNWC can continue the work that we do with families who are homeless. Relationships have a positive effect in getting families in crisis housed, employed and connected with services that assist them to be self-sufficient.

During Christmas in July, we have the opportunity to further the relationships with our families and enhance the interactions with the children and their soon-to-be teachers. Christmas in July was born out of the need for our children, both in shelter and recently graduated from shelter, to have all the necessities to begin school. Through this program, under the care of Jennifer Keezer and her elves, every child receives a backpack filled with items specific for their grade, a shoe card, a haircut card, underclothes, socks, a fall jacket and school clothes. The families gather for a Christmas meal, crafts and entertainment. They renew old relationships with each other and with volunteers from the host churches. The children each have a personal visit with Santa who encourages them to have a good year in school. All of this is funded outside of the IHNWC budget and relationships are built with those in our community who want to see our children thrive and how they thrive!

Yes, relationships are the heart and soul of the IHNWC program. We are so blessed to be able to work with so many people who make this program work and thrive. Whether you are a donor, a sponsor, a runner, a walker or a volunteer who endears yourself to a 3-year-old boy who has found his “Pap,” it is that connection that makes real change in this world and for that we are all so grateful.
In Action Page 4  
Christmas 2019  
On behalf of the families who were blessed this Christmas with gifts from 19 generous sponsors, I want to thank you for making Christmas so special. A total of 36 families to include 83 children enjoyed a visit from Santa and his elves on Christmas Eve. They, in turn, enjoyed lots of smiles and appreciation. A special thank you goes out to the coach and members of the LHS women’s soccer team that helped to load the gifts onto Santa’s “sleigh” (aka the IHNWC bus and truck!) early on the morning of Christmas Eve. Thank you!

Community & IHNWC  
Many thanks to our friends at JBM Packaging who provided IHNWC families with turkeys at Thanksgiving.

Warren County Imagination Library

The Warren County Imagination Library has been formed to move forward a county-wide effort to deliver books to all children from birth to age five. The theme of this program is “Every Child Reads Every Day.” Our goal is 20 for 20—20,000 books delivered to Warren County children in 2020.

This generation change started in early November 2019, when Commissioner Shannon Jones convened a group of Warren County leaders at the Warren County Foundation to learn about the Ohio Governor’s Imagination Library. Within a few weeks, the five library districts decided to fund a three-year pilot program. The Warren County Literacy Fund has been established for this purpose.

Children can be registered at www.imaginationlibrary.com. During the pilot program, a permanent endowment campaign will raise $5 million to support the program forever. A nine-member governance team guides the process in Warren County.

IHNWC is proud to be a partner of this exciting program. Every parent is made aware and every child is signed up once families graduate from shelter into housing.

Warren County Quilt Guild

Linda had the opportunity to visit with and thank the Warren County Quilt Guild for their support. Every child is presented with a handmade quilt upon their arrival to shelter. Our children get much comfort from these lovely quilts. Thank You!!
Come Out & Join Us!!

Armco Park Shelter #33

Run4Home 5K

KIDS FUN RUN

2020

SATURDAY

JULY 4TH

7:00AM

Three ways to register:

Online at www.ihnwc.org or RunningTime.net • By mail or drop off to IHNWC

For more information about run4home or IHNWC call 513-934-5250

MAIL REGISTRATION TO, OR DROP OFF AT:

IHNWC, 203 E Warren St. Lebanon, OH 45036

NOW OFFERING!

Sleep in Option available

$20 Entry + $5 for T-Shirt

Check Below

Check Box: T-Shirt YES (choose a size)

T-Shirt Size: Adult Male: □ S □ M □ L □ XL □ XXL

Adult Female: □ S □ M □ L □ XL □ XXL

Youth: □ S □ M □ L

Runner □ Walker □ Kid’s Fun Run □ Sleep In

Entry Fee (Non-refundable)

$25.00 if received by June 19, 2020

$30.00 for sleep in option

$30.00 after June 19, 2020* $30.00 on Race Day

$10.00 Kid’s Fun Run

Additional Contribution $ _______ Thank You!!

Make checks payable to IHNWC

Pre-registration is encouraged • Race day registration available • 7:00 a.m.

Chip timing results • Race starts at 8:30 a.m. • Walkers immediately following runners

Kid’s Fun Run • Kids 10 years and under • 9:30 a.m. • 1/4 mile

NOW OFFERING!

Sleep in Option available

$20 Entry + $5 for T-Shirt

Check Below

NOW OFFERING!

Sleep in Option available

$20 Entry + $5 for T-Shirt

Check Below

In consideration of and as a condition for my entry, I, for myself, and on behalf of my parents, principals, executors, children, wards, minors, and assigns, waive all existing and potential claims, causes of action and damages and release the Warren County Parks District – Armco Park, Interfaith Hospitality Network of Warren County and all sponsors, organizers, volunteers and others associated with the planning or organization of this event of and from all such claims, causes of action and damages arising from or pertaining in any way to my participation in this event. I attest that I am physically fit and sufficiently trained to participate in this event.

Signature ____________________________ Date ____________

(Parent signature required if less than 18 years of age)

*Race T-shirts and sizes not guaranteed for registration after June 19, 2020

*In the event of a cancellation due to COVID19 we thank you for your donation*
My name is Jennifer Keezer. I coordinate the Interfaith Hospitality Network program at Resurrection Lutheran Church and I am the chairperson for the Christmas in July Event. For the past fifteen years with the help of about 50 volunteers we have been hosting the event at Lebanon Presbyterian Church to get IHN children ready for school. The Christmas in July event occurs the last Saturday in July from 12 noon to 4 PM. At that time all school age children in the IHN program for the last year receive much needed items: gift cards for a haircut and new shoes, new outfits, book bags filled with the required supplies, and a small toy. In addition, the families participate in activities, and we provide a complete Christmas dinner.

We have 37 to 45 families participating, and we get 60 to 80 children ready for school. In order for the children to start the school year feeling good about themselves and not standing out requires $22,000 each year. Every year we receive heart-warming thank you notes from the parents and the children. The parents are very relieved that they do not have the burden of funding the costs of starting school and the children are very grateful for the clothes and supplies.

We greatly appreciate monetary donations, which are tax-deductible. Checks should be made payable to IHN of Warren County and designated for Christmas in July.

Thank you,
Jennifer Keezer
Chairperson for Christmas in July

A Note from a Christmas in July Recipient

Thank you so much for everything you have done for us. You are amazing and we want you to know that we appreciate you.

We love you!!

Hannah
Host Recruitment Retention
By Rev. Mary Joseph & Jennifer Fry

The verses above are fitting for this time of the year as it fills us with a sense of hope, rebirth and renewal as we find ourselves yearning for warmer days ahead. Mary so looks forward to seeing the bulbs in her gardens begin to break through the soil, as if to say, “Here I am, spring is on the way.” Jenn looks forward to having her windows open with fresh air filling her home and her pup Molly being happy again to be outside!

The Host Recruitment and Retention Team is also filled with hope and a sense of rebirth for the days ahead as we continue our commitment to IHN. We are grateful to Jennifer Goepper, an IHN coordinator at Sycamore Presbyterian, and Paul Dillenburger, an IHN board member from St. Philip’s Parish and its’ St. Vincent de Paul group for joining our team. We welcome them!

The team has been hard at work developing a comprehensive and accurate list of churches in Warren County including Pastor & Mission Coordinators’ names. We are calling each church to verify their information on the list and once we have a working list, we’ll start making calls and sending emails to introduce IHN to those churches who aren’t involved in the program, or those who may have been involved at one time and would like to re-engage with IHN.

We have a busy spring ahead and we so appreciate our congregations and groups who are currently participating in caring for the families whom we seek to serve. They are our guests and we again thank those of you who are welcoming them into your church homes.

If you would like more information about the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Warren County please visit our website at IHNWC.org or call the day center office at 513-934-5250.

Host & Support Churches
Heritage Presbyterian Church
St. Susanna Church
Mason United Methodist Church
Hope Church, Mason
Compass Christian Church
Grace Baptist Church
Lebanon Presbyterian Church
Lebanon United Methodist Church
St. Patrick’s Episcopal Church
Lakeview UCC
True Kingdom Ministries
St. Mary Magdalene
Nexus Church
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
Resurrection Lutheran Church
Bethany UCC
Sycamore Presbyterian Church
Our Lady of Sorrows
Monroe United Methodist
Monroe Presbyterian
The River Church
First Church of God
North Cincinnati Community Church
Springboro First United Methodist
Springboro United Church of Christ
Pilgrim South
Red Lion United Methodist Church
Living Water Lutheran Church
Cobblestone Community Church
New Freedom Church
Lifehouse Church
**Wish List**

Help! Our supplies are low and our needs have increased. Collections by your group, scouts, and churches are always welcome. Also, think of IHNWC as you do your buy one, get one free shopping.

We always need:

- Small kitchen appliances: coffee pots, toaster ovens, crockpots
- Paper towels, toilet paper
- Diapers (4, 5, 6)
- Wipes
- Baby Items (thermometers, baby wash, shampoo, diaper rash cream, lotion)
- Laundry detergent
- Dryer sheets
- Facial tissue
- Trash bags (55 gallon, 13 gallon)
- Cold and pain medication for infants, children, and adults
- Cleaning supplies
- Undergarments for children & adults
- Gift Cards (Walmart, Aldi, Kroger, Gas Cards)

**Your Gift Matters**

Your gift impacts so many families and children who are experiencing homelessness right here in our community! Our families need safe shelter, basic needs and help finding a new home. Your gift makes a difference. All gifts are tax deductible and greatly appreciated.

**How to Give**

We have online giving! Please visit [www.ihnwc.org](http://www.ihnwc.org) and click “Donate” to enter your information.

We love mail! Using the information enclosed please make checks payable to Interfaith Hospitality Network of Warren County. THANK YOU!!

Kroger and Dorothy Lane Market will also allocate a portion of sales to IHNWC. For more information on all of these programs visit [www.ihnwc.org](http://www.ihnwc.org) and see our Community Benefits page.

**Amazon Smile**

Shopping Amazon?

Please be sure to select IHNWC as the beneficiary!

Your shopping can generate funding for families in need with zero personal expense. Register with our organization on Amazon Smile before placing your order with Amazon Smile.
Volunteer Spotlight

Getting to Know

Peggy Jacobs

Sycamore Presbyterian Church

What do you usually do to volunteer for IHNWC? Which is your favorite?
• I am one of the Core Team members, which has changed over the years. I organize sign ups, update pantry supplies, plan 7 healthy meals and create keepsake crafts for the guests. I am there every evening because guests learn to trust a familiar face.
• I enjoy eating with the guests & not cooking myself!

How did you first get involved in IHNWC?
• I started with my husband, Larry, because there was a need for overnight hosts. In 2005, the previous core team members retired and we decided to take on the role with another couple.

What is your “why” for volunteering?
• My husband passed away in 2010 and I continued to serve in his memory. He loved talking with the guests! I was a pre-school teacher for 30 years, so it was natural for me to help young families. My joy comes from helping these young families on their road to success. I feel, I’m the one blessed just being able to serve.

Do you have a memorable moment about your volunteer experience with us?
• There are many happy memories. It is especially nice to receive their “thank you’s”, which Linda graciously encourages. It is nice to know they felt our love and maybe we made a difference.

What would you tell new members/volunteers about volunteering for IHNWC?
• Just enjoy the guest and love them for who they are with their struggles. You never know what seed is planted when you interact with them. Volunteers also share their stories and we all grow. Having an evening activity lets the guests relax and they are proud of an accomplished project. We make name plates, flower arrangements, paint trivets and build birdhouses, to name a few.

Tell us a fun fact about yourself!
• SPC promotes Run4Home. The Core Team members wear funny hats as we collect sponsor money. We are quite a spectacle!
• The hobby I love the most is making quilts at SPC. Once completed, prayers are said over the quilts and eventually all are given away for various healing reasons.

How long have you been a board member of IHNWC?
• 7 years - I joined the board in 2013

What do you enjoy most about being a board member?
• I enjoy working with other members of the board to help advance the mission of IHNWC. Our board members bring a variety of great experience, backgrounds and perspectives to the organization, and I enjoy collaborating to achieve positive outcomes for the organization.

Why did you join IHNWC?
• In 2012 I had just acquired a business in Lebanon and was looking for a way that our company could help support the local community. I sought out five different organizations and met with the leadership of each one. When I met with Linda Rabolt, our Executive Director, it became very clear that the capabilities of our business aligned best with the needs of IHNWC. I was also very impressed with the operating model of the organization. IHNWC has a very modest budget but achieves an enormous positive impact through the tremendous volunteer efforts of our host and support congregations. Seeing everything that others were doing inspired me to want to be part of the effort.

What is your current occupation?
• I manage a business in Lebanon called Eastgate Graphics. We apply shrink sleeve labels, pressure sensitive labels or silk screen printing to rigid plastic, metal and glass containers ranging in size from 1 ounce to 1 gallon. In addition we offer a full range of graphics and prepress services including graphic design, color separation, proofing, dry offset platemaking, and silkscreens. Our clients include industry leading brand companies, package manufacturers and package distributors.

What do you love most about IHNWC?
• I have a deep appreciation for the sustained effort by so many people in our community to share their time, energy, and love to help support families in our community who most need our help. This kindness, that has been provided unconditionally for more than 21 years, makes me very thankful to be part of our great community.

What's something about you (a fun fact) that not many people know?
• One of my favorite things to do is coach youth soccer. I’ve been coaching since 1992, originally in the SAY and Select programs. About 10 years ago I got involved with Cincinnati TOPSoccer, which is a league for kids ages 4 to 20+ who have physical and/or cognitive disabilities. This is an amazing program that gives every kid the chance to play at their own level in a high quality, organized league with a safe, supportive environment. We have great fun practicing and playing games together, and we are always looking for more players. Check us out at www.cincytopsoccer.com

Board Spotlight

Getting to Know

Tom Ludeke
To our Interfaith Hospitality Network of Warren County family:

As a community organization, we strive to do everything that we can to preserve the safety and health of our guests, volunteers, staff, and community. While we have not had any confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 among anyone connected to our organization (as of March 15 at 4 pm), we are monitoring the developments of the COVID-19 virus very closely. We have decided to implement a social distancing plan for the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Warren County. The purpose of this plan is to protect the health of our guests, staff, volunteers, and community as a whole and to play our part to slow the spread of this virus in our community.

The plan outlined below will go into effect starting Sunday, March 15, 2020, and will extend until the week of May 17, 2020. On or before April 15th, the IHNWC Leadership team will evaluate when to return to normal operations. We will send emails to the coordinators and ask that you check our web page at www.ihnwc.org for up to date information.

Phase 1 - Social Distancing Plan - Actions that IHNWC is taking:

1. **Churches:** The Interfaith Hospitality Network of Warren County Rotational Shelter Program will be placed on a temporary hold until May 17, 2020. While our homeless families are not among those in the most at-risk population for this virus, many of our church volunteers are. To protect our volunteers and church partners, the families will not be staying in network churches during this time but instead they will be sheltered at a local Lebanon motel. We will continue to depend on our volunteers to provide breakfast, lunch and dinner as they normally would. IHNWC bus drivers will pick up the meals each night at the host church and deliver them to the families. We are also asking the host church volunteers to provide “goodie bags” for the children. These will have items to entertain the children during this difficult time. We will send the narrative as we always do so that our coordinators are aware of the census as well as other important information.

2. **Volunteers:** Out of an abundance of caution, all volunteers and volunteer activities that occur on the IHNWC properties will be suspended until further notice. This includes the Heaven and Hearth furniture ministry.

3. **Guests:** We intend to keep the same capacity levels (5-6 families), however, to reduce high concentrations of people in one location, we are providing our guests with hotel rooms. The families will continue to work with the IHNWC staff to achieve their goals of housing and self-sufficiency.

4. **IHNWC Staff:** Our amazing staff is our biggest asset as an organization, and we want to do everything we can to ensure they and their families stay healthy. Staff with fevers or who have underlying health restrictions are asked to stay home. Please feel free to contact Linda Rabolt, Executive Director; with any questions or concerns that you may have.
5. **Homeless Crisis Response Program**: As of this date, the HCRP program will continue to provide assistance to persons in shelters or who are literally homeless with support. We are asking for exceptions from the state on this grant to provide even more assistance to those in our community who are in crisis or may become at risk for the loss of housing due to this pandemic. We will provide additional information on this as it comes available.

6. **Heaven and Hearth Furniture Ministry**: This ministry is a large part of the success of our families once they graduate from shelter. With that, we feel that it is unsafe for all involved to continue to pick up furniture and household items and will temporarily suspend this ministry. We will continue to monitor the situation and advise of any changes. We hope that the community will hold onto their donations so that we can continue to provide our families with much needed items upon their move to housing.

7. **Donations of used items**: We are grateful for the many in kind donations of used items that come to the IHNWC daycenter. Many of these items are of great use to our families. **With that, we are temporarily suspending the acceptance of all used items for donation at the daycenter.** We hope that you will hold onto your donations of children’s clothing, infant items and other items that the families can use to start their new homes. We will let you know when we are able to accept your kind donation on our webpage. *(This does not include donations of items listed in category 8.)*

8. **Community**: While volunteer opportunities are limited, we need our community now more than ever. Here are a few ways you can help:

   A. **Give Financially**: This transition will increase costs for the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Warren County, so your financial support during this time period will be significant. Please feel free to donate online at [www.ihnwc.org](http://www.ihnwc.org) or send your donation to IHNWC, 203 East Warren Street, Lebanon, Ohio 45036.

   B. **Supply Donations**: We need specific supplies for cleaning, sanitation, and infant care during this time. We also have great need for gift cards to McDonalds, Burger King, Bob Evans, Walmart, Kroger and gas cards. We ask that you contact Linda Rabolt at 513-934-5250 or follow us at www.ihnwc.org to keep track of the updated needs.

   C. **Be Kind and Pray**: We ask that you be kind to one another and pray for our neighbors and community during this time.

I will be posting updates on our webpage ([www.ihnwc.org](http://www.ihnwc.org)). For additional information on COVID–19 in the State of Ohio please check: www.coronavirus.ohio.gov.

This is an unprecedented effort, the likes of which I haven’t seen before in my lifetime. We have not been given a spirit of fear, but a spirit of hope. Let’s continue to provide hope to homeless families and to each other during this time of crisis. Together, we can meet this challenge as a community.

Blessings,

*signed*

Linda A. Rabolt
Executive Director
Did you know in the year 2019 IHNWC assisted:

- 43 families in network
- 127 individuals
- 80 children
- 45 under age 6
- 13 unborn babies
- 1168 referrals

Thank you to all the many volunteers at our host and support churches for providing meals, fellowship, hospitality and unconditional love to our families.

Interfaith Hospitality Network of Warren County (IHNWC) was formed 21 years ago to provide shelter, meals, hospitality and support for homeless families.

If you would like to get involved please contact Linda Rabolt, Executive Director, at 513-934-5250 or linda@ihnwc.org. For more information about IHNWC go to www.ihnwc.org