

The mission of FISH Hospitality Program is to serve homeless women and families by providing shelter and meals, and such other assistance as we are able, in order to give them a new opportunity to live independently in their communities as respected families and individuals. FHP does assist and enable our guests to obtain housing, jobs, medical services and other assistance to which they are entitled, as far as resources allow. FHP serves people in need without regard to race, religion, national origin or disability.



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Mar 20 **FHP Board of Directors Meeting/Annual Meeting** 7:30 pm at Wesley United Methodist Church, 1500 Plainfield Ave., South Plainfield N.J. 07080

May 8 **Coordinators Meeting** 7:30 pm at New Dover United Methodist Church, 687 New Dover Road, Edison, N.J. 08820

June 2 **Annual Yard Sale/Flea Market** 8:30 am until 3:00 pm at Our Lady of Mount Virgin Church, 600 Harris Avenue, Middlesex, N.J. 08846. Rain date June 9.

SERVICE STATISTICS

January 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011

Persons sheltered -	75
Family units -	30
Number of women -	29
Number of men -	5
Number of children -	41
Bed nights provided -	3,664
Average stay in program -	62 days
Average daily census -	10.0

WANTED

**An electric typewriter in good condition for FHP office
Please call 732-968-5957**

Volunteer View

*For one week in December 2011 The Presbyterian Church in Westfield filled in for one of our congregations that was unable to host our guests. This church had been part of Homefirst in Plainfield but since Homefirst are no longer operating a shelter the people at Westfield Presbyterian Church were looking for another way to serve the homeless. So I am happy to announce that they joined our program and will be a night host church for three weeks during 2012. We are really happy to have on board their coordinators Carole Cook and Margo Seaman and all the volunteers from The Presbyterian Church in Westfield.
Susan*

As the season of Advent began and we readied our hearts for the birth of our Lord, we needed to look no further than Lower Westminster Hall to have to see the Holy Spirit at work. Our church family welcomed eleven guests; five adults and six children, as part of the FISH Hospitality Program. From the amazing set-up crew to all of the volunteers who helped serve breakfasts and dinners, the volunteers who gave up their comfortable beds to sleep at the church overnight and finally to the break down crew...a great big THANK YOU for being so willing to share yourself with our guests.

In this economy the families that we housed are the working poor that you read about: an RN, a daycare worker, a 25 year employee whose division was eliminated leaving her jobless. They found themselves struggling and eventually lost their homes. We are grateful that we were able to provide a safe, warm place for them to stay during the week.

Matthew 25:40”The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Carole Cook
The Presbyterian Church in Westfield

Wish List

**NEW pillows NEW pillows
we are in desperate need!**

Laundry detergent and fabric softener

You may leave these items at the FISH Office or any participating Congregation.

THANK YOU TO...

Mark Huddell, the people of Bound Brook Presbyterian Church and Pastor Nancy Birdsong for hosting our annual Children's Christmas Party. It was Mark Huddell's excellent leadership that made this a very successful event. Thank you also to Dave DiPerrro, Patricia Kelly and Diane Padula and to all who helped with the party. It was awesome how you transformed a cold bare gymnasium into a warm and festive setting for our families to enjoy a delightful afternoon. The food was superb, and enjoyed by all. Thank you to all the wonderful organizations who donated items.

GUESTS' FEEDBACK

"The volunteers were very nice people and very helpful and caring."

"I always had everything I needed and didn't have to spend my money on anything. I could just save. That's a big plus."

"The volunteers were extremely helpful."

"The volunteers at each church provided excellent service for the most part. Being grateful for their help allows me to look past any minor uncomfortable encounters."

"The volunteers made the move a smooth transition."

"I must say this program provided a service that is much needed and if I can refer someone I will!"

"I've learned a lot! I am truly humbled by what this program has offered to me and my daughter."

"Thank you for saving me! Just know that everything that was shared with me I will carry and apply from here on out"

YARD SALE / FLEA MARKET

**Saturday June 2 at
Our Lady of Mount Virgin
R. C. Church -School Yard
600 Harris Ave, Middlesex, N.J. 08846
8:30am until 3:00pm
(rain date Saturday June 9)**

CALLING ALL VENDORS AND VOLUNTEERS

**Table space is \$20 each, Van space \$25.00 each
(Vendors arrive at 7:45am)
Donations for the FHP tables can be delivered to
the school on Friday, June 1, 4:00pm to 6:30pm
Volunteers are needed to set up and clean up
Also to sell items at FHP tables.**

**Please call the FHP office (732-968-5957) to tell us
how YOU will help in the fund raising event.**

A Life Changing Experience

Before I entered the FISH Hospitality program my spirit was broken. I experienced depression for the first time in my life and was quickly losing hope. I became homeless in the summer of 2011. I was also raising an extremely active three year old, named Aaron. We had nowhere to go and no one to call. I began calling different shelters and stumbled upon a shelter in New Brunswick. I came to find out that it was a men's shelter.

I asked myself, "What am I going to do now/" About thirty minutes later I got a phone call from a woman named Susan from another shelter I had called. She had asked me to come in for an interview. As soon as I walked into the FISH office I was greeted by many smiling faces and warm "hello's" Walking into Susan's office I was nervous and did not know what to expect. When talking with her she assured me that with hard work, focus and discipline I could make it through the program and be successful.

Susan started helping me right away. Taking the time to help me set goals and meet those goals. The FISH Program started to feel more like family over the next few weeks. We all helped each other and got along great. Everyone being in the same situation really helped to encourage us.

After being in the program for a few months Susan was able to help me get into Naomi's Way which is transitional housing. I now have my own apartment and am saving money well. I feel as though I am on the road to success. My son is now on a normal schedule and is happy and healthy.

This was indeed one of the hardest challenges I've ever had to overcome. FISH Hospitality changed my life and will continue to change many lives. I can't thank all the volunteers and staff enough for their compassion.

Sincerely,

Carroll

President Obama's Proposed Housing Plan

You may have read in the news recently that President Obama has proposed a plan to help homeowners who are current on their payments by making it easier and less expensive to refinance. By refinancing at today's low rates, these homeowners can save an average of \$3000 per year.

An interesting option of this plan did not get as much publicity. Mortgage owners who are underwater—their house is now worth less than what they owe—can refinance and have all closing costs paid by the government. To get this deal, they must choose a 20-year instead of the usual 30-year loan and agree to put the amount they save under the new low rates toward the principal on the loan. This way, they will rebuild the equity in their home.

Here are some other provisions of the President's housing proposal. All mortgage agreement forms will be written in simpler language. And the procedures for helping at-risk homeowners to avoid or appeal foreclosure will be standardized, simplifying all the different state plans.

Finally, the National Housing Trust Fund will get a \$1 billion infusion for the development, rehabilitation and preservation of affordable housing for extremely low income families. This influx of funding is a small part of Project Rebuild, an effort to put thousands of construction workers to work refurbishing vacant and foreclosed homes and businesses. Some of these refurbished and vacant homes will be converted into rental properties. The benefits of this conversion are that it would expand the rental market as well as reduce the long list of unsold homes, an inventory that has kept house values so low.

Of course, this is an election year, so it's not surprising that we will see this plan followed by others, along with plenty of debate about them. But if you're like me, it opens up our minds a bit to read about new solutions to the big, complex problems of our housing market that have hurt so many families.

Brock Haussamen

MARCH 2012

FISH Hospitality Program, Inc.

A tri-county program for homeless women and families serving Middlesex, Union and Somerset Counties in New Jersey

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Board of Directors

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Exec. Director: Susan E. Baybutt, MSW, LSW,
C-ASWCM

Thank you to **VERSATILE printing applications** of Bound Brook, NJ for their continued support of FHP by donating their services to print this newsletter.

PARTICIPATING CONGREGATIONS

Host Congregations (night and/or day):

Bound Brook Presbyterian Church - n
Christ United Methodist Church, Piscataway - n
First Baptist, Sewaren - n
First Presbyterian, Avenel - n
First Presbyterian, Dunellen - n
Friends Quaker Meeting House, Plainfield - n
Middlesex Bible Chapel - d
New Beginnings Church of the Nazarene, Edison - n
Rose of Sharon Community Church, Plainfield - n & d
Second Reformed Church, New Brunswick - n
St John the Evangelist R. C. Church, Dunellen - d
St Paul's United Church of Christ, Milltown - n
The Presbyterian Church in Westfield - n
Trinity Episcopal, Woodbridge - n
Trinity Presbyterian Church, East Brunswick - n
Wesley United Methodist Church, S. Plainfield - d
Woodbridge United Methodist Church - n

Buddy Congregations:

New Dover United Methodist Church
St Cecelia's R.C. Church, Iselin
St James R.C. Church, Woodbridge

Support Congregations:

Grace Alliance, Piscataway
Our Lady of Fatima R.C. Church, Piscataway
Our Lady of Mount Virgin R.C. Church, Middlesex
Pilgrim Covenant, South Plainfield
St Francis Cabrini R.C., Piscataway
St Luke's R.C. Church, North Plainfield
St Paul's Episcopal Church, Bound Brook
The Rescue House of Prayer, S. Plainfield
Trinity Reformed Church, N. Plainfield

Affiliate of Family Promise
Affiliate of FISH, Inc. Dunellen, NJ
Member of New Jersey Alliance for the Homeless

A United Way Agency