

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.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept 19 **Board of Directors Meetings: 7:00 pm**
Nov 14 at St. Francis Episcopal Church, Dunellen

October -- Coordinator's Meeting date and place TBD

SERVICE STATISTICS

(January 1 – April 30)

Persons sheltered – 20 Families – 7
Sheltered Adults – 8 Children - 12
Nights of Shelter provided – 1,532

Thank You for the generous donations:

Dawn Dunkins: Gift Cards

Maceo Smallwood: personal items

Johana Spinelli: personal & cleaning items

St Francis Episcopal Church: Gift cards, cleaning supplies & personal items

The Congregational Church of Bound Brook: Gift Cards

MANY THANKS to:

St Francis Episcopal Church for serving as a Host Church on an emergency basis for not one but TWO weeks in April

Also to the Volunteers who pitched in at the last minute. We greatly appreciate it!

GUEST'S CORNER

A Very Special Letter

Good Day!

It was October of 2004 when I found myself in need of emergency shelter. I do not recall how I learned of this program, but I met with an intake specialist and was admitted. At the time, I had two sons - 11 and 4 years old and was pregnant with my daughter. FISH Hospitality provided me and my children with a safe, warm environment.

I want to thank you for helping me in my time of need, and to let you know how much the program helped me.

I have since moved to Miami, Florida, and have obtained a bachelor's degree in psychology. My oldest son is a Nuclear Engineer in the US Navy. My youngest son is a junior in high school, an honor student studying to be an engineer; and my daughter is in the 6th grade of a prestigious charter school in the Wynwood section of Miami.

Your program was both beneficial and supportive. I pray God will continue to bless this program so you may continue to provide these services for other families in need.

*Warm Regards,
Selene Hernandez*

Who's in the program now?

(Kid's age in parenthesis – County)

Mom & one girl (2) – MC

Mom & boy (5 months) - UC

Mom & boy (9) – MC

Mom & two girls (12 & 9) - UC

Mom & twins: boy & girl (12) and girl (9) – MC

A FAMILY OF FAITH... WITNESSING GOD'S GRACE

God never said there would not be hard times...Romans 5, Verse 3-5

Our Hardship

We experienced financial hardship after our bread winner also head of household experienced a three month hospitalization and a period of at home disability which all lasted close to six months. Although, we were blessed to have at least one family member and one friend cover some rent during this challenging time, the situation caught up to us even as my husband just secured a new higher paying job. We were forced to give up the place we called home in Union County.

"... and nothing shall be impossible to you..." Matthew 17:20 (KJV)

Godly Service

We were proud to experience 'Godly service' during our stay with FHP. It was like that gym you see advertised on TV ... 'no judgement zone' for our temporary situation. We felt safe and received a high level of hospitality at the host churches. Although the focus remained on advancing to an independent living situation we were made to feel like 'welcomed' guests during our stay.

Even from the moment of intake, Theresa and FHP staff were extremely dedicated to our progress and concerned about our experience and needs while in the program. There was the Van Driver Frank, who no matter what hour had a smile, a joke and was always ready and willing to assist you however he could (and all he ever looked for was a cup of coffee before he hit the road). Patricia who was always willing to help whenever she was needed and always kept the day center neat, clean and safe. Emily handled budgeting with the Guests and was always willing to assist Guests in any way she could. She always had a good word of advice and always directed you to other internal FHP resources. And we can't forget the Director and Social Worker for the Guests, Theresa. She was always full of energy even through a challenging personal period. She never shirked on her duties and commitment to the FHP Guests. She was not only great at connecting us to internal FHP resources but did a wonderful job connecting us with non-FHP resources in the community.

"Be devoted to one another... Never be lacking in zeal... share with the Lord's people in need and practice hospitality..." Romans 12:10-11 (NIV)

The Host Churches: "Let the Greatest Among You Serve"

Now the churches were just "showing out for the Lord!" (as some of my sisters in Christ would say) and had fun doing so. They were bold, proud and unashamed of doing their Father's work. They wanted us to focus on our goals, spend time with our children and expressed how they realized how challenging the schedule was for many of us. My husband worked night hours in New York City six days a week, I drove (sometimes 45 minutes each way) to take our son to school everyday and then drove all day for work.

Each coordinator and volunteer sincerely wanted to get to know you, bond with you, ease your day and help you any way they were able towards housing goals. Every space prepared for Guests was clean, many created the feel of a hotel. Many brought their children in to play with our children. We were always met with genuine smiles and well wishes.

Trinity Episcopal in Woodbridge allowed our son to sign up for their holiday gift program when we were there around Halloween - which we totally forgot about. But wouldn't you know, we got a call to pick up our son's gifts from one of the church members so we were blessed with two bags of gifts for Christmas for our child.

Bound Brook Presbyterian and St. Paul's in Milltown hosted us for two different blizzards where we were snowed in. And in both cases, people braved the snow to make sure we were fed well, we were warm and comfortable. Ruth Fellowship Ministries in Plainfield set up a computer station just for the Guests and their kids. A little before we transitioned out of the program, The Presbyterian Church in Westfield arranged for a live *Elsa* (from *Disney's Frozen*) to perform on a Saturday morning after a wonderful pancake breakfast.

We greatly appreciate the efforts of the Community Presbyterian Church, Edison that hosted us for two days during Christmas week. **A special thank you to Charlene**, who kept the church open and stayed with us. The congregation received us well when we surprised them and joined them for Christmas morning service. Last minute, they even allowed our son to participate in the Christmas Day youth presentation during the service.

These wonderful children of God will receive much favor for the special work they do with FHP Guests. No one ever used the word shelter, just provided wonderful hospitality and Godly service. We never felt like we were in a shelter, we felt home in God's care.

Special thanks to FISH Hospitality Program Community Partnerships and Resources

It was amazing to see how the FISH Hospitality team and some of the churches 'gathered the troops' in the community and how the community answered the call to come together in support of this program and its Guests.

The Men's, Women's and Youth Ministries and the volunteers from the various congregations who make donations, volunteer and dedicate time to the program and to the Guests and their children.

The President and Vice-President of the Board were just as caring and involved as the other coordinators and volunteers. Thank you to their many volunteers and resources given from their church.

The Blessings Keep Coming even as we Transitioned:

We were blessed to find a two bedroom apartment in a house in a neighborhood with some top ranking public schools for our child. Even after the completion of the program, FHP continued to be a blessing to us. They sent us to the Fish, Inc. food pantry to start us off with some bags of food. FHP gave us a ShopRite gift card and a Walmart gift card and provided us with bags of toiletries and health and beauty items to give us a good start.

One week after exiting the program, the woman of the house was offered a job... Woohoo! Then, a week later, we received a call from Ashley Furniture notifying us that they were delivering a twin mattress and box spring for our son's room — a program our Director Theresa suggested to us prior to leaving the program. More proof of God's grace and how He is always working on our behalf.

Need More Programs Like This:

What a wonderful service to a community! We know God is pleased and saying "well done". We will surely spread the word of the good works done here and come back in the future to volunteer and or donate. We are extremely thankful to have found such a program that helped give us a leg up through this time and prevented us from being on the street or in our car and allowed us the opportunity to transition with dignity.

Yours in Christ,
Jerrilyn - Todd & Jerrilyn

JUNE 2017

FISH Hospitality Program, Inc.

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*Affiliate of Family Promise
Affiliate of FISH, Inc. Dunellen
A United Way Agency*

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***You can make a donation on-line using Paypal at:
<http://www.fishhospitality.org/donate>***

Thank you!

WISH LIST

Unscented baby wipes, cocoa butter & Aveeno body lotion, mouthwash & Qtips (in smaller packaging, *but no travel size, please*) and laundry detergent PODS

Household items: for Guests when they move into their own homes - paper towels, toilet paper & dish detergent, etc.

GIFT CARDS: Costco Cash Cards, Walmart, Target, Walgreens, Payless Shoes, Famous Footwear, Shop Rite, Acme, and Stop N Shop

We need gift cards to give to Guests for specific needs, birthdays and when they leave FHP for household items or food.

PARTICIPATING CONGREGATIONS

Host Congregations:

Bound Brook Presbyterian Church
Christ United Methodist Church, Piscataway
Community Presbyterian Church, Edison
First Baptist, Sewaren
First Presbyterian, Avenel
First Presbyterian, Cranford
First Presbyterian, Dunellen
Rose of Sharon Community Church, Plainfield (day/night)
Ruth Fellowship Ministries, Plainfield
Second Reformed Church, New Brunswick
St. Francis Episcopal Church, Dunellen (day)
St Paul's United Church of Christ, Milltown
The Presbyterian Church in Westfield
Trinity Episcopal, Woodbridge
Trinity Presbyterian Church, East Brunswick

Support Congregations:

First Congregational Church of Westfield
The First Presbyterian Church of Iselin
Friends Quaker Meeting House, Plainfield
Jack & Jill of America, Plainfield
New Beginnings Church of the Nazarene, Edison
New Dover United Methodist Church, Edison
Our Lady of Mount Virgin, Middlesex
Park Community Church, South Plainfield
St. Cecelia's Roman Catholic Church, Iselin
St. Frances Cabrini, Piscataway
St. Francis Episcopal Church, Dunellen
St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church, Dunellen
St. Luke's Roman Catholic Church, North Plainfield
St. Paul's Episcopal, Bound Brook
St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, South Plainfield
JOT (Joint Outreach Team)
Stoncrest Community Church, Warren
The Rescue House of Prayer, South Plainfield
Trinity Reformed Church, North Plainfield
Metuchen Branch YMCA
Woodbridge Housing Authority

PLEASE USE AMAZON SMILE for all your gift purchases at www.smile.amazon.com - please designate FISH Hospitality Program as your charity.

Thank you

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