



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

## WINTER NEWSLETTER

### BEN'S LETTER

*A Note from Ben Brustkern, Executive Director*

*"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." - Helen Keller*

As the calendar shifts into 2024 and I reflect back on 2023 and all of the amazing accomplishments that Friends of the Family has achieved, I am reminded of one constant. The people who show up every single day to make other peoples lives better. The teammates that have dedicated their lives to working with people from all backgrounds and barriers. Those who selflessly give for others to succeed.

It takes a lot to be a successful non-profit but success comes from the people within. Everyday staff pickup the phone not knowing what the next story will bring. Will it be a mother with 3 kids describing the horrific violence she has experienced from her partner or will it be the individual sleeping outside in 10 degree weather that needs a place to call home. No matter who it is, the response will be compassionate, solution focused, and understanding of the human that is calling.

When you see the staff photo on the front page, just know that your community is better because of each individual pictured and that your donations are used to further the vision that ALL of us at Friends of the Family believe in. I am lucky to be part of such a great team and this agency is beyond grateful for each and every person that has walked through the doors and delivered some of the best client services you will find in this industry.

Thank you for your ongoing support and generosity.



### GOOD THINGS

Madison, Community Engagement Manager, shared that this years Adopt a Family program was the biggest one yet! We received 325 wish lists and 109 donors FILLED THEM ALL! Thank you to all who helped make so many holidays brighter in 2023.

Lea, our Transitions Specialist, shared recently that one of the clients we work with was hired by an employer partner. This is a big milestone for both the client and Friends of the Family. To learn more about our Safe Workplace Partnership, visit our website or reach out to Lea at [lea@fofia.org](mailto:lea@fofia.org).

Hey Volunteers! Looking for a fun way to get involved at Friends of the Family? We are looking for people to join a committee for our upcoming event, Chefs Take a Stand! If you love planning, events and volunteering, this is for you. For more information about this opportunity, please reach out to our Communications and Events Manager, Sarah, at [sarahp@fofia.org](mailto:sarahp@fofia.org).

# DONATION DRIVES

Here at Friends of the Family, we are always amazed by the amount of support that we receive from our community. Whether through giving, volunteering, sponsoring and everything in between, the people, business, and organizations that provide their time, talents, and treasures to us are truly priceless.

Throughout the year, many of these places give through donation drives, where they collect items from our top needs list to ensure that those we work with have the essentials they need. In 2023, we had over 15 different donation drives held by Boy Scout Troops, churches, businesses, students, and individuals, just to name a few. Friends of the Family is so thankful for everyone who partnered with us over the last year.

Donations are always needed throughout the year - if you would like more information about donation drives, please reach out to our Community Engagement Manager at [madison@fofia.org](mailto:madison@fofia.org).



## 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!**

- TruStage Foundation
- Veridian Credit Union
- Fayette County Community Foundation
- Max and Helen Guernsey Charitable Foundation
- Waterloo Community Foundation
- Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation
- Women for Good
- Farrer Endowment Foundation
- Lil' Drug Store Products, Inc.

## TOP NEEDS:

- FITTED SHEETS (TWIN XL)
- SLEEPING BAGS
- TOWELS
- HEAVY BLANKETS
- HAND/FOOT WARMERS
- NEW BRAS/UNDERWEAR (ALL SIZES)

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)

## A Night in Nashville

2023 marked our tenth annual A Night In Fundraiser! And this year did not disappoint! With Nashville as this year's theme, live music, boots and hats, and yee-haws were seen and heard throughout the night.

With the support of sponsors, donors, auction items, volunteers and staff, A Night In Nashville brought in a whopping \$55,000! Those dollars ensure that Friends of the Family can continue to provide services for those in crisis due to domestic violence, sexual assault, homelessness and housing insecurity.

We are already thinking about next year's location... where should we go?? While you're thinking, save the date November 8, 2024 at Prairie Links Golf Course in Waverly!



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



### Chefs Take a Stand

Chefs is back celebrating its 10th year!! Thursday, April 4, 2024 from 6pm to 9pm, make plans to join us at the Hilton Garden Inn Cedar Falls for this amazing and tasty fundraiser that will get us even closer to our vision of everyone has a home.

Tickets are \$35 and get you yummy samples of creations from 8 to 10 local chefs as well as delightful drinks from 4 - 6 Iowa beverage vendors! Then you'll vote on who wins Best Dish and Best Drink awards. This event also features a chance to bid on some amazing silent and live auction items, all to support ensuring everyone has a safe place to call home. Grab tickets at our website, [www.fofia.org](http://www.fofia.org).

Sponsorship opportunities are available as well. Reach out to our Communications & Events Manager at [sarahp@fofia.org](mailto:sarahp@fofia.org) for more info.

## **NEW PROGRAM: ALWAYS HOME**

Always Home is a newly funded program for Friends of the Family.

Recently, Friends of the Family received funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the Always Home Program. This is a permanent supportive housing (PSH) program provided in Cerro Gordo County. PSH is permanent housing in which housing assistance and supportive services are provided to assist households with at least one member (adult or child) with a disability in achieving housing stability.

Always Home will be provided in Cerro Gordo specifically because the need is so high. Prior to this, a permanent supportive housing program wasn't available in Cerro Gordo and this will be the first in the county.

For a client to qualify for this program, they have to have a documented disability of long duration. It also prioritizes those who have experienced chronic homelessness which is a term used to describe individuals who have experienced homelessness for at least a year — or repeatedly — while struggling with a disabling condition such as a serious mental illness, substance use disorder, or physical disability.

Always Home prioritizes people experiencing category one and four homelessness. This specific program is unique to our other housing programs in the area because an individual can receive assistance for the duration of their need, there's not a time limit for how long someone can receive assistance.

This program is partnering with Prairie Ridge Integrated Behavioral Healthcare in Mason City. Participants in Always Home are able to be referred to Prairie Ridge so they have access to substance use programming if needed.

Friends of the Family began offering this program on January 1st and we have already begun pulling people for this program. There are 12 spots available and if individuals are interested in learning more, they can call our Housing Hotline at 319-233-3094.



# A YEAR IN PHOTOS

Check out some of our favorite moments from 2023





**Hilton Garden Inn - 7213 Nordic Drive, Cedar Falls**



Get your tickets now, scan the code.

Join us and taste delicious creations from top chefs  
in the community and sip on samples from local  
beverage providers - all to support our vision of  
Everyone Has A Home

**Thursday, April 4, from 6 to 9**  
**Hilton Garden Inn - Cedar Falls.**

# **Chefs Take A Stand**

*Join us for the 10th annual*



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