



INTERFAITH COALITION

Partners in Faith. Changing Lives.



These last couple of months at Interfaith Coalition have been action-packed, to say the least! I would like to extend a deeply heartfelt note of gratitude to everyone – staff, board, donors, volunteers, friends – who have offered support and stability during a time of great transition.

Inherent in any new job is a steep learning curve, and my first few months at IFC are no exception. I have been working with the staff to chart our course as we prepare to move into our new space at First Christian Church. If all goes according to plan, by the time this newsletter has reached you, we will be settled into our new home.

While preparing for our own move, we have been reminded of the value of asking for help. I am grateful for the many hands have contributed to this effort, and continue to do so.

“As we have gone through the phases of our own move, I have been thinking about the families who have moved into and out of our Interfaith Coalition homes this year. Although our move into our new space has had its challenges and anxiety, it pales to what these parents and children have faced in homelessness and their exit out of it.”

Moving can be an exciting time full of fresh possibilities and new beginnings, but it is also inherently stressful. As we have gone through the phases of our own move, I have been thinking about the families who have moved into and out of our Interfaith Coalition homes this year.

Although our move into our new space has had its challenges and anxiety, it pales to what these parents and children have faced in homelessness and their exit out of it.

Our work at Interfaith Coalition is to make this transition less taxing wherever possible. Even under the best circumstances, though, no move is ever a seamless process. I think of how many additional challenges are faced by families in unstable housing situations who also have to navigate school registration, bus routes, and the unfamiliarity of new surroundings while also having overlapping elements of instability to balance every day. I applaud their resilience and perseverance.

As we prepare to wrap up 2022, I look forward to finding additional ways to support families in our new home, and theirs, and ask that you join me by making a year-end donation to Interfaith Coalition. With your help, we can ease some of these families’ burdens through stability, consistency, and guidance.

I am eager to see how we will continue to forge ways for families and children around Whatcom County to exit homelessness, and ask you to be part of that journey.

Devin Connolly
Executive Director



Make your year-end donation to Interfaith Coalition by mailing a check in the provided envelope, visiting interfaith-coalition.org, or by scanning the QR code below.



INTERFAITH FAMILY HOUSING IN 2022: FAMILIES GUIDING THEIR SUCCESS



View our full 2022 Annual Report at interfaith-coalition.org or by scanning the QR code below.



FAMILY HOUSING

20 Families housed
51 Children housed
84 Individuals housed



GRADUATED AFTER SHELTER

7 Families
17 Children
28 Individuals

Prevention

Keeping families facing the loss of their housing in their home through rent assistance.

Diversion

Providing rental deposit and move-in cost assistance for families who have lost their home.

Stabilization

Ongoing support for families when they have graduated from Interfaith housing.

KIDS & VOLUNTEERS GIVE AN ARTFUL FAREWELL TO OUR FORMER LEARNING CENTER

Our Learning Center closed its doors temporarily while we prepared for our big move. On the last day of tutoring before the pause, children were led by the dedicated Learning Center volunteers in an art project. The kiddos put on their painting smocks and used acrylic paint to make finger-painted trees vibrant with the colors of fall leaves. These paintings were made as presents to give to each of the volunteers who have supported them thus far while in Interfaith Coalition housing.

After painting, Interfaith Coalition staff joined our family members and volunteers for a farewell party to the old Learning Center. We gathered around a build-your-own sundae buffet provided by one of our volunteers and the kids showed us that they had creativity to spare after their art exercise; many sweet towers of treats were made with the sundae toppings as we shared our last family activity before starting to pack up to go.

The children were all so lovely and happy to be creating beautiful art and especially loved piling toppings onto their ice cream sundaes. Tears were shed by the volunteers who have been part of these children's journeys for many months and, in some cases, years.

We're grateful for what our Learning Center volunteers bring to the lives of children in our housing and look forward to reopening the space in our new location with expanded services and tutoring.



MIDDLE INCOME CLASS, MEET LOW INCOME CLASS

Famed socio-economic researcher Ruby Payne found that, generally speaking, in middle class, we have a tendency to prioritize professional and financial achievement. Where will we go to college? What is our next step in our career? Where do we want to go for vacation next year? In lower class, relationships can often be seen as our most important assets. Who do I know that can fix my car since I don't have money to pay a mechanic? Which neighbor can watch my child when I get called into work last minute? Those of us in lower income levels might not have money to pay for things, but do have people who can help. It's called social capital and it's a powerful asset.

Trudy Shuravloff, Executive Director of The Whatcom Dream says, "Sometimes people who didn't grow up in different socioeconomic communities find it hard to relate to each other."

Even the relational boundaries between low income and middle class can differ.



"If you've grown up in a lower income community," says Trudy, "middle class can feel like this," she stops and holds her arm out in front of her with her hand facing palm-out. "It feels like, 'I like you, but please stay over there.' In my low income community, I enjoy sharing with others because when I do that, I get help and feel supported and don't feel so alone. And if someone helps me, I'm glad to reciprocate."

Growing up learning that relationships are everything, but living in a world where the messages you receive tell you that material things and money means success, is detrimental to empathizing with each other.

"When you don't have material things or money, people may think there's something wrong with you. They may wonder, 'Is she lazy?' 'Does she have an addiction?' Sometimes there's an assumption that there's got to be some kind of defect that explains why someone is poor," Trudy says.

She goes on to point out that stereotypes abound everywhere, regardless of socioeconomic class. Years ago, if you were to ask her what she thought of wealthy people, she'd laugh and say she didn't trust them. Over the years, she's learned many people are using their wealth to support their communities and some folks are incredibly philanthropic.

"It doesn't matter who you are, we all want people to understand us because it hurts when they don't," she says.

"It's okay if you can't relate to someone's story. You don't have to understand it to be able to help. Sharing my story and hearing other's stories is a way gain context for who we are, our struggles and stresses. I want people to feel, to be moved to action. If you're uncomfortable being on the front lines of that work, support organizations that are. Unified by each other's struggles and strengths, we're better as a community."

The Whatcom Dream holds Poverty Simulation workshops where people can experience walking in another person's shoes. Host a Poverty Simulation at your school, church, agency, or business. Give The Whatcom Dream a call at 360-306-8324.

Could you survive in...

Poverty:

- I know how to live without electricity and a phone.
- I know which churches will provide assistance with food or shelter.
- I know how to move in half a day.
- I know how to keep my clothes from being stolen at the laundromat.

Middle Class:

- I have an online checking account and monitor my bills online.
- I talk to my children about going to college.
- I know how to get one of the best interest rates on my new car loan.
- I plan my vacations six months in advance.

And just for comparison...here's Wealthy Class:

- I can read a menu in at least three languages.
- I own more vehicles than there are drivers.
- I have several favorites restaurants in different countries.
- I fly in my own plane, the company plane, or first class.



INTERFAITH COALITION
of WHATCOM COUNTY
PO Box 30767
Bellingham, WA 98228

Return Service Requested

Nonprofit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Bellingham, WA 98226
Permit No. PI 231

Consider this...

Homelessness lowers one's mental bandwidth

People experiencing homelessness live each day in survival mode, which raises cortisol, a stress hormone.

Higher stress means less patience, self-discipline, and ability to make decisions. Imagine that ... every day.

2,500 FREE WINTER COATS AND HATS PROVIDED AROUND WHATCOM COUNTY



Thank you to every one of you who helped us give out 2,500+ free coats, hats, scarves, and gloves to 500 families and individuals around Whatcom County. Without you, many children, teens, and adults in our neighborhoods may only have a tattered and worn coat to shield them against our wet, chilly winter. With this community effort, though, hundreds of people got to “shop” for a new-to-them coat.

Our Winter Coat Drive is an effort of thousands. A dozen congregations held coat drives, Ridwell featured winter coats so their subscribers could easily donate from their front porch, Ragfinery offered space to accept donations, Brandon Nelson Partners Realtors provided their box truck, Bellingham Food Bank provided a home base to give out coats in Bellingham. Congregants and volunteers, including Marta Hand and Loretta Tedrow of United Church of Ferndale and Marie Valum of St. Peter Mission in Deming gave generously of their time and energy so we could broaden the reach of our coat drive. Ronalee Kincaid takes the helm on Project Warm-Up, organizing donations of yarn and knitted and crocheted hats and scarves year-round so these beautiful, handmade items could be given away at our winter coat distributions, as well as many other locations and outreach programs around Whatcom County.

And the volunteers! Nearly 40 volunteers came together to sort coats and be “personal shoppers” so guests could walk away wearing the perfect coat. As disheartening it can be to see so many in our own community in need of something as simple as a coat, our volunteers create an atmosphere of joviality, filling the tent with laughter and comfort, giving a smile and respect to *every single person* who walks up. All of this powerful collaboration for the sake of providing one item of clothing. Imagine what else could we accomplish by coming together as a whole community.

