



NEWSLETTER

December 2015



It's Operation Holiday season! We're processing the last few applications, making our lists and checking them twice. Now's the time to kick collection drives into high gear. The KSN Telethon is coming up tonight - we still need \$200,000 for Operation Holiday this year. Please volunteer and donate so 12,000 Wichitans will receive food, warm coats, blankets, toys, pet food and Dillons gift cards this year. [Read more about some of the fun activities and how to help this Operation Holiday season.](#)

— LATEST NEWS & EVENTS —

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Operation Holiday: A Story

From Anne Corrison

Operation Holiday is in full swing. Some people may question whether all this effort to collect and distribute food, coats and toys once a year makes a difference. It does. Operation Holiday brings hope.

I saw this firsthand last year when I delivered gifts to two households. Typically people who have signed up for assistance come to the Distribution Center to pick up their items. But in this situation the requests came in just before Christmas.

The first was from a social service agency on behalf of a family. The father was dying and the mother, Anna, didn't speak English. Despite the great sorrow in their family, Anna wanted her children to experience joy on Christmas morning by having gifts to open.



for herself; she just wanted them for the children.

Although I was not looking forward to shopping for eight children just a few days before Christmas, I thought about who we are and what we stand for at Inter-Faith Ministries. I also thought about you, our friends and donors, and realized that you would want me to respond to these two families with kindness and generosity.

I recruited my brother-in-law to help. Together we shopped, bagged and delivered gifts to the two households. I'll never forget Anna's broad smile when we arrived. Equally memorable were the children who lined up behind their grandmother, peeking from around her skirt, eagerly looking to see who was bringing the bags of gifts. I could feel their excitement as they wondered what treasures they'd receive. I went home that evening refreshed, not exhausted, feeling gratitude for all who helped make that day possible.

Does Operation Holiday make a difference? Just ask the thousands of people who come to us for help. Know that you are part of a long chain of men and women who bring hope to others during the holidays. Thank you for caring, and may this be a season of great joy for you.



Pet food collection new to Operation Holiday this year

When Dr. Christen Skaer suggested including a pet food donation drive during Operation Holiday we all looked at each other with that "Why did we never think of this before?" expression.

It took us 55 years, but we are thrilled that this year we will have pet food available to Operation Holiday recipients.

"Pets are such an important part of families," said Dr. Skaer. "In the work the Sedgwick County Animal Response Team (SCART) does with Project Care we

provide low income people with free vaccinations for their pets. That's shown us how much people at any income level love and consider their animals a part of the family, and we want to make sure pets are well fed this year."

Donations of pet food, accessories and toys are accepted at Skaer Veterinary Clinic, 404 S. Edgemoor and at the Operation Holiday Distribution Center, 6225 E. Kellogg.

An additional fun fact: Gary Albin, who is a partner with Accident Recovery Team (ART), Operation Holiday's presenting sponsor, has been the person transferring donations from the Skaer Clinic to the Distribution Center. It's great to have sponsors who put some muscle behind their commitment.



KSN Operation Holiday telethon

Don't let our Board members just sit around tonight!

Tune in to KSN, Channel 3, Wednesday, December 9, for the Operation Holiday telethon.

One of our favorite Operation Holiday traditions, the telethon runs from 4 to 7 pm. Inter-Faith Ministries Board members and staff will be answering the phones to take pledges.

"The KSN Telethon is one of the ways we raise the \$350,000 we need for Operation Holiday," said IFM Board President Bonnie Toombs. "It's important to have the support of the entire community, and KSN donates their staff time, studio - and some wonderful air time to help get the word out."

Other events the past couple weeks have also helped with donations and visibility within the community. #Giving Tuesday, Stuff the Bus and Stuff the Truck all were great fun and kept Operation Holiday

in the news. In a three day period we doubled the number of food items we have at the Distribution Center. Even our peanut butter crisis was something the media got behind and helped with. Here are just a few pics from last week's Operation Holiday events.



Not too late to volunteer for Operation Holiday

When I was in elementary school 50 years ago I brought cans of food to the classroom to donate for Operation Holiday. Aside from my nickel that I put in the offering plate every Sunday at church, that was my first introduction to the importance and joy of service, donating and volunteering.

A few generations later, schoolchildren still do collection drives for Operation Holiday. They also can help at the Distribution Center this season.

We're still looking for a few good men, women and children to volunteer during Operation Holiday. One of the most important times is December 16, the day before distribution begins.

"That last day gets very busy as we work to be sure everything is ready and all the last minute donations are inventoried and set out," said VISTA fellow Kyle Gibson. Kyle is recruiting and scheduling all the volunteers this year.

To volunteer on December 16 or on other dates where we still have openings call Kyle at 316-264-9303 or email him at vista@interfaithwichita.org.

The Inn Crowd



About a year ago Anne Corrison suggested I start writing a column about life at Inter-Faith Inn. Such a great idea! "Write about the Inn," she urged. "What specifically?" I asked. "Anything you want!" she cheerfully replied.

Great advice, except it's so hard to pick one topic and stick to it when there's so many distractions.

Just the view from the office window can be interesting and time consuming. Sometimes it's important, like an altercation between two people waiting in line for tickets to the Warming Souls Winter Shelter, or a donor dropping off some much appreciated food or clothing. Sometimes it's just fun; the office is a great place to sit and watch wedding parties arrive, pose for photos and depart from St. Mary's Cathedral just across the street. My favorite event is coming up December 12 - I get a front row seat for the Parade of Our Lady of Guadalupe (photo above). Colorful costumes, elaborate headdresses, mariachi music and horses make it impossible to want to do any work.

When everything outside seems quiet I again turn my attention to the computer, but just as I start typing a resident asks if I have a minute - and of course I do.

Even more than talking with donors this is what I most enjoy. The Inn's residents

are a diverse population. Inter-Faith Inn is the only shelter in Wichita which admits single women, single men, couples *and* families.

Residents want to talk about their job searches, housing searches, frustrations, achievements, children, worries. They want to talk about other residents, other staff, "stupid" rules they think we should abolish, rules they think we need but don't have, do we know where they can get a pair of size 11 steel-toed boots, the third floor women's bathroom is stopped up again...the list is endless.

I applaud, commiserate, cheerlead, advise, rebuke, and sigh in frustration (of *course* you didn't get the job - you wore a hoodie *and* showed

up 30 minutes late!). I absolutely develop favorites, but I've also learned that quite often the ones who don't make an immediate impression are the ones who will end up being the most memorable.

It's impossible to talk with residents without thinking about the need for better job skills training, resume writing, interview techniques, parenting skills. It makes me think about other success stories and, too often, failures - and about the many different ways of measuring success. It makes me wonder about how to serve our population without solving perpetual budget problems and how the need for shelter always outstrips our capacity to provide it.

It already breaks my heart every time I have to turn away a family because we don't have room (and saying "we have no room at the Inn" this time of year has an added poignancy to it).

No one is ever going to mistake Inter-Faith Inn for the Ritz - or even for a Motel 6. There's broken furniture, ancient cookware, fitted sheets without elastic, and don't get me started on the repairs that are needed. But recently one resident hoping to be readmitted after a 10-day hospital stay said "I just want to come home." If home is "the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in" then she is home.

Marketing Coordinator Carolyn Kell works at Inter-Faith Inn on Saturdays - when she isn't busy watching parades.

Memorials and Sonorariums

In memory of Carole D. Nelson
In memory of George Rethorst
In memory of Verle Krehbiel
In memory of Claire Lorraine Colaw
In memory of Angie Stover
In memory of Vera Clem
In memory of John Eugene Price
In memory of John McLoughlin
In memory of Thelma Harlan-Bell
In memory of Eric Dutton
In memory of John W. Campbell
In memory of Gary Hamilton
In memory of Barney Schwan
In memory of Mark Hornberger
In memory of Keith Bishop
In memory of William E. Harrington

In honor of Anne Corrison
In honor of Bob Neace
In honor of Sally Dewey
In honor of Sue Ann and Paul Corn
In honor of Dr. Seth Schneider
In honor of Earlene Condiff
In honor of Eva Murphy
In honor of Don and Shirley Beggs
In honor of Jack Focht

Warming Souls Winter Shelter open through March 31

November 1 was the opening day of the Warming Souls Winter Shelter (WSWS). This seasonal shelter complements Inter-Faith's two year round shelters. The goal is to make sure everyone has a warm, safe, dry place to sleep during the coldest months of the year.

"The unseasonably warm weather so far this year means that we aren't yet seeing the numbers we had last year," said Anne Corrison, "but it's important for us to be able to provide this shelter; I just wish we had the funds and space to shelter everyone who needs it year round."

On Christmas Eve everyone is welcome to attend a special late night Mass at the Men's Winter Shelter, 841 N. Market. It will begin at 9:30 p.m. and will be celebrated by Father Jim Billinger of Holy Savior Catholic Church.

Basic Needs Pantry

Often when people come to one of our shelters they arrive with literally the clothes on their backs. Both out of necessity and to help residents conserve their resources, we provide toiletries, hygiene products and towels/washcloths for their use. That means we constantly need supplies of razors, anti-perspirant, shampoo, soap, lotion, combs/brushes and other items. Towels, socks, and single size sheet sets are also always welcome.

If your church, business or organization would like to conduct a "basic needs" drive please contact Kathleen Webb, 264-9303, kwebb@interfaithwichita.org.

Mark your calendars

U.N. Human Rights Day. 5:30 pm, Thursday, December 10. Gather at the east end of Douglas Avenue Bridge near Drury Plaza Hotel. Sponsored by People of Faith for Peace.

Homeless Persons Memorial Service. 7:30 pm, December 21, St. John's Episcopal Church, 402 N. Topeka. On the longest night of the year we remember and honor the homeless people who have died in the last year, whether it be from violence, exposure, or illness. Sponsored by Advocates to End Chronic Homelessness (AECH), this year's service will feature a message from Rabbi Michael Gilboa.

Mass at Men's Winter Shelter. 9:30 pm, Thursday, December 24, 841 N. Market. Father Jim Billinger will celebrate mass with winter shelter residents and anyone else who would like to attend.

Souper Bowl. 10:30-2:00, Friday, February 5. Join us the Friday before "The Other" Bowl for soup, provided by some of Wichita's finest restaurants, handcrafted bowls, desserts and great bread. One out of seven families in Wichita live in hunger. Souper Bowl is a fundraiser for Inter-Faith Ministries food programs and homeless shelters. Tickets are \$20 each; \$15 for seniors or groups of eight or more.

Final Friday, 5:30-8:30 pm, Friday, February 26, Art of Faith Gallery. Our first Final Friday of the year features artwork from St. Mark's Church of God in Christ. Plan to attend.

Faithlines is a monthly e-publication of Inter-Faith Ministries, 829 N. Market, Wichita, KS 67214. Please visit our website, interfaithwichita.org for more information about any of our programs.