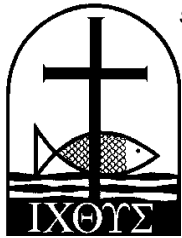


The mission of FISH Hospitality Program is to serve homeless women and families by providing shelter and meals, and such other assistance as we are able, in order to give them a new opportunity to live independently in their communities as respected families and individuals. FHP does assist and enable 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

- April 1, **Coordinator's Meeting** 7:30 pm
New Beginning Church of the Nazarene,
90 Jefferson Blvd., Edison N.J. 08817
- May 17, **Annual Yard Sale/Flea Market**
8:30 am until 3:30pm
St John's R.C. Church, Dunellen, N.J. 08812
Rain date May 24
- May 20, **FHP Board of Directors Meeting 7:30 pm**
Wesley United Methodist Church
1500 Plainfield Ave
South Plainfield N.J. 07080

Service Statistics

January 1, 2007 – December 31, 2007

Persons sheltered	60
Family units	28
Number of women sheltered	28
Number of men sheltered	2
Number of children sheltered	30
Bed nights provided	3,627
Average stay in program	79 days

Cumulative statistics since the program began in 1990

Persons sheltered	1,284
Family units sheltered	568
Number of women sheltered	562
Number of men sheltered	55
Number of children sheltered	667

In 2007 we received 568 calls for shelter. This represented 499 family units

VOLUNTEER VIEW

ONE FISH, TWO FISH, WE LOVE TO DO F.I.S.H

As I sit thinking about this article and my daughter's Girl Scout Troop's, experience volunteering as a FISH Hospitality host, I was not sure how to approach writing it. It should be meaningful, yes...but should it be humorous? Serious? Would I be able to convey how I feel about hosting? Then it came to me as I looked at all the holiday decorations and listened to the carols and music of the season, knowing that pretty soon it would all be gone and packed away until next year. I was especially touched by the Elvis Presley tune: "If Every Day was Like Christmas", a song I must have heard a million times and never really paid much attention to. The lyrics of the chorus sang out:

**"Oh why can't every day be like Christmas?
Why can't that feeling go on endlessly?
For if everyday could be just like Christmas,
What a wonderful world this would be".**

And that about sums up how I feel when I volunteer to host FISH Hospitality Program. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the feelings that you have in this special Holiday season did last all year? Well when I host, it is Christmas in July, or maybe Thanksgiving in October with all the trimmings. I "visit" with "friends" and pass on "cheer", "peace", and "the smile upon a tiny face" that I may see, "is worth more to me than anything". And in return, the gifts I receive are peace, love, grace and joy too.

Here are some of the Girl Scout's (ages 11-13) answers to "What makes hosting FISH great to you"?

- "I especially like it when there are babies."**
- "I love when there are kids our ages."**
- "When I set the tables and help serve dinner and make sure that the tables look nice for the guests."**
- "It's fun to talk with the guests and hear what's going on in their lives, what they like and don't like about school, etc."**
- "Planning a menu and helping to cook the meal is fun."**
- "I like when we are done eating and we can dance or play with each other."**

**Adriana Biedermann
Bound Brook Presbyterian Church**

FROM A FORMER GUEST

I never thought I would ever be homeless. I had a nice apartment and a steady job and just thought that everything was great. I would spend money like crazy, not thinking about emergencies or anything that might happen unexpectedly.

When I least expected it I lost my job and could not afford the rent. I was told that I had to move out in a month. I was very embarrassed and did not know what to do. A friend told me I could stay with her for a couple of weeks but she couldn't let me stay too long because there was not enough space for my two children. I was looking around for a place to go or someone who could help me but I was having a hard time, until I called FISH Hospitality Program. I had an interview with Susan and she told me I could come and stay there. I was relieved but at the same time I was scared because I did not know what to expect.

When I first went to FISH Hospitality I liked it right away. I received a bag with things I would need like soap, shampoo etc. Everyone was very friendly and made me feel welcome. I had my own private space and we all had our own beds. Every night all the guests would get together and eat dinner and the food was just great. There were also different activities for the kids which was great. The kids always had something fun and educational to do.

I received help with finding a job and help with everything that I needed. We got the newspaper every morning to look for jobs and also we had access to a fax machine and anything else that I needed to help with the search. With everyone's help and support I found a job and started working after being in the program for two months.

After I started working I found a small apartment and was able to move in. It was very exciting to finally be able to move on my own. I made sure that I started making the right decisions about money. I've started thinking about the future. I kept the job for sixteen months then got a better job. I now work at a bank and have recently moved into a bigger apartment. We are doing great!

I am thankful I found people that helped me through this difficult time in my life. I don't think I would have made it without everyone's help. I learned something different from everyone there.

Thank you for all the help. I really appreciate everything you have done and I will continue to strive and do better.

GUEST'S QUOTES

"the volunteers help all the time with your needs"

" the volunteers were very hospitable. Most went out of their way to make my family comfortable. Also they must genuinely have a caring spirit"

"even though I never saw who moved our bags each week they (volunteers) made sure our bags met us at each new church intact and before our arrival"

"the meals were very good. Every church took into consideration the like/dislikes and needs of my family. Since I do not eat beef or pork the effort was made each meal to allow for variety. Even if a separate dish had to be made"

"the majority of the churches were very nice. They made our accommodations as homey as possible. Also each church took into consideration our family size and ages of children when setting up rooms"

"becoming homeless is difficult for anyone. The process of looking for shelter was hard. But when I contacted FISH Hospitality they were prompt in returning my call and once I was accepted they made the transition a lot easier than anticipated. Every week was easier because of the friendliness and kindness of all staff. I am grateful for this program accepting my family in our time of need"

"the living accommodations were very good but it's just a little tiring moving so much. When you get comfortable it's time to move"

"meals were just right and you always got your veggies!"

"I've achieved everything I set out for – looking for a brighter future"

"I didn't think I would make friends (with the other guests)... I found a family"

GUEST SUCCESSES

Claudia moved into rented rooms

CiCi also moved into rented rooms

Mona moved into transitional housing

HELP FOR THE HOMELESS

The following devotion was taken from The Secret Place: Devotions for Daily Worship Fall 2007. This is published by the American Baptist Churches of the USA. To subscribe to this publication call 800-458-3766 or e-mail sales@judsonpress.com

Thought for today: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Psalm 23:1

I was recently in a Sunday School class with a group of homeless folks from the streets of our city. The teacher asked the group to paraphrase Psalm 23 into language that everyone there could understand and relate to. Following is a translation that came from that experience:

The Lord is my homeless shelter manager.
He provides for my needs.
He gives me a mattress for the night.
He provides breakfast in the morning.
He gives me peace again.
He shows me how to be sinless so I can honor Him.
Even when I am in danger of being killed,
I am not afraid because you are with me.
Your ways comfort me.
You make it right with me in the midst of those who hate me.
You take care of me when my enemies surround me.
You accept me abundantly.
Every good thing will follow me all of my life,
And later I will be in heaven with you

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for helping us interpret your message in a way that makes it meaningful for our experiences. We want to follow you all of our lives. Amen.

Marshall Schirer-Wichita, Kansas

WISH LIST

New bed pillows, women's deodorant, laundry detergent, Lysol disinfectant spray, Purell hand sanitizer (handbag size)

THANKS TO...

Rose of Sharon Community Church and Rev. LaVerne Ball for hosting the annual Children's Christmas Party, Sharon Hunt and Claudine Lewis for coordinating the party, and all the many wonderful volunteers and donors of gifts and food. The volunteers from Rose of Sharon did an amazing job making a delicious meal, setting up a wonderful Santa Village and entertaining and making our families feel at home.

Middlesex Pathmark, our lady of Fatima, Arbor Elementary School, Dunellen and Green Brook Girl Scouts, Middlesex High school, Maugher Middle School and Our Lady of Mount Virgin for donating Christmas gifts given out at the party.

Liz Crystal, Sandy Carabella, and students from Piscataway High School for sorting all the Christmas gifts. What a task!

Kathy Steiner for organizing the party.

The many wonderful volunteers who contributed in many ways to make the party a success.

Bound Brook Presbyterian Church, Trinity Episcopal of Woodbridge, Woodbridge United Methodist Church, Cablevision and Jamie Zagata who helped make Christmas special for FHP guests.

Our Lady of Mount Virgin and Sister James Xavier for inviting FHP to their Ecumenical Prayer Service, and for inviting us to present the program during the refreshment time. Thank you also for the donation of the offering to FHP.

Girl Scout Troops 317, No. Plainfield; 139 Middlesex; 118 Middlesex; 34 North Plainfield who prepared and served dinner to our guests during the past few months.

Brett the Amazing and his puppet Maurice who entertained the children at Christ United Methodist Church.

YARD SALE / FLEA MARKET

**Saturday May 17 St. John's RC Church,
Dunellen, NJ
8:30am until 3:30pm
(rain date Saturday May 24)**

CALLING ALL VENDORS AND VOLUNTEERS

**Table Space \$20.00 Van Space \$25.00
(Vendors arrive 7:45 am)
Donations for the FHP table can be
delivered to St. John's on Friday, May 16
from 4:00pm to 6:30pm.
Volunteers are needed for set-up and clean-
up, also to sell items at FHP table. Please
call the Office (732-968-5957) to tell us how
YOU will help in this fund-raising event !!**