



May 2011

The FreeStore Story

Like Father, Like Son?

By Terry Swanson

One Sunday morning not long ago, a woman who helps with FreeStore Saturday deliveries, stopped me at church. She said she was hoping to see me because she wanted to share something that had happened on the previous day's delivery.

A family they were serving included a single mother with a 17-year old son and two younger girls. While the FreeStore crew was moving furniture and items, the younger kids were helping and very excited. But the older boy didn't offer to help at all. Instead, he was on his cell phone, looking angry and sullen. My friend and the other volunteers could hear his conversation and were upset.

They heard things like, "You'll be sorry if you do." "I'll come over there and slap you silly." "You know I mean it, too."

They didn't know what to do. Would you? Such a scary scenario. Do you recognize the pattern being repeated. At a loss, about what to do, our volunteers did nothing, which was the correct behavior though they didn't know it at the time.

Then they told me about it. I didn't know what to do either but later my husband had a conversation with Shirley Davis who is the CFI Domestic Abuse Services liaison to the DSM police.

She said it was just as well no one confronted the young man. When challenged or confronted, abusers often transfer their anger to person doing the confronting. (We also told the family's shelter advocate who was going to follow up on it.)

What a terrible position for our volunteers to be in. Even more terrible is the pattern they saw. The young man was handling a problem the only

way he knew how—with violence: Like father, like son.

We FreeStore volunteers are not trained to confront abusers. That's for the professionals. But we do have a charge and that is to help families who have escaped from abusive situations and to spread the facts about domestic abuse and about just how pervasive and ugly it is.

And with the continued support of folks like you, we will continue that work.

Two very sad statistics we know are

- **Of all** juvenile and adult criminals, 80% lived in domestically violent environments
- **Boys** who witness domestic violence are **twice as likely** to abuse their own partners.

We must keep working together to defeat this awful plague. Thanks for helping!

A Decade of Service

Doesn't seem possible does it that the FreeStore is in its 10th year. It was sometime in 2001 that Jim Brown was doing some painting at the Family Violence Center. When he asked the director how many women were in the shelter. She answered that it was full and there was a waiting list. One of the reasons was that even when women were ready to leave with apartments and jobs, they often didn't have anything to put in their apartments, especially beds or kitchen ware.

The idea was born: spread the word to friends and collect their used furniture and give it to the women who were ready to leave the shelter. The FreeStore became a reality.

Look back to 2001. That first year we served seven families. In the beginning we

worked out of a garage-sized storage rental. We used our own vehicles to pick up furniture but the families were responsible for moving their selections. Three men did it all. They picked up furniture, straightened the storage area, and met clients.

Fast forward to 2005. The FreeStore becomes a 501c3 designated charity. We serve 83 families and have about 30 volunteers. Principal Financial Group offers us 700 E 4th St warehouse rent-free. They tell us we can use it until it's torn down in three or four years.

Fast forward to 2011. This year we have almost 100 different people involved in FreeStore work—75 who work regularly. Last year we served over 200 families.

During the first quarter of this year we've served 64 fami-

lies. We have two trucks. We are able to use them to pick up donations and to move furniture for domestic violence clients. We now service domestic violence victims in Adel, Boone, and Ames as well as Des Moines. We have lots of inventory and, for a small fee to their sponsors, are able to offer furniture and items to other needy families.

Principal tells us the warehouse is going to be torn down in June. Wow! How grateful we are to them for, not four, but five years of free warehouse space.

By the time you, dear supporters, read this we will have found new space and be ready to start the next phase of our service to the Des Moines community.

We'll keep you posted!

Fill the Mayflower

with dressers, kitchen tables/chairs, kitchenware, microwaves; coffee pots, toasters, pots and pans, etc.

May 13: 4-7PM May 14: 8AM-4PM

Valley West Mall

BBQ Dinner May 13

Raffle May 14: handmade quilt 42" TV iPad

More information at www.thefreestore.org