



Nov. 2011



The FreeStore Story

A Learning Experience

By Jeanie Smith

In the months since I became Board Chair of the FreeStore, I have learned a lot about domestic violence. Much of this has come from meetings of the Domestic Abuse Coordinating Council (DACC), which is a monthly meeting of representatives of the various agencies that serve and protect victims of domestic violence.

What I have learned is that the people we serve have come a long, long way before we ever see them. Many of them have endured years of domestic abuse before they found the courage – and it does take courage – to break away. Many of them would have continued to endure the abuse longer if the abuse were directed only at themselves. What gives them the courage to break away is their fear for their children. I am filled with admiration for their courage!

When we meet our clients, they have already broken from their pasts, found shelter, re-

ceived counseling, beefed up their job skills, sought and found jobs, secured a relatively low-cost housing solution. Frequently, these steps have been accompanied by multiple trips to the police, to courts. Maybe they have reconciled with their abusive partners, only to be abused once again and have to repeat the cycle.

Our services to these clients are on the back-end, but I can tell you that what we do is vital to our clients' chances truly to begin new lives. Were it not for the generosity of the FreeStore donors and volunteers, our clients would not have the ability to stay free of their abusive situations for good. Think about it: If you have a place to stay with friends or relatives, that scenario can work for a while. But you can't complete your journey to independence that is so critical to building your self-esteem and to emerging from an abusive situation suc-

cessfully and permanently until you are on your own. At some point, you need your own home. If you have a place that's your own, but you can't afford to furnish it, the likelihood that you'll stay independent is pretty low. What we do for our clients gives them exactly what they need at this stage of building new lives!

Over and over again, I have had the representatives of the agencies in DACC tell me how critical our services are. We have watched and felt the gratitude of our clients. Occasionally, we'll meet a former client in a store. We don't recognize her, but she always recognizes us.

In this season of Thanksgiving, we on the Board of the FreeStore are thankful to you, our donors and volunteers. We are also thankful for our clients, who daily teach us about courage, about starting over, about the joy of giving

FreeStore Update

By Terry Swanson

Did you notice the picture on the FreeStore Story masthead? It's our new warehouse.

Before I tell you about the new warehouse, we at the FreeStore want to say, "Thanks." to Principal Financial Group for providing us with free warehouse space for these past five years. It was a wonderful opportunity for the FreeStore to grow and expand. We are grateful for their generosity.

Though we had over 8000 square feet worth of furniture to move, it only took three weeks to move and arrange the new warehouse. It took lots of people and resources to make such a big move look so easy: Our first thanks go to The Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines for the

grant that allowed us to update the warehouse so it was useable for our needs. Then we must give thanks to Two Men and A Truck for men and trucks to move most of the large items. And finally we send thanks to all those volunteers that gave many hours in this year's terrible June heat. You are the greatest!

Even with the moving hiatus, we've served 161 families though Sept. 30th and will surely reach over 200 by the end of the year. Last year at this time we had served 152 families with a total of 210 for the year. The 161 families so far this year included 183 adults and 230 children. That's 413 people who have beds because of your kind gifts and support.

Our referring agencies tell us it's still difficult for poor families to find low-cost housing. This is especially true for abused women who often carry the bad credit their husbands incurred.

The 161 families includes 108 referrals from domestic abuse shelters and 53 referrals from 26 other Des Moines area agencies. Each family took over 1500 lbs. of items, some of which would surely have ended up in a landfill.

The wise man does not lay up his own treasures. The more he gives to others, the more he has for his own.

Lao Tzu

