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Script for Interfaith Hospitality Network fundraising video  
IHN: A Place of Comfort for Families

Home... A place where you and your loved ones feel protected, where you can relax... celebrate birthdays and special days together... your own haven in a world that all too often doesn't seem to care.

Without a home, life is tough. Homelessness hurts. Just ask any of the nearly three and a half million people who are homeless across the country.

Or listen to one of the 2500 families here in Cincinnati who lack a regular and adequate place to call home.

[Comment from client about the hardships of being homeless]

... And homelessness hurts no one more than children.

In fact, families with children are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population in the Cincinnati area.

Think about how hard it would be to concentrate on school if you weren't sure where you would be sleeping that night ... or the next night. And certainly not the night after *that*.

Homeless people are a lot like you and I. They might have had a run of bad luck, lost a job, faced a crushing hospital bill, or some other overwhelming problem.

[One family talks about how they became homeless]

That's where the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Greater Cincinnati comes in. IHN is a unique approach that offers shelter and support for our neighbors... Goodhearted volunteers from the religious community combined with professionals who work to reintegrate the families into the community.

IHN fills an important niche among shelters for homeless people in Cincinnati. Of the more than 30 shelters in Cincinnati, the Interfaith Hospitality Network is one of ONLY TWO shelters that will house two-parent families, single fathers, and families with teenage boys.

And not only do we serve people who don't get services elsewhere, we do it cost efficiently. This is not just a feel-good, wouldn't it be nice program.

Because we draw on the resources of area religious congregations, we provide shelter for half the cost of traditional shelters. For every dollar of operating expenses we incur, we get 65 cents worth of services – meals and lodging – donated.

Just what makes a church or synagogue or mosque offer to be a host for homeless families?

[Congregation member/official speaks]

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Here's what it involves: the host congregation provides:

- Three meals a day
- Private sleeping space, and
- Volunteers who make the guests feel at home.

Currently, some 21 congregations host families in the Cincinnati area.

Some congregations want to help but don't have the facilities. But they can still do their part. These "support congregations" help by donating meals and volunteers to the host congregations.

Today, more than 33 area synagogues, mosques and churches have stepped forward to support the families.

[Representative of support congregation talks about what it has meant to his/her congregation.]

What's a typical stay like for the guests?

They arrive at the host congregation in time for a hot dinner that volunteers have cooked. They spend the evening visiting, doing homework, crafts, or enjoying entertainment provided by volunteers. It could be a sing-a-long, a magic show, a simple conversation.

Then each family retires to its private sleeping space for the night.

They wake up bright and early, eat breakfast, grab their bag lunches, and get ready to board the IHN bus.

During the day the IHN bus transports families to appointments, interviews and day care. It takes guests to the host congregation every evening at 5 p.m., then back to the Day Center every morning at 6:30 a.m.

The Greater Cincinnati Foundation realized the importance of IHN as a community asset and funded a new bus in 2005 to replace the 20-year-old one. The bus takes people to appointments, interviews and day care.

At the Day Center, people take part in adult education classes. They can also use the kitchen, the laundry and take a shower ... small things that seem like luxuries when you don't have a home. The Day Center also gives them a mailing address and telephone number.

At the Day Center, case managers focus on helping families find and keep permanent housing. Here they learn about setting priorities in searching for work and housing. The

adults have a better chance of concentrating on their job and housing search since they know their children will have a roof over their heads through IHN.

So, what's the bottom line?

In 2004, we served 88 families and 276 individuals. All told, that meant 18,336 meals and a total of 6,112 shelter nights. More than two-thirds of our guests were children.

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The families stayed an average of 22.1 days. Most families move into rental housing after IHN. Some go into transitional housing programs run by other nonprofits. Some move in temporarily with families and friends. A few go to other shelters.

IHN has proven itself to be remarkably effective. In the past five years, somewhere between 60% and 90% of the families served by IHN have found stable housing. Only 6% of the families that have come through IHN returned to emergency shelters in the Cincinnati area.

Positive figures, no doubt about it. But the *real* return on investment comes from hearing first-hand what it's meant to have neighborly help when it was desperately needed.

[Family/child talks about the value of IHN]

What can YOU do to help? Quite a lot, actually.

- Become part of this successful program that makes a huge difference to our neighbors in need.
- Encourage your congregation to become a host or support congregation.
- Volunteer at the Day Center or at a congregation working with IHN, or
- Donate money or in-kind supplies to the effort.

Volunteers are the key – people who give of their time and their checkbooks. For more information, go to [www.ihncincinnati.org](http://www.ihncincinnati.org)

Find a meaningful return on *your* investment – become part of the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Greater Cincinnati.