



INTERFAITH
Family
Shelter

Summer 2024 Newsletter

Uniting in service to families,
with children, facing homelessness

June 2024

From Our Executive Director:

Dear Friends of Interfaith,

It all started with a plate of cookies. Sixteen years ago, my neighbor Jonylan Woolf came across the alley and into our kitchen with a plate of cookies and a request: "Would you be willing to get more information about a Board for a small local nonprofit?" I had never heard about this organization: the **Interfaith Family Shelter**. But I had also recently served on and stepped down from two other boards, so I decided to explore this opportunity a little more.



For the next nine years, I served on the Board of the Interfaith Family Shelter, and even held the position of its President. When the position of Executive Director opened up almost eight years ago, I was on the hiring team for the agency's leader. Holding a draft of the job description in hand, I turned to my wife, Mary Helen, and asked if we knew anyone who would be a good fit for this description. Her response was classic: "Have you looked in the mirror lately?"

After 25 years as a high-school and middle-school principal, I was open to a career change. Fast-forward seven years, and I can say that it has been the best decision of my working career. I have met so many great people, learned so much, and was able to help people who were experiencing some of the worst days of their lives. Even better, I know that this agency will continue far into the future, helping families with children experiencing homelessness. What better work can one do?

Executive Director

Meet our new ED

The Interfaith Family Shelter is excited to welcome **Lynsey Gagnon** as our brand-new Executive Director later this summer!



Lynsey brings a wealth of experience and leadership to this role, including her terms as Executive Director of Community Resource Centers at *Volunteers of America Western Washington*—a position that she has held since February, 2020—and Manager of Impact Integration at *United Way of Snohomish County*.

A former finalist for the Snohomish County Emerging Leader (Top 12 in 2021 & 2022), Lynsey has also coordinated programs and projects that directly benefit vulnerable and low-income individuals, including Project Homeless Connect and the Free Tax Preparation Program.

A warm welcome to Lynsey Gagnon as Interfaith's incoming Executive Director!

Learn more about our programs and support Interfaith with a gift or in-kind donation.

Visit: www.interfaithwa.org



SCAN ME

: InterfaithFamilyShelter

: @FamilyShelterWA

: Interfaith.Family.Shelter

RAPID RE-HOUSING helps families sustain permanent housing!

Jul 2021— Jun 22

68 families
(235 individuals)



Jul 2022— Jun 23

78 families
(260 individuals)



Jul 2023— May 24

69 families
(226 individuals)



A Vision and a Legacy: Celebrating Jim Dean

Jim Dean's life is exemplified by meaningful purpose, cultivating the very best in others, and keen resourcefulness—all balanced by a comforting sense of humor. "Service is my love language," he shares. "I love to help people. My mission has always been to enable them to reach their full potential." This tenet has guided his career: for several years as a school principal, and most recently as Interfaith's Executive Director since 2018. Under Jim's leadership, this organization has blossomed from a single shelter for 11 families into several efficient, innovative, and cost-effective programs. The Interfaith Family Shelter has expanded its impact and reach to thrice that original number.

This is a testament to Jim's vision, and it is the legacy that he leaves as he prepares for a well-deserved retirement. There's a lot to be proud of, but Jim points to "purchasing the Family Shelter site" as his biggest achievement. "I am proud that Interfaith's future is much more stable than it was seven years ago." He pauses and adds, "I am also proud of each family that moves from homelessness into their own next home. That's what the work is all about." Indeed, Jim's efforts over the years include everything from planning operating budgets, to helping a capital campaign, and even fixing broken plumbing at our shelter locations. He has built strong faith and community partnerships, mentored staff to excel, and strived to bring Interfaith ever closer to its vision: "that no child sleep outside tonight in Snohomish County," he says. "This drives my push to increase capacity and help even more families. Although we are not there yet, we are closer to this vision today," he concludes. Jim's future plans reflect this continuing passion to serve. "I've trained to become a Spiritual Director in the Ignatian Tradition, and will apply this to help people become all that they can be. I will also be involved in getting the right people elected to help our community be all it can be." With a twinkle in his eyes, he adds, "I guess I will probably only stop when I can't move anymore." Happy trails, Jim!



Jim Dean steps down as Executive Director at the end of July, 2024.

Volunteer Spotlight: Tom Poe

Tom Poe is a former electrician and close friend of another super volunteer, Earl Shafer. Besides his skill at general facilities maintenance, one of Tom's retirement hobbies has saved the Interfaith Family Shelter thousands of dollars. Tom regularly scans online sites where municipal agencies post surplus items for auction, and then reaches out to Interfaith about products or appliances that our shelter locations might need. One such valuable find was a **6' x 6' commercial refrigerator** that costs about \$4,000 as a new appliance. However, under Tom's guidance, we secured it at the highest bid of just **\$700!** This very same appliance now resides in our kitchen and serves the needs of eight families.



Just this past month, one of our dishwashers was giving residents problems: it never quite worked right and sometimes leaked, mostly because of long-standing issues to get someone to come in and service the appliance. We had even offered well over its original price for service calls and parts, but to no avail. Then Tom came to the rescue! Somehow, he located a one-year-old **under counter commercial dishwasher** up for auction in Poulsbo. The local Fire Department was renovating their facility and this appliance—plus \$600 worth of chemicals—was up for auction. Not only did Tom secure the winning bid for just **\$450**; he even picked it up from Poulsbo and delivered it to the shelter! Within 24 hours, he and Earl had it installed and running.

Tom's resourcefulness, thriftiness, and (most of all) his big heart continue to inspire us and the families that we serve. Thank you so much, Tom, for all that you do!

Make a gift or volunteer at Interfaith! Contact us to get started.



Interfaith Association of NW Washington

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