

MIC

MISSOULA
INTERFAITH
COLLABORATIVE



Bridging Faith Communities & Social Organizations

September 2016

From the Desk of Casey Dunning, Executive Director

Building Bridges for Action:



In March of this year, MIC and Family Promise came to together for the sake of serving our homeless families better and multiplying the impact of our congregations in serving the community.

A lot has happened since March. Family Promise has become a part of a community-wide effort to address the critical issue of Family Homelessness in Missoula. Amazing organizations such as YWCA, Mountain Home, WORD, Missoula County Public Schools, 10-yr Plan to End Homelessness, First Presbyterian Church, St Francis Xavier Parish and First United Methodist Church have been working together to create a collaborative solution: if a family loses their housing, they will have a place to go that very night and also the support needed to get back on their feet. Together, these organizations have created a new model that will do just that. It will require significant leadership and continued service from our congregations. The crucial question before our Family Promise congregations is whether or not we should change our current Hosting Model. Currently, our congregations host four families at a time in our own buildings. The proposal is to continue our hosting role as congregations, yet do it in one central building that is able to house 20 families at a time.

This conversation and discernment has been deep and rich among our Coordinators, Clergy Members and Volunteers. I've been amazed at the lively engagement and the focus of concern. The first concern is what is best for the families and the community and the second concern is whether this is feasible and what it will take to put in place.

After three meetings with Coordinators, one with Clergy Members, and working with coordinators to engage volunteers in all 28 of our Family Promise congregations, our Coordinators have shown strong support for moving to a "Central Hosting Model". In October, we will bring everyone together (Coordinators and Clergy Members) and if the path is clear, we will move forward with a specific plan to create adequate Family Housing and Shelter in Missoula.

I have to say, regardless of the results, my breath is taken when I reflect on how amazing it is to be a part of this inspiring network moving toward a worthy vision to care for families in our community.

Family Promise/HAN Update:

We are moving into fall with many stories of summer blessing. Four of our families were able to transition into housing during the summer! We've had three new partners join the mission of offering hospitality to homeless families in the last month! **Christian Life Center** will now be working with **Clark Fork City Church** to Host families at Clark Fork City Church! Also, **ERA Lambros Real Estate** has just become our second Business Support Partner! They will be cooking and hosting meals two evenings every quarter. Thank you for stepping up as a leader for homeless families in our community!

Coming Up



No Room at the Inn

Save the Date!

Dec 9 -11th, 2016

How to Participate:

**Submit a new or special
crèche for display!!**

and

**Donate raffle & auction
items by contacting**

Sr Mary Jo at

maryjo@blessedtrinitymissoula.org

Plan to:

**Attend The Gala, View
the Crèches, Enjoy
Musical Entertainment,
and much more!**

For more information call: 207-8228
missoulacollaborative@gmail.com

Donate Today!

Help us to continue the work!

Mail a check to:
Missoula Interfaith Collaborative,
202 Brooks, Missoula MT 59801

Donate online at:
<http://bit.ly/MICDonation>

You will receive a tax receipt for you generosity.





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Stories of Action:



Kay Robinson moved back to Missoula after 30 years away in the Flathead. She and her husband, Mike, were looking for a meaningful ministry. They found Family Promise. Kay and Mike have been investing hours each week working directly with our Family Promise families as Advocates, assisting them in finding housing, jobs, working on budgeting etc. Last weekend, Kay stood before her congregation, First Lutheran Church, to share her experience working with a mother of an 11

month old daughter who has known only homelessness. Kay's commitment to and love for that mother and child could be felt around the room. When we share our commitment to living our faith in such tangible ways, we can't help but inspire others to do the same!

Back to School Bash

Back to School Bash is a collaborative venture among Salvation Army, United Way and MIC to equip Missoula families with necessary backpacks and tools for school! This year marked the second year for this event and here is what happened...

- Over 2000 people served
- 912 backpacks given out
- 425 meals (Chicken Pita's) served by Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church
- 2,500 books distributed from a book drive spearheaded by Holy Spirit Episcopal Church
- Gary Turbeck Memorial Clothing, run by St. Paul Lutheran was out of clothes long before this event's end, because these quality clothes were in such demand.

**Please see the insert for Notes on the Book Drive from Lucia Solorzano Work of Holy Spirit Episcopal Church*



Learn how you can volunteer today! Visit our website at www.micmt.org for more information.



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Building Leaders:

In early August, I gathered with 15 of our Clergy Members as they shared their hopes and dreams for their congregations. I wish each of you could have been a fly on the wall! Many of our Clergy Members have been gathering to form a "Learning Community". They realize that:

- A) Complex challenges like family homelessness need strong leadership from our congregations and
- B) Younger generations who see less and less relevance in attending religious services, deeply value being involved in meaningful service and justice work in the community.

Thus, for the sake of our community and the vitality of our congregations, we are learning to adapt and transform our congregations to become more outwardly focused and engaged in the social issues that matter most.

An excerpt from a book (*Canoeing The Mountains-Ted Bolsinger*) that our Clergy Members are reading together:

"Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery reached the headwaters of the Missouri River in their canoes, expecting to portage to the headwaters of the Columbia. At the crest of Lemhi Pass Lewis and Clark expected to see the final stage of 'The most direct and practicable water communication across this continent...' but instead gaped at the Rocky Mountains, snow-capped, formidable, daunting and totally unexpected. At this point the Corps had to choose: Go forward, not knowing, across 340 miles of uncharted mountainous terrain or turn around. Their canoes that had served them so well on what they thought was their 'voyage of discovery' were now useless. They ditched their canoes and boldly continued their journey on horseback, adapting to the new situation through transformational leadership."

The book goes on to say that Transformational Leadership invites those who are bold to reframe the current pressure on our congregations as an opportunity to collaborate, to experiment, to fail, to evaluate, to move forward without our canoes to the next phase of connecting with God in the work of the Kingdom.

I am looking forward to being on this journey with our Clergy Members! I will keep you updated along the way!



Learn how you can volunteer today! Visit our website at www.micmt.org for more information.



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Continued from Back to School Bash:

Back to School Bash Book Drive:

I wish that each of you could have been Charlotte, the spider in E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, quietly observing the action as children and their parents selected books during this year's Back-to-School BASH. The one word Charlotte would have woven to describe the event is "joyful."

Thanks go to members of six MIC congregations that donated new and gently used books to the BASH, which provides backpacks stuffed with school supplies to K-12 students referred by various local social service agencies. The six participating churches were The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, First Christian Church, First Presbyterian Church, First United Methodist Church (especially its Vacation Bible School attendees), Holy Spirit Episcopal Church and St. Paul Lutheran Church.

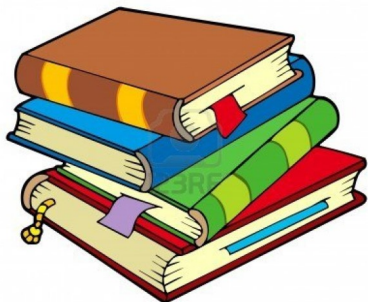


The book drive was a remarkable and humbling journey. Local author Sneed B. Collard III donated 800 new books for the event. Our book-drive team also received donations from the Missoula County Public Schools, Fact & Fiction, The Book Exchange, the Missoula Public Library, John Rimel of Mountain Press, and many other generous community members who simply believed that all kids deserve good books. Not counting the 800 books provided by Collard, we collected more than 1,700 books from the community! That allowed us to offer more than 2,500 books to the participating students and their families.

Because so many people provided books to serve so many reading levels and interests, Holy Spirit volunteers helping at the event could satisfy a wide range of wishes:

- The young boy, around 8, who staggered and grinned under the weight of a huge book about dinosaurs.
- The young mother with a sleeping infant in her arms who left with her first board books.
- The mother wanting something with detailed pictures but limited text for her 17-year-old autistic son. The big book of mythology was perfect!
- The teenage lover of autobiographies who beamed as she walked out with Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk To Freedom*.
- The sister searching through picture books to find bright colors and expressive faces to entertain her disabled brother.
- The countless kids of all ages who left with "cool" books about volcanoes, pirates, horses and the child wizard, Harry Potter.

Because of everyone who made this important event possible, the love of good reading and the power it has to brighten lives and bring hope were palpable at the Back-to-School BASH. We hope that the congregations that participated this year will want to do so again next year and that other MIC congregations will want to join us. Thank you!



Lucia Solorzano Work,
Book Drive Chair,
Holy Spirit Episcopal Church

Learn how you can volunteer today! Visit our website at www.micmt.org for more information.