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# The FreeStore



Annual Report  
2006

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## Mission Statement

The FreeStore is organized to support children and families who have escaped abusive situations. The FreeStore picks up household goods donated by members of the community and gives them (at no cost) to clients of the Children and Families of Iowa Family Violence Center as they move from the Center and begin new independent, productive lives in a safe environment.

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# The FreeStore Annual Report 2006

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## The FreeStore Board



Jim Brown  
Terry Swanson

Earl Llemke

Larry Anderson  
Bev Blaha

The FreeStore Board is a working board. Each member is involved in one or more of the activities that make the FreeStore run smoothly. Jim Brown and Earl Lemke pick up donations, Larry Anderson meets clients when they come to the FreeStore to get goods, Bev Blaha spends many hours marking and sorting linens, and Terry Swanson is responsible for public relations and fund raising.

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## Message from the chairman

Since 2006 was the first full year of operation of the FreeStore as an independent entity, it began with some uncertainty. We had a vision of big things, but could not have anticipated how much change would occur. In a few short months we received a truck that allowed us to help clients move furniture to their new apartment. Many women can't afford to rent a truck and they don't have a support group they can tap to get help. Our small moving van also allowed us collect more goods so we had enough items to give to clients.

Everyone who helps a client move has seen children sleeping on the floor or their own clothes until we are able to provide furniture. They sleep on their clothes to make the floor softer, and as one mother told me, "we don't have a dresser to put them in anyway."

A grant request led Principal Financial Group to offer warehouse space which allows us to take larger donations and help even more clients. Within three months we received what our strategic plan anticipated would take two years. Within a few more months we had also exceeded the capacity of our new warehouse.

Our growing cadre of volunteers proved their dedication to our mission by helping 177 clients to select and move goods from the FreeStore. This was more than twice the families we helped in 2005. More victims have heard of our services, and women realize we can provide enough help to overcome the financial barrier in starting over.

As we move into 2007 we realize that we can't just feel good about how we have grown. Instead, we need to look at what other opportunities we can identify to help even more children and their families to start over.

The FreeStore is a furniture bank. There are at least 43 furniture banks in the nation. We have a challenge to meet the needs of more people in Des Moines by recycling the furniture and household goods that are no longer needed by our growing group of donors. As we grow we look for more volunteers. We also need a base of continuous financial support. We hope you will look over this report and decide that you would like to become a regular part of our dream to help more and more children and families to get out of a cycle of domestic violence or poverty and regain their full measure of self esteem and happiness.

Jim Brown

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# About the FreeStore in 2006

## Background

In 2001, the director of Children and Families of Iowa Family Violence Center (FVC) told Jim Brown the shelter had a backlog of women waiting to come into the shelter. One problem was that though some women were ready to leave the shelter, even had jobs and apartments, they could not leave because they had no furnishings for their apartments. Jim and two other men from St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in West Des Moines decided they could collect and store enough used household goods to help women get started furnishing their apartments. The idea of the FreeStore was born!

The next few years saw the FreeStore grow in activity: more helpers, more donations, more clients as members of the greater Des Moines community began to recognize the worth while work being done. The process was simple: spread the word that FreeStore volunteers would come to your home and pick up (good) used furniture, and store it in a warehouse until a woman leaving the shelter chooses it to help furnish her new, safe home. During this time the women were mostly responsible for finding help to move their selections. This was often a hardship on them, but at the time the FreeStore had no resources to help them move. Two Men and a Truck offered one afternoon a month to help and that was a godsend for women who had no local help.

Finally in 2005, the FreeStore, became an independent 501c 3 charity with a mission to help women and their children as they left the FVC.

## How the FreeStore Works

### The process for incoming goods

1. Donor contacts 225-2020, where we have a voice mailbox, contacts a volunteer directly, or drops off the donation at St. Timothy's or the warehouse (by appt.)
2. A volunteer makes arrangements to pick up the donation and gets it to the FreeStore warehouse.

### The process for outgoing goods

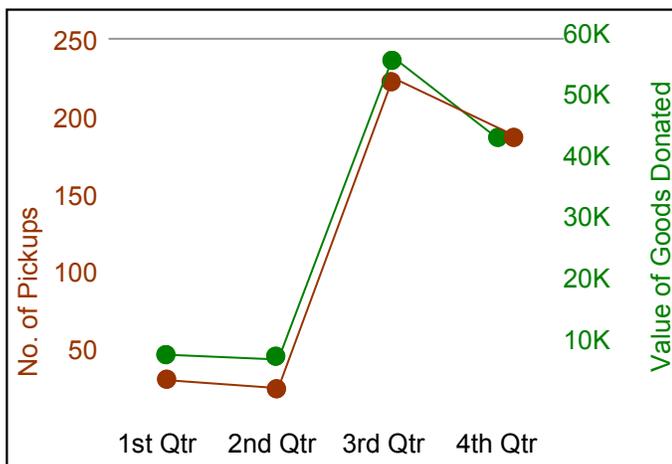
1. When a woman is ready to leave the shelter, her advocate sends a fax to St. Timothy's with her name, phone number and if she needs help with her move. (Two Men and a Truck is available to help one client a month).
2. The church secretary contacts the greeter on duty who contacts the client and arranges whatever help she needs for her move.
3. The client takes whatever is available that meets her needs.
4. If the client needs help moving, the FreeStore truck and driver are available to her and her helpers, or if she needs them, FreeStore volunteers will help her move.

## 2006—a year of growth

2006 started as usual for the FreeStore. In the beginning of the year, the activity level was much like 2005. That is we had one or two furniture pickups each week and served an average of two clients each week. About March, though, we saw the beginning of growth. Three incidents that would make drastic changes in the FreeStore took place:

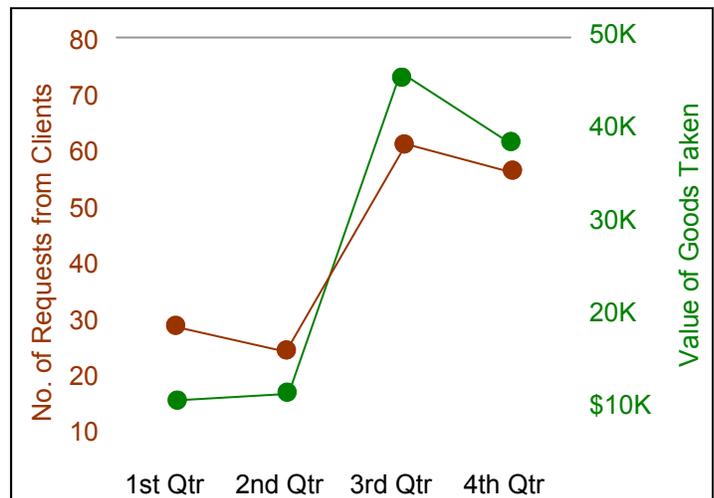
- ◆ A generous supporter heard our plea about not being able to help women move and gave us a truck!
- ◆ Principal Financial Group gave us warehouse space that was twice what we had before; all we had to pay were utilities.
- ◆ An article in the DSM Register introduced our work to the whole metropolitan area

The article resulted in an outpouring of donations, the likes of which we'd never seen. Fortunately for us, the new warehouse had plenty of room. Amazingly as the number of donations grew, so did the number of clients and the number of volunteers. Since we now had a truck and were able to help clients move, clients were taking more goods.



**Number and Value of 2006 Pick Ups**

(Items were valued at Salvation Army Thrift Store prices)



**Number of Requests by Clients**

**Value of Goods Given to Clients**

(Items were valued at Salvation Army Thrift Store prices)

Operations and processes evolved. Picking up donations, arranging donated items, meeting clients, and delivering goods to clients homes fell into patterns that were clearly manageable.

The day-to-day work of the store is divided into 4 main areas:

- ◆ Helping women choose and move furniture (Greeters, Drivers, Mover Volunteers)
- ◆ Picking up donated items (Drivers, Pick-up Volunteers)
- ◆ Warehouse Management (Stocking, Sorting, Cleaning)
- ◆ Administrative (Marketing, Public Relations, Fund Raising, Truck Maintenance)

Of course there is cross over and depending on talents, people often work in more than one area.

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## Some 2006 Statistics

- ◆ Although our primary mission is to serve clients referred to us by the Children and Families of Iowa Family Violence Center, we occasionally respond to requests from other service organizations in the area. This year we gave goods to 7 clients referred by other service organizations.
- ◆ Though we only had the truck for 9 months, we drove 4,000 miles picking up donated items and delivering goods to clients homes.
- ◆ We served a total of 177 client requests.
- ◆ The FreeStore has 18 regular volunteers and several more who work as needed, helping clients move or picking up furniture. Volunteers worked over 3,525 hours in 2006. There is no paid staff nor mileage reimbursement.
- ◆ We gave out a total of 2,927 items, worth \$111,000 (Items were valued at Salvation Army Thrift Store prices.) Items included
  - ◆ 39 Children's items such as baby beds, strollers, booster chairs
  - ◆ 162 Electronic items such as TVs, microwaves, VCRs
  - ◆ 513 Comforters, blankets and sets of sheets
  - ◆ 175 Mattress sets
  - ◆ 956 Pieces of furniture, such as couches, dressers, beds, tables and chairs
  - ◆ 157 Pillows
  - ◆ 202 Household items, such as rugs, irons, vacuum cleaners, curtains
  - ◆ 519 Kitchen items, such as sets of dishes, sets of flatware, sets of glasses, crock pots
  - ◆ 115 Sets of towels
  - ◆ 89 Personal items such as hair dryers and suitcases
  - ◆ 51 Utility items such as air conditioners, space heaters, TV stands



The FreeStore  
702 E. 4th St  
Des Moines, IA

Inside the FreeStore



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## How women moved items before we had a truck



## Having a truck eases the moving burden



The FreeStore Truck was a great gift



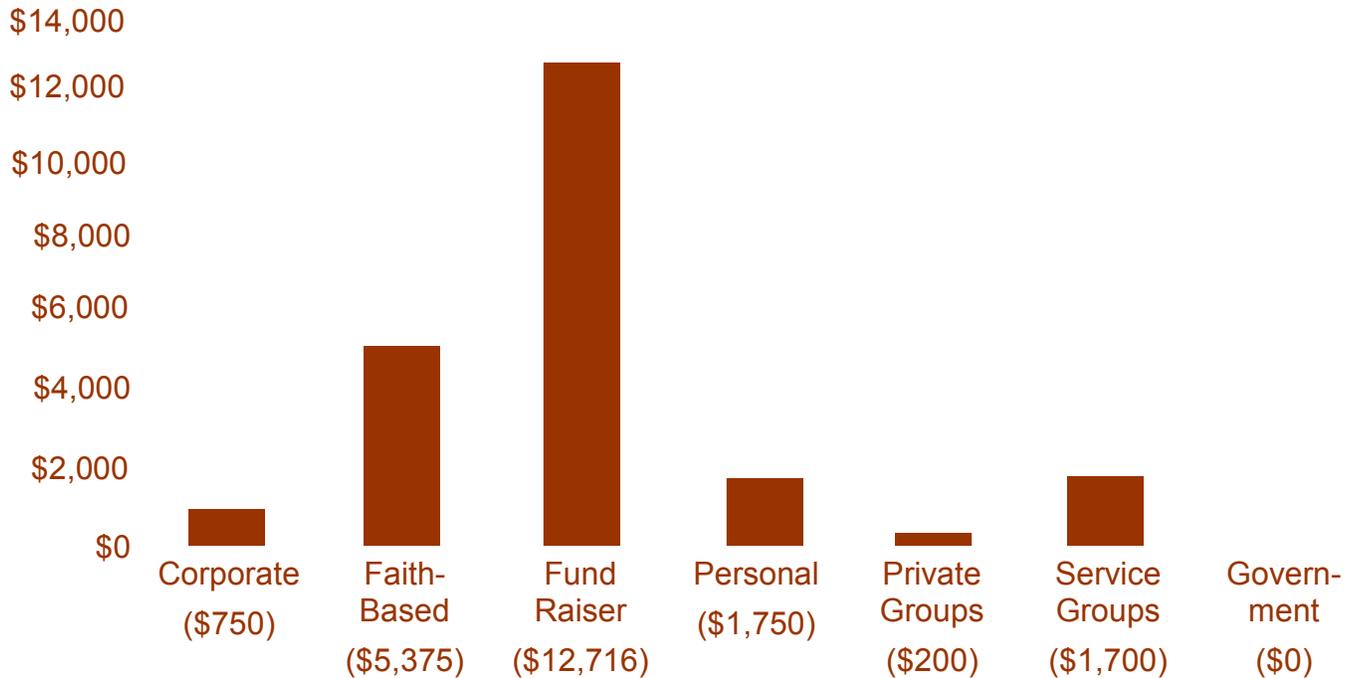
Volunteers load a client's choices

FreeStore  
Annual Financial Statements  
For the years ending  
December 31, 2005 and December 31, 2006

<b><u>Revenue</u></b>	<b><u>2006</u></b>	<b><u>2005</u></b>
Warehouse Rent St. Timothy's Episcopal Church	\$2,520.00	\$5,040.00
Cash Donations	7,255.00	1,458.00
1st Fund Raiser	12,716.00	
Miscellaneous	<u>20.74</u>	<u>0.71</u>
Totals	\$22,511.74	\$6,498.71
<b><u>Expenses</u></b>	<b><u>2006</u></b>	<b><u>2005</u></b>
Warehouse Rent at 120 S. 11th St WDM (Jan-June)	\$2,814.00	\$5,040.00
Governmental Fees		500.00
Bank Charges		<u>14.95</u>
Warehouse Utilities Costs (6.5 Months)	834.00	
Property and Casualty Insurance (6.5 Months)	717.00	
Truck Operation and Maintenance (8 Months)	1,037.47	
Miscellaneous	<u>107.57</u>	
Totals	\$5,510.04	\$5,554.95
Results	\$17,001.70	\$943.76

\*\*These financial statements do not include in-kind contribution of warehouse storage space donated by the Principal Financial Group for June through Dec. The value of this donation in 2006 is \$8,673.00.

## 2006 FreeStore Donations Received



- ◆ Corporate Donations: Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc.; Jacobson Companies
- ◆ Faith-Based Groups include St. Timothy's Episcopal Church; St. Luke's Women; St. Mark's Lutheran; West Des Moines Church Opportunity Group; Temple B'nai Jeshurun; St. Timothy's Geodes; St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
- ◆ 2006 Fund-Raising Campaign had 113 individual respondents
- ◆ Personal donations made before the fund-raising event
- ◆ Private Groups include The Des Moines Bridge Center Clubs
- ◆ Service Groups include the Domestic Abuse Coordinating Council and The Danish Sisterhood Lodge #102
- ◆ No money was received from any government sources

NOTE: The above graph does not include

- ◆ The in-kind contribution of warehouse storage space donated by the Principal Financial Group for June through Dec. The value of this donation in 2006 was \$8,673.00.
- ◆ The value of the donated truck, including registration, license, and insurance, which was valued at \$4,484.00

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## A Greeter's Story

Sometimes the volunteers at the FreeStore feel overwhelmed. There are so many needs, so many sad stories. Then, out of the blue, something wonderful happens to revitalize us. This happened not long ago when one of our greeters told of what had happened to him the previous afternoon.

He was in Costco with his children doing some shopping. There were lots of free samples being passed out, and one lady was handing out Brie cheese, a particular favorite of his. It was really good Brie and he decided he'd like another taste so he went back to the stand. The lady asked if he would like another piece.

When he said, "Yes!" she picked up a piece and came around to the front of the table, threw her arms around him, and in his words, "Hugged the stuffing out of me!"

Then she stood back and said, "You don't remember me but I'll never forget you. You helped me when I left the shelter. You met me at your FreeStore and helped me pick out furniture and helped me move. It was the first day of my new life. I'll never be able to thank you and your friends for what that meant to me."

Then she handed him his piece of cheese and went back to work.



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# ***You Say You Know***

## ***A Psalm by an Abused Woman***

*You say you know all the days that were planned for me. You  
knew my unformed substance in the womb. You saw me  
being made in secret.*

*Did you see me being abused? Did you hear me call to you in  
Terror. Did you know me then?*

*How is it you did not save me? did not stop it.*

*How does faith work? Why did you not rescue me?*

*What is faith?*

*Is the fact that I am a survivor an indication of your strength?  
That even through all the terror, you were there?*

*And that having come out of it and survived,  
I am a testimony to you?*

*Even today as I speak to other victims, I talk of love and  
hope, for forgiveness and for believing in oneself.  
Does that mean you knew you would bring me through?*

*I do not understand your ways, God but I am still alive to see  
your loving kindness in the land of the Living.*

*based on Psalm 139*

To donate household goods, call 225-2020:

To donate money, send a check to

The FreeStore  
1020 24th St.  
West Des Moines, IA 50266

Or

To donate electronically visit [www.thefreestore.org](http://www.thefreestore.org)

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