

The FreeStore Story

Fall 2023



A FreeStore Note

By Diane Munns, Board Chair

Happy Thanksgiving from the FreeStore and thanks for your continued support of our mission, helping families start over.

I'd like to give you some rather startling statistics. We've had about a 30 percent increase in demand for services year-to-date over 2022. If you look back over five years, we've seen a 70 percent increase in demand from families in crisis.

But you, our donors, continue to be up to the task. We've had some wonderful gifts and grants, but year after year, it is individual donors who have provided 60 percent to 80 percent of revenue for our all-volunteer charity. We ask for support only twice a year, and only via this newsletter. Elsewhere in this issue is an article on how we use your cash gifts.

Increased demand has also put increased pressure on our volunteers, and they,

too, have come through. Our volunteers drive and load trucks, maintain the warehouse, schedule and greet clients, sort and clean donations, test and repair donations, and coordinate the many tasks that keep us running. Looking for a volunteer opportunity? Send a note to info.thefreestore@gmail.com and we'll show you around.

I'd also like to direct you to an article that explains why we do this work. Lisa Stagg's story brings home the role we play in helping families start over. As she explains, a visit to our warehouse allows a family to sleep in beds with clean sheets, eat off real dishes, put clothes away in dressers, and begin to heal.

You are receiving this newsletter because you have helped us in the past. Thanks for that, and thanks in advance for any help you can offer going forward.

Spending Your Donations

Several times a week we send two-person volunteer crews to collect gently used furniture and household items, and thanks to you, those big trucks come back full nearly every time. But clients also need other items, and your donated dollars are used to purchase them.

For example, we never have enough donated vacuum cleaners, microwaves or small appliances to meet client needs. Our volunteer buyers shop for bargains on these items, and stock the warehouse. A couple of years ago a sharp-eyed volunteer landed 200 counter-top microwaves at a big discount.

We continue to buy other items that help clients set up a new home, including bedding, pots and pans, kitchen utensils, mattress protectors, cleaning supplies (every client gets a basket full of paper towels, dish soap, toilet cleaners, and the like), toasters, crock pots, small mixers, and small dressers for kids.

As always, our largest expenditures are warehouse rent and truck maintenance. Also, as always, our budget for salaries is zero, since our entire operation is run by volunteers.

Year-to-Date Client Data, January–August

Year	Families	Adults	Kids	DV
2017	142	167	257	54
2022	241	273	275	64
2023	311	376	419	81

Fall 2023 FreeStore Gift

Please return this portion in the envelope provided to:
**FreeStore, 1020 24th St.,
West Des Moines, IA 50266.**

Your donations help pay for expenses such as warehouse rent, truck maintenance and fuel, furniture re-building supplies, and cleaning supplies for clients.

Yes! I want to help the FreeStore continue its work.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____

My Gift: \$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 \$200 Other \$ _____

Information on the other side explains how the Birdies for Charity program matches up to 10 percent of your tax-deductible gift.

Lisa's Story

Life has changed a lot since that day a dozen years ago when Lisa Stagg picked out household supplies from the FreeStore warehouse and watched as volunteers delivered the goods to her new apartment. Since then she took herself to college, got a great job, bought a house, and centered her life around two lively children.

She still has the plates and a comforter and a few other items she chose at the warehouse that day. "Every time I use them it takes me back to that day. What an amazing experience."

After fleeing an abusive husband and taking refuge in a shelter for several months, an apartment was arranged for

her. "But I had nothing except clothing. Someone at the shelter recommended your service and when I walked in the warehouse, I remember saying that I could use a couple of those things, and the volunteer said, 'You pick out what you need.' It brought me to tears in a good way."

She got beds, a dresser, a couch, kitchen goods, a small television and other items, all delivered that day, all at no cost. "It was a huge weight off my shoulders. I don't know how to put it into words. It was like I was the most important person in the world," she said.

FreeStore Board Chair Diane Munns said it's unusual to get years-later feedback



Lisa, middle, with her children Joselyn and Jayden.

from clients, and that Lisa's story is an inspiration for our volunteers. "While we know we are just a small cog in the support system necessary for families in crisis to succeed, we are thrilled at Lisa's story and so happy we could be a part of it. Thanks to Lisa for agreeing to share her story."

Missionary Service



Sisters Natalie Hansen, left, and Naia Cheney at the FreeStore warehouse

Missionaries assigned to Des Moines frequently volunteer at the FreeStore to assemble dressers for kids, which come as kits. "We love the

fact that the FreeStore is providing furniture and household goods for free to people who are starting from scratch, and you even deliver it to their homes," said Sister Naia Cheney of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Cheney said that she and Sister Natalie Hansen will soon rotate to different assignments but "there will always be missionaries in this area and we'll continue recommending the FreeStore."

Unexpected Gift

When a longtime civic group decided to dissolve earlier this year, members selected a charity to receive all of its remaining assets. The FreeStore is honored that LAW of Polk County, Inc., a group of spouses of lawyers, chose our charity among the many that it supported over the years. "We

did a vote and narrowed it down to our top ten, then selected the FreeStore," said Heidi Puckett of Urbandale. "We're all very impressed with what you do. I've already told several people that if they need to donate furniture or household items, they should give them to you."



Members of LAW of Polk County, Inc., present a \$2,838.86 check to FreeStore Chair Diane Munns. From left, they are Barb Norton, Heidi Puckett, and Marti Marvin.



Birdies for Charity

Many charities in central Iowa, including the FreeStore, partner with the Principal Charity Classic Golf Tournament's Birdies for Charity program. The FreeStore receives EVERY penny you donate. The Birdies program adds up to 10 percent to your gift (at no cost to you). For example, your \$100 becomes as much as \$110 to help families start over. Write your check to the FreeStore and mail it in the envelope provided.

Learn more at: principalcharityclassic.com/charity/birdies-for-charity