

IHN at Alpha House – Youth Action Plan

The Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) at Alpha House is a not-for-profit shelter serving homeless families of Washtenaw County. We are a grass-roots organization run primarily by congregations of various faiths, and by volunteers – people just like yourself! In the course of a year, almost 2000 volunteers will come through our doors to assist our approximately 50 families accessing the shelter. With those 50 families are approximately 125 children per year. More than providing shelter, food, and case management services to our families, we also provide love, support and hope.

When an IHN Host Congregation volunteers for the week, we encourage congregation parents to bring their children to volunteer at Alpha House. Introducing our children to the joys of service and needs for social justice is one of great lessons that we can teach them.

For youth groups interested in supporting Alpha House, there are many ways to partner with us – the older the group, the more hands-on you can become. Your youth group could:

- Raise funds (bottle drive, yard sale, car wash, etc) to buy needed items for our families or to sponsor a child through our *ONE CHILD, ONE NIGHT* program.
- Hold a Food Drive to collect canned goods – or even better, make it an Umbrella Drive, an Art Supplies Drive, a Sports Equipment Drive . . . be creative!
- Become a Project Volunteer and ‘take over a project’ such as a small garden or our recyclables.
- Volunteer to clean and organize a particular area here at the shelter once a month, such as the art room, the clothing storage room, or the children’s playroom.
- Make back-to-school bags for our children, complete with folders, pens, paper, etc.
- Prepare ‘Birthday Kits’ to use for children celebrating birthdays while at Alpha House, complete with birthday supplies and small age-appropriate gifts.
- Take a Saturday or Sunday and turn it into a Work Day at Alpha House.
- Or . . . come up with your own idea! There are so many creative ways in which you and your youth group can directly support other youth who are in need, right at this moment!

We use many items at Alpha House and are always in need of more donations. Fortunately, we’ve been ‘overblessed’ with many kinds of toys, books, and clothes – but we have so many other needs. Some of the regular donations we are in need of are: Storage Bins (plastic), Bikes, Roller Blades & Helmets, Personal Items (shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, etc), Laundry Detergent, Nice Pillows, Sheet Sets, Batteries, Daily Planners, Diapers, Light Bulbs, Office Supplies, and a lot more . . .

If you would like to talk about ways in which your youth group can grow while partnering with us in this important work, and/or to brainstorm creative ideas, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator, Joel Eckel (734-822-0220; jeckel@alphahouse-ihn.org). We are eager to meet our new partners!