

COORDINATING



TIMES

July 2008

May Coordinators' Meeting

6 people attended the recent Coordinators' Meeting held in May. We had a great discussion and much time for sharing. Thanks to all who attended!

Agenda items included:

Follow-up Family Report

Importance of Food

Host Week Reflections

Ideas to enhance the Volunteer Experience

Important Reminders for Volunteers

Please read more about these topics in the following pages. Hope to see you at the July meeting!

Next Coordinators' Meeting:

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

7pm at Alpha House

The Importance of Food

"Food is powerfully symbolic and really complex. Through food we express love. We bring comfort and hope. We forge new relationships and strengthen old bonds. Food reaffirms not only our humanity but the joy of being alive. "

-Marcus Samuelsson, Award-winning chef

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Food matters. It matters even more during times of crisis. IHN families are probably going through the hardest time of their entire lives. Sitting down to a hot, colorful, abundant meal prepared with love and care by volunteers offers temporary relief from the day's stress and hard work.

Meals need not be elaborate, gourmet events in order to brighten someone's day. However, it is very important that meals show thoughtfulness, are balanced, tasty, kid and adult friendly, contain a few side dish options, and there is enough to go around. Please remind meal volunteers of the importance of food and offer guidance when needed. As always, contact Heidi with questions, concerns or ideas!

Host Week Reflections

After the dust has settled from your next busy week of hosting at Alpha House, we would love to hear how you felt about the week. Your input is vital to improving our program, training and retaining volunteers and enhancing the volunteer and IHN family experience.

Heidi will be calling or emailing you with a brief questionnaire at the end of your next host week. We'd love to hear your honest feedback!!

Questions will ask about the highs and lows of the week and your suggestions for us to help the week run more smoothly next time.



Gimme Shelter 2008!!

Save the Date!

IHN's annual fall fundraiser, Gimme Shelter, will be October 11th.

Committee Members Needed!

Organized, creative people who know and love IHN are needed to help with the Food Committee and the Silent Auction Committee. Please contact Heidi if you are interested or if would like to recommend someone.

Ticket Sales!

Stay tuned for more information about how you can help sell tickets in your congregation.

Booster Car Seats Needed to Comply with Law

Governor Granholm recently signed legislation requiring children under age 8 or less than 4'9" tall to use child restraints. Booster car seats should be used for children who are between the ages of 4 and 8. The bill took effect July 1. IHN is greatly in need of NEW booster seats to help keep our kids safe and help parents comply with the law. NEW booster seats can be dropped off at Alpha House any time. Please help spread the word!

IHN Hospitality Code

This is a great list of helpful tips and reminders when interacting with IHN families. Please feel free to pass it along to your volunteers!.

1. **It's nice to hear your name**, so learn the names of our families too.
2. **Labeling people creates invisible barriers**. Remember that families are families, not the "homeless". Whether spoken or on a posted sign, labeling creates an automatic division, an "us" and "them" syndrome.
3. **Personal questions can be tough to answer**, so don't put families in awkward positions. If they need to talk, give them the chance but don't pry.
4. **Never assume that a family can't hear you**. Do not discuss a family's situation with other people. Respect their privacy.
5. **Everyone can use a little privacy**. Respect the shelter's private spaces-like family bedrooms.
6. **Sometimes we need to spend time alone**. Respect a family's need for quiet time by themselves or with family.
7. **We all have bad days**. Depression, sadness, and hopelessness may come. Allow families space to deal with their emotions. And be prepared to forgive outbursts, without judging them as ungrateful.
8. **We understand and care for our children**. Allow families to do the same. Avoid contradicting a parent's instructions to his/her children. And always ask permission before giving things to children.
9. **Parents need a break**. Offer to baby-sit, tutor, play with and plan activities for interested children while their parents take a break.
10. **Adult guests should be treated like adults** Although our families are in a situation that may require them to be temporarily dependent on others, it does not mean that they are not grown up and able to make their own decisions.

Weekend Volunteers

Weekend shifts at Alpha House can be some of the most meaningful volunteer experiences of the week! In addition, families look forward to the hot breakfasts, lunches and afternoon playtime as a special and relaxing treat. However, for coordinators weekends are often difficult to plan for. There are two extra hot meals served by volunteers on the weekends. Sometimes families leave the shelter during the day and volunteers have nothing to do. Other times, the families stay and volunteers spend a busy afternoon playing with the kids and getting to know the parents.

In order to make weekend planning easier we are doing two things:

- 1) Working with families to encourage more advanced notice regarding their weekend plans
- 2) Working with weekend staff to more quickly alert volunteers when weekend numbers are low

Here are a few tips for coordinators to help with weekend planning:

- Include phone numbers of weekend volunteers on the schedule so that staff may call them immediately if numbers are low
- Fill weekend afternoon activity shifts last. If there are other open shifts, encourage volunteers to sign up for those first.
- Encourage weekend lunch and afternoon activity volunteers to call ahead in the morning to get a final count of how many people to expect.
- Let volunteers know when they sign up that sometimes weekend numbers can be unpredictable. However, their service is still very much needed and appreciated!!

Questions, concerns, ideas?

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