

INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK

ALPHA HOUSE

Volunteer Newsletter

September 2026 Issue #5



Dear Volunteers and Coordinators,

Happy Fall! We've had a wonderful summer filled with volunteers gardening, cleaning, and hosting meals for the residents of Alpha House, and we are eternally grateful for each and every one of you.



This October, we are hosting Gimme Shelter, our 31st annual fundraising event. This year's event is dedicated to celebrating our growing community response to family homelessness while acknowledging the challenges that lie ahead. Gimme Shelter is happening on October 14th from 6-9pm, and tickets are available for purchase on our website at alphahouse-ihn.org/gimmeshelter26. We would love to see our volunteers and congregational partners there!

A Repaired Roof

Alpha House is beyond grateful to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for literally putting a roof over our heads! After the cold winter and rainy spring, Alpha House West was left with severe water damage and holes in the roof, and a generous donation from the Ann Arbor stake has allowed us to complete these repairs. Without this blessing, our staff and residents would be exposed to the elements. We cannot thank you enough for all of your generosity!



Repairs at Alpha House West have begun!

Additional gratitude goes to our County Commissioner from District Four, Caroline Sanders, who brought some cases of water for the hard workers during the roof repairs! Thank you for your support!

Meal Service and Hospitality

This quarter, 17 congregations as well as a few organizations & individuals generously hosted meals for the residents at Alpha House, and we are so grateful for every single dinner and brunch served to the needy families of Washtenaw County. Because of you, children have hot, delicious food filling their bellies, and parents sleep better at night knowing that their kids aren't going to bed hungry.

An extra 'thank-you' to our lovely friends at the MA Center, who hosted a special Christmas in July for our residents, bringing karaoke, food, and some gifts for children!

As the holidays approach, we are still seeing a need for meals in the late months of 2026. If you have the means, please consider hosting a dinner at Alpha House. We have also been diligently working on the 2027 schedule as well. If you or your congregation is interested in hosting a meal at Alpha House West in 2027, please check out the spreadsheet on our website to see which gaps need to be filled. The meal schedule and other resources can be found at alphahouse-ihn.org/meal-hosting.

If your congregation hosted a meal at Alpha House in 2026, you should have received an email from Lee Solo (lsolo@alphahouse-ihn.org), our Communications Associate, regarding hosting in 2027. If you didn't, please reach out!



Volunteer Coordinator Yohannes Desta hard at work assisting the UM Medical School volunteers in beautifying the Alpha House West gardens and playground!

Progress in the New Wing

We have so much gratitude for everyone who donated bedding sets for our new wing in Alpha House East (Del's House). This was a huge need, and our community partners really pulled through! We received so many Amazon boxes that we ran out of space to put them! The Pines Wing is officially open, and we are now able to house more families than ever before!



All the new bedding sets for the Pines Wing!

Community Involvement



(left to right) Traci, Shonagh, Andy LaBarre, and Promice in Alpha House West

The County Commissioner for District Seven, Andy LaBarre, brought a donation of clothes, books, and toys for the children at Alpha House. We are so grateful to have community partners who come bearing gifts and good company! Pictured left, he met with Shelter Director Traci Bendele, Executive Director Shonagh Taruza, and Finance & Business Operations Director Promice Mosley when he visited the shelter in June.

A Beautiful Mural

Longtime volunteer Joanne Kvasnovsky painted an amazing mural in the basement bathroom of Alpha House West, bringing much-needed color and joy to the space! More mural photos can be found on page 10.



A beautiful scene full of inspiration & peace!

Peace, Love, and Spa Days

The Journey of Faith Christian Church hosted a phenomenal spa day for the residents of Alpha House East in June! One of the congregation members invited Ulta professionals from her work to do hair and makeup, and self-care gift bags were given to the residents! A Servant's Heart Community donated refreshments and Pastor Sarah Lynne offered hand massages. This was such a kind endeavor that brought some warmth and joy back into the lives of the mothers and children residing in our shelter. Thank you so much for giving our residents a bit of well-deserved relaxation!



Our Director of Operations Ms. Love (right) receiving a hand massage!



The MA Center is making sure that every child has a backpack for school!



The Bethlehem United Church of Christ also came bearing backpacks!

Preparing the Kids for Back to School

Wonderful volunteers from Bethlehem United Church of Christ organized a donation drive to collect school supplies to fill 30 backpacks for the school-aged children at Alpha House. The MA Center of Michigan also organized a huge backpack drive and brought about 25 filled backpacks to our shelters.

Several lovely physicians at Trinity Health Ann Arbor raised funds to organize an end-of-summer ice cream party for the children and staff at Del's House. Thank you Lisa Kutas for making this happen!

A heartfelt thanks to everyone who has taken the time and effort to facilitate the academic success of the children residing at Alpha House.

United Methodist Churches Team Up!

This past July, the First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor and the West Side United Methodist Church teamed up and made a huge impact at both Alpha House West and Del's House by cleaning, spreading mulch, organizing books, and assisting with many other tasks. We are so grateful to both of these congregations for all of the help in making Alpha House a welcoming, safe space.



Volunteers spreading mulch on the Alpha House West playground

Renew, Energize, Donate with Keller Williams

"RED" Day is Keller Williams' annual day of giving back. Every May, agents, leaders, and associates step away from their daily business duties at KW and venture out into their communities to Renew, Energize, and Donate. One lovely group of KW associates came to Alpha House West on May 14th and spent the entire morning cleaning walls, wiping windows, and organizing donations. They also brought lunch for the families at Alpha House!



We love when community members get out and volunteer! This was a bigger group than we typically have volunteering at our shelters, but that just meant that they were an even bigger help!

Air Mattress Donations

We received many donations of air mattresses from Church and from Huron River Methodist Church, St. Clare of Assisi Episcopal Church, and Temple Beth Emeth. These air mattresses are an incredibly important tool for our families. When they move out of our shelters and into more permanent housing, having a place to sleep that first night makes a huge difference. Thank you for helping our families transition from homelessness into housing!



Thank you so much for all these air mattresses!

Beautifying the Gardens



What lovely flowers! Keeping the gardens at our shelter looking nice is a full-time job... & we love when volunteers come to help!

The Dexter Gardening Club came to Alpha House West earlier this summer, planting flowers and helping to make the front of our shelter look absolutely stunning! We are always beyond appreciative of our volunteers who work so hard to beautify the community!

Blessing Bags

Pineview Church put together some wonderful Blessing Bags filled with self-care items for the families residing at Alpha House. This is such a great way to help give these families some material comforts that many of us take for granted. The youth also painted a mural to be hung at our shelter! Thank you so much for these gifts and your donation!



Our families are so appreciative to the folks at Pineview!



These playhouses are a fan-favorite!

Who Says Cleaning Can't be Fun?

A group of 30+ physicians, all in the first year of their pediatric residencies with the University of Michigan Medical School, did a huge spring cleaning inside and outside of Alpha House East on Saturday, June 27th as part of their week-long orientation. The physicians not only cleaned, but also played with the children, conversed with their parents, and brought lunch for everyone. Alpha House wishes these new pediatricians all the best in their careers!



We were thrilled to have such a large group of dedicated volunteers willing to spend their day making Alpha House feel more welcoming. Thank you!

Gratitude

A huge 'thank you' to Cheryl O'Brien, Business Development Manager at Big George's Appliance Mart, for her incredibly generous donation of a washer and dryer to Alpha House! Our gratitude also goes out to BRAG of Ann Arbor for facilitating this!

A very special thank you to the Pre-K through 5th grade students at Temple Beth Emeth Religious School for sending their hard-earned donations to Alpha House! The Dexter High School Student Council also made a donation to Alpha House at the beginning of this summer, and we are so grateful to both of these schools! Thank you!

The youth group from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints volunteered at both shelters this summer, helping to clean and assisting in the assembly of bedframes in Del's House, helping us to open the new Pines Wing to families in-need!

Grace Church Ann Arbor - West surprised us with a donation of food and supplies! Thank you for your increased involvement with Alpha House... we're looking forward to building this partnership!

Jackie Evers from Zingerman's donated some much-needed gardening supplies, including a brand-new wheelbarrow, to Alpha House! These supplies were put to use almost immediately. Thank you!

Thank you to new volunteer Catherine Knight for spending each Friday this summer supporting staff around dinnertime.

Summer Flowers and Baby Showers



Our expectant families and new parents greatly enjoyed the games and gifts brought by Success by 6!



The Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative reached out to Alpha House this past July with an offer to host a community baby shower for our expecting parents, showering them with fun gifts combined with games and educational resources. Our families had a wonderful time and we are thrilled that this was able to happen. Thank you so much for doing this!

We are beyond grateful to our community and congregations!



Thank you to the Bank of Ann Arbor for bringing ice cream!



HouseN2Home provided some beautiful furniture for a shared space at Del's House. Thank you!



Ms. Alethia Battles, Ms. Kathy Wyatt and the lovely ladies from the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, who collected self-care donations for the women in our shelters.



Long-time supporter Beth Lipton among volunteers from the First United Methodist Church and West Side United Methodist Church organizing the children's books at Alpha House West!

Gorgeous Mural Details by Joanne Kvasnovsky



Could it be Bambi and Thumper?



Peaceful ducks in a pond



Best friends forever!



Serene kitties enjoying a picnic