

GREENVILLE AREA INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK (GAIHN)

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The **Mission** of the Greenville Area Interfaith Hospitality Network (GAIHN) is to assist local congregations to share hospitality (in the form of emergency shelter, meals, and transitional housing) with **homeless families that include children**, and to help those families achieve self-sufficiency and self-fulfillment.

Twenty-four dynamic Greenville-area churches generously use their Sunday school classrooms and other church facilities to offer homeless families safe lodging, nourishing meals, and genuine hospitality—right down to the mint on the pillow! Each church hosts the guest families for a week at a time, about four (4) times a year on a rotating schedule, and/or provides transitional housing for families. Eleven other congregations provide volunteer services and support resources.

Our program is unique because we are the only emergency shelter in Greenville for single mothers with sons who are age 10 or older. Most other local emergency shelters separate family members by gender, and only GAIHN will allow homeless single mothers to reside with their youthful sons in the same facility. **GAIHN is also the only emergency shelter in Greenville for single fathers with children.**

Thanks to the concerted efforts of our host and support congregations, *families are able to stay together* as they confront the daunting challenges of being homeless & living in a temporary emergency shelter. GAIHN fills an important niche by safeguarding a family's integrity during this crisis period. GAIHN also serves as a clearinghouse to share information and optimize resources for the Greenville interfaith community to partner effectively in the enterprise of alleviating—and someday eliminating—family homelessness in Greenville. Our ultimate goals are to reduce homelessness and promote family integrity among Greenville County resident families.

GAIHN's hospitality strategy is to provide homeless families with emergency shelter and meals at our host congregations (free of charge) for about 10-12 weeks, followed by intermediate periods in either short-term (3-6 months) or longer term (12 months +) transitional housing (with GAIHN staff providing intensive case management, high-quality life skills training, and ongoing counsel). Our dream is for each guest family to obtain sustaining employment and permanent housing that is safe, affordable, accessible, and adequate for their family's needs.

GAIHN also partners with a variety of local, state and national public and private entities to fulfill our mission of compassion and restorative justice. Prominent among those partners are the Upstate Homeless Coalition of South Carolina, the United Way of Greenville County, SHARE, United Ministries, and Homes of Hope.

This year at least thirty-five homeless families (representing over 125 individuals) will find home and hope through the distinctive generosity, innovation, and collaboration of a more than a score of local congregations of several faith traditions (a list of the GAIHN host and support congregations is available at www.GAIHN.org). Families with children comprise 40% of America's homeless population, and one in four homeless persons in our country and county is a child (ages birth to seventeen). Through GAIHN you and your faith and/or civic group can address the vexing problems of family homelessness and poverty by making a genuine difference for the good in our GAIHN guest families' lives. We welcome you to join us in this life-transforming adventure!

Please consider becoming involved in GAIHN's important ministry of hospitality. The investment of resources by your faith group and/or organization in these worthy families will produce life-changing dividends in the lives of some of our poorest—and most prosperous—neighbors in the Greenville community.

“Often, often, often, the lark entones, the Christ comes in the stranger's guise.” ~ A Celtic rune