Did you know April is “Shower The Crisis Center” month? We are seeking your help in collecting baby items during the month of April. This includes diapers, formula, baby food, and baby wipes.

The birth of a new baby can be a happy time for families, but it also brings with it challenges. A blur of sleepless nights and endless diaper changes are all too familiar to new parents, but imagine adding the stress of poverty. Imagine having to decide between changing your child’s diaper or feeding her.

Recently, a volunteer in the Food Bank talked with a father who was so relieved we were able to provide him diapers that were the right size for his baby. He exclaimed, “Oh, I am so happy these diapers are here and the right size! Now I can buy my son his cap and gown for his graduation next month because I can save a little more on diapers!”

The volunteer was reminded that those might be small costs for many of us, but can make a huge impact on a family struggling to make ends meet. The sacrifice that father almost had to make was to either not change his baby’s diaper, or not watch his son walk across the stage for his high school diploma. That’s not a choice we want anyone to have to make.

At The Crisis Center, we know what a tough spot so many Johnson County families are in. Studies show that more than 30 percent of families experience diaper need. There is no government assistance program for diapers. If a family is unable to purchase diapers, there are no public programs to help them. A lack of sufficient diapers has been linked to a number of health problems in children and can also lead to health issues.

A woman came to The Crisis Center looking for help with her past-due rent. She recently had emergency home repair expenses and would soon have additional family members moving in with her. She had income, but was actively looking for additional work to help make ends meet. At this time of unexpected expenses, The Crisis Center’s Emergency Assistance program was able to assist with her rent and keep her secure in her housing.

When someone is living paycheck to paycheck, a crisis could become the unfortunate incident that sends an individual or family into a downward spiral of unemployment or even homelessness. There are times when funds from the Emergency Assistance Program are the difference between a family being evicted or being able to stay in their home, having the power shut off or keeping the lights on. The Emergency Assistance Program is partially funded through the Consultation for Religious Communities’ Common Fund of Last Resort. This specific fund, which is a partnership of churches throughout Johnson County, is designed to help people when all other resources have been explored. Our Emergency Assistance Coordinator Michael Lawler and a group of dedicated volunteers work with each client to determine the level of need and whether or not the Emergency Assistance Program can be utilized. Unfortunately, each week people in need are turned away due to high demand. If you would like to help the Emergency Assistance Program please write ‘Emergency Assistance’ in the memo line of your check and mail it to: The Crisis Center of Johnson County, 1121 Gilbert Ct., Iowa City, IA 52240.

Emergency Assistance: When a Crisis Occurs We are Here to Help

For more information, please visit our website at www.jccrisiscenter.org.

Help us “Shower The Crisis Center”!

Connections
Vol 1, 2016
By Natalie Veldhouse, AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer

Last month, the Johnson County Hunger Task Force presented its findings to the Johnson County Board of Supervisors. The Hunger Task Force brings together local government officials, nonprofit leaders, and community members to discuss issues related to food insecurity in our neighborhoods. The Hunger Task Force was first brought together in October 2014 and has been working ever since to determine the needs of individuals and families in Johnson County.

Johnson County experiences a higher food insecurity rate than the state average, at 14.2% (Feeding America, 2013). In other words, 18,640 Johnson County residents lack consistent access to affordable, nutritious foods. Since the task force first assembled in October 2014, committee members have engaged in several research projects to assess the current state of food insecurity in Johnson County.

The task force has conducted key informant interviews, surveys, and focus groups aimed at identifying key barriers to food access. They spoke with food pantry clients, those experiencing food insecurity that do not use SNAP or panicaries, rural faith-based communities, school social workers, and food assistance providers such as food pantry and hot meal directors.

Key Findings:

- Food pantry clients are severely cost burdened by housing costs, with 81% reporting that they spend more than 50% of their income maintaining housing.
- Transportation is a huge barrier to food access for many people, including older adults with mobility issues, or about the Hunger Task Force, please email Natalie Veldhouse at natalie.veldhouse@jccrisiscenter.org.

The task force presented these research findings and recommendations to the Johnson County Board of Supervisors, and will work with them to prioritize which recommendations will be implemented. For more information or to get involved, please visit our website or email Natalie Veldhouse at natalie.veldhouse@jccrisiscenter.org.

SHOWER continued from page 1

by the Johnson County Board of Supervisors.

- Pantries struggle to provide the types of foods that clients have the highest demand for: meat, eggs, milk, and fresh fruits and vegetables.
- These two problems are related to issues in pantry storage and purchasing ability.
- There is a lot of stigma associated with accessing food assistance resources in rural areas.

Based on these results, the Hunger Task Force has developed a collection of recommendations ranging from solutions that are inexpensive and easily implemented, to larger, systematic changes aimed to address underlying issues that generate food insecurity. The recommendations include community improvement initiatives, transportation options, and collaborating with local organizations to improve the nutritional value of food offered through pantries and hot meal sites.

The task force presented these research findings and recommendations to the Johnson County Board of Supervisors, and will work with them to prioritize which recommendations will be implemented. For more information or to get involved, please visit our website or email Natalie Veldhouse at natalie.veldhouse@jccrisiscenter.org.

Shower the Crisis Center
April 10 - 13
Host a drive for diapers, baby food, baby formula, and baby hygiene products

CROP Walk
Sunday, April 3
Registration at 5 p.m., Walk begins at 6 p.m.
(25% of proceeds benefit The Crisis Center)

Chamber Business PM
Thursday, April 28
4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at The Crisis Center of Johnson County

Donor Appreciation Lunch
Friday, June 17
at the University Athletic Club

Join the Fan Club
May to August
Throughout the summer we are asking the community for $50 donations to purchase fans for people in need during the hot and humid months of June through September

Thank you for your continued support and for being such a strong member of The Crisis Center Family! Becci Reedus Executive Director

The best way to keep up with The Crisis Center’s activities and events is subscribing to the monthly

www.jccrisiscenter.org
You can also connect with The Crisis Center elsewhere online:
Facebook: jccrisiscenter
Twitter: www.com/crisiscenterj

Connect with us

Happy Birthday, Mobile Crisis Outreach Program!

The Crisis Center of Johnson County has been celebrating their birthday every year by sharing information about the programs and services they offer.

The Crisis Center is a 24/7 program that dispatches mental health counselors to homes, schools, hospitals, or public places where a mental health crisis is occurring.

The mobile crisis program has helped strengthen the partnership between The Crisis Center and the Johnson County Sheriff’s Office. According to Deputy Sheriff Brandon Richmond, the Mobile Crisis Outreach has helped law enforcement fill gaps in their services.

“Program fills the void in our community between law enforcement and mental health that has and still does raise lots of concern within our community,” said Richmond. “Mobile crisis outreach gives law enforcement the tools we need to get these individuals the longer-term counseling resources.

In addition to assisting law enforcement, the Mobile Crisis Outreach Program is also critical in keeping emergency rooms open to those who truly need hospitalization. Mercy Hospital and the University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics have provided the largest number of referrals to the program. Once a counselor is available to assess the situation, most clients are stabilized somewhere other than the hospital. Only 18 percent of clients were admitted to the hospital following a mobile crisis intervention.

The annual pancake breakfast, held in partnership with Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, served a record 1,168 people in March. For the first time, we welcomed 243 people to our new meeting space: the Iowa City Community Pantry.

A Note From the Director

Kevin O’Brien

Realty, Southgate Development, & McCune, Jill Armstrong - Skogman

Thrivent Financial Services.

To host a drive? Contact Sarah Benson Witry, Food Bank & Emergency Assistance Director, at 319-351-2726 ext. 118 or sarah.witry@jccrisiscenter.org to learn how you can help!

The mobile Crisis Outreach has helped law enforcement and assisted them in connecting with people struggling with mental illness.

Working together is mutually beneficial.” Pulkrabek said. “Working together is mutually beneficial.”

Where were clients stabilized?

- Stabilized at home
- Crisis bed
- Hospitalization
- Other (shelter, group home, friend’s house, etc)

18% 32% 41%

Crisis bed
Hospitalization
Other (shelter, group home, friend’s house, etc)

10%

Share your photos.

Caring is contagious! Snap a photo of your Crisis Center food drive or fundraiser so we can share it with the community.

Send photos to admin@jccrisiscenter.org

Support local programs that are working to keep our community strong.

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