

## Community Action Agency of Siouxland Welcome Home Project Narrative

The Welcome Home Project is a new and innovative initiative that combines transitional housing and outreach services to get homeless families in Siouxland off the streets as soon as possible. Our mission is to give those families a safe, furnished place to live, clothing if needed, and an adequate food supply; but importantly it is also to provide them, among other services, a chance to work one-on-one with a family development specialist working toward self-sufficiency. Existing resources for homeless families in metropolitan Sioux City are consistently at capacity and often there are delays of several days before a family can obtain shelter. The goal is for families that are identified and qualify to have a place to sleep that evening.

The Welcome Home project has been developed by an Advisory Board of concerned businesses and community leaders, religious institutions, and community agencies over the past 8 months. The advisory board contacted the Community Action Agency of Siouxland ("CAA") to collaborate with them, consider combining our various skills, and look to CAA to administer and operate the program. Some of the Advisory Board Members include representatives from both Sioux City regional medical centers, Jackson Recovery, Siouxland Mental Health, and the Center for Siouxland, the City of Sioux City, and the Sioux City School District. The Community Action Agency of Siouxland has a rich history of offering exceptional services to the poor in Woodbury County. Started in 1971, the agency offers several programs that will be of assistance to the families in the Welcome Home Project while they are in the program as well as once they exit the program including Early Childhood Programs (e.g. Head Start & Early Head Start for children 0-5), Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, Weatherization, Family Development and Self-Sufficiency, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Senior Community Service Employment Program, George J. Williams Memorial Food Bank, Woodbury County General Assistance and Emergency Assistance. Therefore, we see the collaboration as fundamental to its success.

The same partnerships and collaborations that have enhanced CAA's Transitional Housing program are being utilized to strengthen the Welcome Home Project. The Community Action Agency has over a 100 written agreements with service providers in the area. All connections are being utilized to give the families in the Welcome Home project every advantage. Many agencies working together collaboratively are needed to solve the problems of poverty. Each agency brings a certain area of expertise that will help these families. Introducing these families to these services will help their money go further, help them access food and put a roof over their heads and ultimately allow them to live permanently without assistance.

The program began in February 2011 offering up to six families the opportunity to live in a remodeled, Section 8 HUD-qualified apartment housing complex located on the west side of Sioux City. This apartment building has a total of 20 two or three bedroom units and is a nicely renovated building, near public transportation and schools. The Welcome Home Project rents 6 two bedroom apartments. The apartments were adopted by Mercy Medical Center, Sioux City Community Schools and Sunnybrook Community Church. Each organization completely furnished and supplied items such as toothbrushes, food, cleaning supplies and games and activities for the children. The landlord is committed to our mission and supportive of working

with us to meet our goals, using a commercial apartment building for this service.

The Families in the Welcome Home project are required to be involved in a constructive use of their time. Many of the families that have come into the program were already working. If not working the participants will need to be actively seeking employment by registering at Iowa Workforce Development and Diversified Staffing to find work as a day laborer until permanent employment can be obtained. Maintaining or gaining employment is one of the goals of the program to help the families gain self-sufficiency. If unemployed they will be encouraged to volunteer at the Community Action Agency of Siouxland or other non-profit organizations until they start working full time. Residents are also expected to see to the needs at their apartment such as cleaning and taking out the trash. It is anticipated that families will be involved in the project for approximately six months with the understanding that it could be shorter or longer depending on their needs and how quickly they are able to gain and maintain long term sustainable housing.

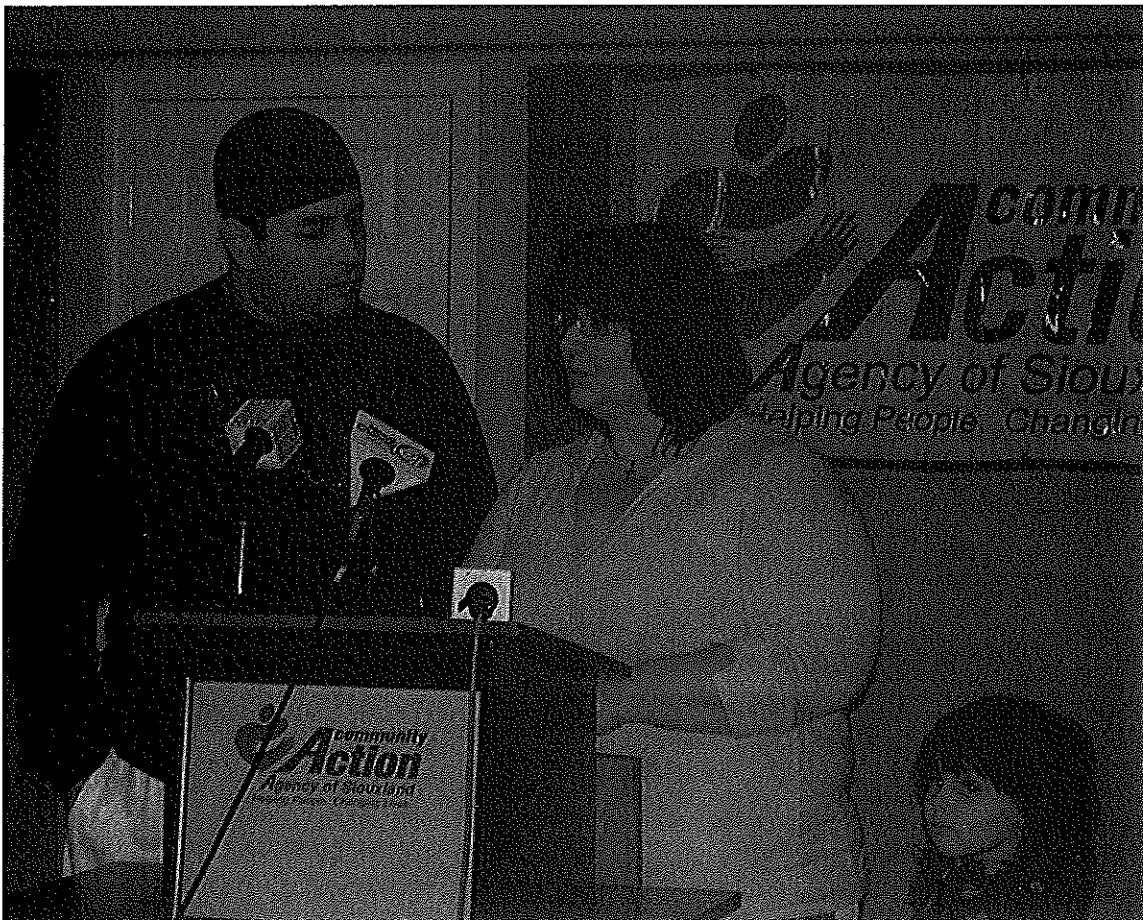
Another important goal of this project is to address any barriers families that may have contributed to their homelessness. Families that are homeless often have many barriers including language, mental health & substance abuse issues, disabilities, transportation, the lack of knowledge about available services. The Family Development Specialist will help identify and overcome those barriers one by one, in part by forging a relationship with the family and providing intensive support. As noted, CAA's collaborations with other agencies and services in Siouxland will be instrumental in addressing those issues. For example, the Specialist will actively work with Siouxland Mental Health in providing the families available services; also, the Specialist will work to help families find independent housing by taking them to look at houses and apartments for rent if necessary. The Specialist will insure applications for housing, food or transportation assistance are completed. They will also work with families on budgeting to save for deposits and rent.

Since the first family moved in the apartments in February 2011 the program has been full, with three families moving on to self sufficient, permanent housing.

# *Welcome Home Project*



One of the apartments furnished by Sunnybrook Community Church.



The first family to move into the Welcome Home Project spoke at the press conference.

Dear Family

Hi my name is Jase. I'd like to be one of the first to welcome you into the 'Welcome Home' program. I do not work for the agency. I'm the first person to enter this program 3 months ago along with my husband, son & 2 young children.

Words can't describe the feeling of relief upon entering this apt. To know that my family is safe & happy. I hope you will feel as blessed & relieved as we did. Please take a deep breath & reflect on what is truly important -- your family. You deserved it!

May God Bless & Angely Guard you  
and  
Welcome Home

# The Welcome Home Project

The Welcome Home Project is a new and innovative initiative that combines transitional housing and outreach services to get homeless families in Siouxland off the streets as soon as possible. Our mission is to give those families a safe, furnished place to live, clothing and food if needed; but importantly it is also to provide them, among other services, a chance to work one-on-one with a family development specialist working toward self-sufficiency. Existing facilities for homeless families in metropolitan Sioux City are consistently at capacity and often there are delays of several days before a family can obtain shelter. The goal is for families that are identified and qualify to have a place to sleep that evening.



- The Welcome Home project has been developed by an Advisory Board consisting of:
- Business & Community leaders,
  - Interdenominational group of religious leaders,
  - Nonprofit agencies,
  - Both hospitals
  - The City of Sioux City,
  - The Sioux City School District.

- A goal of this project is to address any barriers families may have that contributed to their homelessness. Families that are homeless often have many barriers including:
- mental health
  - substance abuse issues
  - disabilities
  - transportation
  - lack of knowledge about available services.

The Family Specialist will help identify and overcome those barriers by forging a relationship with the family and providing intensive support. Collaborations with other agencies and services in Siouxland will be instrumental.

The Community Action Agency of Siouxland has a rich history of offering exceptional services to the poor in Woodbury County. Started in 1971, the agency offers several programs that will be of assistance to the families while in the Welcome Home Project, as well as once they exit the program, including: Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, Weatherization, Family Development and Self-Sufficiency, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Senior Community Service Employment Program, Early childhood programs for children 0-5 (with the major programs being Head Start & Early Head Start), George J. Williams Memorial Food Bank, Woodbury County General Assistance and Emergency Assistance.

**THE WELCOME HOME  
PROJECT FAMILY  
SPECIALIST WILL PROVIDE  
FAMILIES WITH:**

- A safe place to live,
- Confidentiality,
- In home visits,
- Goal setting,
- Encouragement,
- Resource Information,
- Referrals