

Bethany Outreach

A look at Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) “Host Week”...

On the afternoon of the first Sunday of our host week, the guests’ belongings and IHN cots arrive at Temple Beth El via a U-Haul truck. “Set-up” volunteers put the beds and belongings into educational classrooms, one family for each room. Cribs are set up as necessary, and clean linens are put into each room.

At 5:00 p.m., four volunteers start heating up dinner foods, which were previously delivered to the Temple by other volunteers. When the guests arrive, they’re given time to settle into their rooms and then join the volunteers for dinner.

The 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. shift enjoys dinner with the guests and everyone cleans up. An IHN staff member joins the group for the week’s orientation. (Although IHN has its own rules for all congregations, each host site does things a little differently.)

The 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. shift arrives next, and the prior volunteers go home. During this shift, the priorities are dinner clean-up, homework for the guest children and some “down time” for parents and children. The volunteers can read to the children, work on crafts or just spend time with the guests. Older guests enjoy playing pool and foosball in Temple Beth El’s youth room. Parents make lunches for the next day, not unlike other families all over Madison, getting ready for a busy week of work and school.

At 9:00 p.m., two **overnight** volunteers arrive for what is sure to be the easiest shift of the week, and the 7-9 shift says goodbye. Each overnight volunteer brings a sleeping bag and pillow and settles into a private room, on a cot supplied by IHN. By 9:00 p.m., all the children are settled into their rooms, and 10:00 p.m. is “lights out” for everyone.

At 6:00 a.m., the overnight volunteers start a pot of coffee. A knock on the families’ doors wakes everyone by 6:15 a.m. Guests help themselves to coffee and parents can make their children breakfast. It’s a rush to get ready by 7:00 a.m. when the IHN van arrives — again, just like families all over Madison. The overnight guests lock up and leave, and the IHN van takes parents to the IHN Day Center. If the parents have jobs, they leave from there. Kids are taken to school, to daycare or stay with their parents.

By 5:00 p.m., the van departs the Day Center, and guests arrive at Temple Beth El in time for dinner once again. The week continues in this way until the second Sunday of the week. After guests leave at 7:00 a.m., the “take-down” shift loads cots and belongs back onto the U-Haul and turns family guest rooms back into educational classrooms.

All Bethany members are invited and encouraged to help in this rewarding outreach ministry. It’s a great volunteer opportunity for both singles and families. In addition to the shifts described above, we also need “behind-the-scenes” workers who purchase groceries and prepare dinners. We’ll be touring the IHN Day Center as a group at **7:00 on the evening of Wednesday, May 7** for a “Homes for Families” tour. Please consider joining us to find out more about IHN, with no obligation to volunteer. More details later!

If you have questions in the meantime, please call Bethany’s IHN Coordinator, Tracey Reams, at 829-1176.

March food drive

During this month of March, the Outreach Committee is encouraging the donation of cold cereal (any kind) for delivery to the Allied Drive Food Pantry. Hunger is a year long problem for many local residents. Thanks for your generosity and support of our March Food Drive.

