



Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network

# RAIHN

an affiliate of Family Promise®

**CAR CITY 2016**...RAIHN's fourth Car City raised **over \$23,500**, exceeding our goal of \$20,000! We had over 125 participants enjoy a delicious meal, photography by Arleen Thaler and Julie Oldfield, and CAR-aoke, with 60 individuals spending the night sleeping in their cars to raise awareness of family homelessness. A HUGE thank you to our **2016 sponsors**: Realtor's Charitable Foundation, Eric Mower & Associates, Excellus, Clarity Mediations, Heveron & Company CPAs, Marchioni & Associates, Monroe Brake & Motor LLC, Northgate Carwash, Ralph Honda, Tasteful Connections, Urbanski Insurance, USA Payroll, Wegmans, and Woods Oviatt Gilman LLP.



**SAVE THE DATE for Car City 2017 - May 6th/7th!**



### DONOR SPOTLIGHT...

A BIG thank you to St. John of Rochester for their support of RAIHN through tithing. Representatives from St. John visited and toured the Day Center in May. The below picture is the check presentation. THANK YOU St. John of Rochester!



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT...

The RAIHN Coordinators were the recipients of the *Carol Ritter Wright Award for Volunteer Service* through RAAVS (Rochester Area Administrators of Volunteer Services). The award recognizes an individual volunteer or a volunteer group for their outstanding volunteer service in the Greater Rochester Area. Nominees were reviewed on the following criteria: (1) community needs and solutions, (2) connection building, (3) ongoing involvement, (4) impact, and (5) innovation.

**We are so very proud of the RAIHN Coordinators! There could not be a more deserving group!**



## SOMETHING TO SHARE...

The following is excerpted from an email that was sent from RAIHN Coordinator, Mary Bookout from Downtown United Presbyterian Church, to her RAIHN volunteer group. She wrote this following the May Coordinator's meeting, during which three RAIHN graduates presented on their experiences at RAIHN. (Mary granted permission to use this - thank you Mary!)

### **"Sometimes you'd rather sleep in your car."**

We were at the RAIHN coordinators meeting this month, and three RAIHN guests were there to talk about their experiences, but all of them wanted us to know what it was like in other shelters too.

"They tell you what you have to do, but you don't get any help doing it. Sometimes you'd rather sleep in your car." All three guests agreed, and each of them had eloquent appreciation for the ways RAIHN had helped her and her children move along toward independence and a safe place to live.

"RAIHN didn't break my children's spirit," one said, and we immediately wondered what had happened to her young children in other places. We could see what was happening here. Her youngest had climbed happily into a lap, his brother was playing with another of the coordinators. These were friends, from a week or a month back, and the boys had greeted them rapturously the minute they saw them.

"It was so bad, it made me feel mean and evil back." Another spoke bitterly of time in a shelter. "I wasn't the person I wanted to be. I don't know what would have happened to me if I'd stayed there."

She told how RAIHN volunteers had welcomed her warmly and accepted her without judging, and how, nurtured by that warmth, she had begun to be able to trust people and start to move toward being the person she did want to be. She graduated from RAIHN more than a year ago and is working at the library with the Flower City America program. A few weeks ago, she taught a Life Skills class on financial literacy to the current group of

RAIHN guests.

The third member of the panel told how she'd just started at SUNY Brockport when the bottom fell out and she came into the RAIHN program. Like many of our guests, she said, "I never thought it could happen to me, that I'd need help like that." She was in and out of RAIHN in three weeks and is well on her way to finishing a degree in Mental Health Counseling, but she reminded us that hard times can happen to any family. None of us is immune to trouble.

We asked the guests for ways we could make the program better, and they suggested very politely that we might try to tell the next church what our menus have been so families didn't get the same thing day after day. They also said gently that while they enjoy the generous desserts offered, they don't want their children to get the idea that cake and ice cream with a side of cookies should be everyday fare. Maybe we could hold back a little and serve fruit half the time. We can do that.

These three women guests also talked about occasional volunteers who pried, or made belittling remarks. You could see on the faces of every coordinator there that every one of us would rather work any number of hours than have that happen on our watch. I love seeing the ways volunteers connect with our guests, and I think the volunteers from Downtown Presbyterian and the Quakers are amazing, but it's worth being reminded that we need to demonstrate loving welcome in every encounter with the RAIHN families, whether we're official hosts or just riding up in the elevator.

Next week, one of the moms and her four children are scheduled to graduate to a place of their own, and Kim, the Network Director, has applications from five families sitting on her desk, each of which is hoping to fill that one open spot. In the past year, we've had to turn away 300 families. **Three hundred families.** And some of them are in their cars. And others are at the Cadillac Hotel which is worse than sleeping in a car. This is right here, right now, right down the street from us. We need to think about it.

We ended the evening with an important question. We spend a lot of time, we coordinators, working on cultural sensitivity, and we worry that quite often most of our guests are African-American and most of our volunteers are white. We asked the guests what we could do better.

At that point, an African-American coordinator rose to speak. "We have love. And love can transcend differences." And the three guests agreed. "We have love, and God is here. And in all that love, we feel safe."

**To welcome in love is to do and say,  
The kindest thing in the kindest way.  
We can all keep that in mind. We do. And we know it is a privilege, a humungous,  
ginormous privilege, to be able to do something that truly makes a difference. One  
person, one child, one family matters.**

**Together we are making a difference and  
GETTING FAMILIES HOME...FOR GOOD!**



RAIHN  
34 Meigs St.  
Rochester, NY 14607  
585-506-9050

Click here to [Unsubscribe](#)

**vertical  
response**  
A DELUXE COMPANY  
Free Email Marketing >>