



Clare Guest House Newsletter

Vol. 1, No. 1 October, 2006



Clare Guest House 1918 Douglas St. Sioux City, Iowa 51104

Clare Guest House Celebrates First Anniversary!

from Sister Gwen. . .

Clare Guest House is truly a product in the making and an example of what the saying means: "it takes a village"! Clare Guest House was birthed from many, many generous donors. The major donor is the Sisters of St Francis of Dubuque, Iowa with the objective of providing a temporary safe home for motivated women to assist their reentry into society. Clare Guest House is an outgrowth of the Sioux City Multicultural Neighborhood Project that was established eight years ago.

We are so grateful for the continued support from "the village"! Today this took the form of garden products, bread, spices, greeting cards, financial gifts from near and far, fresh fruit, and laundry soap. Thank you all so much!

Our first guest arrived on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Dec 12, 2005. We have hosted nine guests: five have moved on and more are awaiting placement here from the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women at Mitchellville. This temporary time of two to six months at Clare Guest House is a constant struggle for each woman to stay focused and to live out the dream in her heart. These words from the mouths of three of our guests, past and present, say it all:

When I first learned I was to come to live here at Clare Guest House I was very reserved. Then when the day came for me to arrive I felt excited for the new opportunity. However, as I arrived I was filled with nervousness and doubt. I doubted my ability to live under a nun's domain, so to speak. Now that I have been here some short days I have come to be grateful for the opportunity it has given me. I have received many gifts from the experience. I thank God and Sister Gwen for this opportunity and for being blessed enough to realize it. R.

I am thankful to the Sisters for opening Clare Guest House. Otherwise I would still be in prison right now. It's given me the opportunity to start going forward with my life. I plan on going to school to further my education and job opportunities. I have a wonderful relationship with my family, and I spend time with my daughter and grandson. Being here instead of prison has helped me tremendously with my recovery. C.

I want to thank Gwen and everyone else involved with Clare Guest House for giving me a safe place to "start again." It truly was a blessing for me as well as to meet other women who are going through the same thing.

I hope that the house continues on so other women will have the opportunity to live again. L.

Help us celebrate our first anniversary!

Drop by for coffee and donuts on Sunday, Oct 22,
between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.
1918 Douglas Street

About Clare House...

... a place where motivated women can find a supportive community to assist their reentry into society after having been incarcerated.

Clare Guest House believes that every woman

- is created in the image and likeness of God and therefore has dignity and deserves respect.
- has the ability to grow and deserves support in her development.
- needs healthy relationships and deserves to live in a safe and secure community, regardless of race, religion, age, sexual orientation or disability.

Clare Guest House believes that every woman returning from prison deserves

- support in the transition toward fully responsible citizenship.
- a mentor who will facilitate this transition.
- the opportunity to experience respectful community living.
- assistance in finding employment and housing.

"God gives a home to the forsaken and leads forth prisoners to prosperity"

—Psalm 65



Clare Guest House Mentoring Program

—from Sister Shirley Fineran

The goal of the Mentoring Program is to support the transition of the guests toward fully responsible lives in the community. Each guest is matched with a woman from the community who will journey with her as she experiences reentry into the community. The mentor offers support through a weekly one-to-one contact which may involve discussion of issues of concern to the guest, focus on self esteem, or simply quality time together. The mentoring relationship is intended to be a support to assist the woman reach future goals she has set for herself. The two women sometimes go for ice cream, shopping or engage in a community event together, but the focus is always on building the relationship and encouraging

the woman to become a stronger and more self-assured person.

Mentors meet together once a month for dinner at Sister Shirley Fineran's home to share concerns and to receive support for their role in the guests' lives. Then Sister Shirley and the mentors go to Clare Guest House and have dessert with the women and spend an hour participating in a planned activity. The sharing of both mentors and mentees has always been rich and insightful. Depending on the situation, some of the mentors and women remain in contact after they leave the House, and the women are invited to continue to come back for the monthly get-together.

With Gratitude...

Many giving hearts and hands have given Clare Guest House time and energy. These hours of presence and work have been total gift. In-kind services have included renovating the house (painting rooms, cleaning throughout the house, refinishing the dining room floor, laying linoleum, sewing curtains, and much more), staying in the house to relieve Sister Gwen, lawn upkeep and snow removal and landscaping, and the donation of food and household supplies.

Our gratitude also goes to Mercy Medical Center for being a major donor to Clare Guest House and for providing the printing for this initial newsletter.

Clare Guest House opened on October 17, 2005.

Clare House Income and Expenses --July '05 through June '06

INCOME



EXPENSES





Clare Guest House
1918 Douglas St.
Sioux City, Iowa 51104
712 xxx-xxx

Some things that we can do:

- Examine our own attitudes toward persons who have been or are incarcerated.
What terms do we use to describe them?
- Support the families of prisoners if they are our neighbors, family members, etc.
If we know someone in prison, write to them.
- Learn about the stands of our churches on issues that deal with prisoners.
Most Christian churches and Jewish synagogues are taking strong stands for prison reform and against capital punishment.
- Call the detention center and local jail.
Is there anything that can be done by our family or our service groups, especially at holiday time?
- Support the work of Clare Guest House by financial and in kind donations.
- Offer to volunteer our time.

If you wish to volunteer your time, please call Sr. Gwen at:

712-255-1916 or e-mail her at glhennessy@hotmail.com

Volunteers are needed as mentors, to provide respite for regular staff, and to do simple household repairs. We often need paper products, coffee, laundry soap.

Financial donations to Clare Guest House should be made out to

Sioux City Multicultural Neighborhood Project
1918 Douglas St
Sioux City IA 51104 (All donations are tax deductible.)