

MEDIA RELEASE
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EXCLUSIVE TO THE DAILY NONPAREIL

CONTACT: Gina Primmer, Executive Director Habitat for Humanity of Council Bluffs
(712) 328-9476, gina@habitatcb.org

Jerry Mathiasen, Sr. Vice President, Iowa West Foundation
(712) 309-3002, jmathiasen@iowawestfoundation.org

Habitat for Humanity of Council Bluffs and Iowa West Foundation Announce Neighborhood Initiative

Partnership will Enhance Neighborhood Programs

To expand on the successes of the past seven years and increase impact, Habitat for Humanity of Council Bluffs and the Iowa West Foundation announced a new partnership that will transition the operations of the Neighborhood Center to Habitat as a new phase of the foundation's original initiative. A grant of \$167,000 has been awarded for the phase.

Habitat Executive Director Gina Primmer said that Iowa West Foundation's support for the additional phase is a great fit for Habitat's work.

"Several years ago we started to change the way we approached our housing mission," she said. "Instead of looking at our work through the lens of single homes and individual families, we realized we could impact many families and whole neighborhoods if we were open to changing the way we deliver services. This partnership with the Iowa West Foundation is a logical next step for us because it will allow us to pursue our strategic goals and help the foundation achieve a goal of community-wide neighborhood revitalization."

Pete Tulipana, President and CEO of the Iowa West Foundation, said the foundation's board remains committed to neighborhood revitalization and is excited to begin the new partnership based on Habitat's national experience with asset based community development.

"To assist the Iowa West Foundation with its strategic planning, last year we did a major outreach into the community to gather input from organizations and citizens, including neighborhoods and their residents," said Tulipana. "One of the clear findings was that people want neighborhood revitalization efforts to continue and to improve."

Tulipana added, "Our board embraced the importance of this work, and this is a step to do it."

Primmer said this phase will expand Habitat's Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative, and the program will have a large office and community area when Habitat opens their new facility at 1228 S. Main Street in May. She said the space will include meeting space, a resource lending library, computer access, and a newsletter production work station for neighborhood associations.

Habitat uses the Asset Based Community Development model to engage residents, businesses, human service agencies and local government in neighborhood improvement.

"The idea of Asset Based Community Development is to build off of what's already going well in a particular area to address the things that need improvement," Primmer said. "It avoids a one-size-fits-all approach to problem solving and typically results in a high level of resident engagement because it is a positive, strength-based approach. Because of the nature of our organizations, Habitat affiliates all over the country are embracing this."

Tulipana cited many accomplishments of the Neighborhood Center in the first phase of the initiative, including the addition of nine neighborhood associations. He thanked the staff and board members for their grassroots work which made this next step possible.

"The Neighborhood Center organized a number of citizens groups into bona fide neighborhood associations, helped them access grant funds to complete beautification and improvement projects, provided leadership and training to empower citizens to take ownership of their community and made vital connections with local government," Tulipana said. "As we move the initiative to the next phase, these achievements will undoubtedly be a springboard for Habitat's work."

Primmer said the transition from the Neighborhood Center to Habitat will begin immediately and will be complete and fully running at Habitat's new location no later than July 1. Current neighborhood association leaders will begin receiving communication from Habitat this week, but Primmer said anyone is welcome to contact her at (712) 328-9476 or gina@habitatcb.org with any questions in the meantime.

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Habitat for Humanity of Council Bluffs works to eliminate poverty housing and build strong neighborhoods using volunteer labor and donated materials and resources. Since 1993, we have built and rehabbed nearly 100 homes to sell on affordable terms to families in need and completed more than 100 critical repairs through our A Brush With Kindness program. Volunteers are the heart of our program and are always welcome – no experience needed!

The Habitat for Humanity ReStore sells new and gently used appliances, home improvement materials, furniture and other items to support our building program and keep thousands of

pounds of usable goods out of local landfills every year. Every penny of proceeds from your donations to and purchases at the ReStore directly benefit local families in need.

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The Iowa West Foundation is a private community-based foundation headquartered in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Since the establishment of its grant program in 1996, the Foundation has awarded grants totaling more than \$300 million throughout its geographical area of southwest Iowa and eastern Nebraska. The vision of the Iowa West Foundation is “a community where families choose to live and businesses choose to locate because of its quality of life and standard of living.” Funding for Iowa West grant making comes from its investment income and the Iowa West Racing Association, which receives contracted fees from casino operators – Ameristar and Harrah’s. For more information visit www.iowawestfoundation.org.