

Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting
PIHN Committee Annual Report 2020
January 17, 2021

The Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting PIHN Committee coordinates our meeting's efforts to host families transitioning to permanent housing as part of the wider efforts of the Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network (PIHN). While they prepare for a permanent place to live, PIHN guests usually stay for two-to-four weeks at a time at a religious congregation that supplies a place for guests to sleep and dinners, food and hosts. CHFM usually hosts guests for four weeks but has hosted for six weeks in some years.

In 2020, due to Covid-19 restrictions, the meetinghouse was closed beginning in March and we were unable to provide hospitality to families. We were not alone in this and PIHN's shelter program was limited to three families, who were housed in non-congregational settings and without "hosts". PIHN's more recent efforts with homelessness prevention became even more important as many families suffered loss of income due to the pandemic's economic effects. The PIHN organization continues to consider whether and how they may return to congregational shelter and hosting in the future. The CHFM PIHN Committee continues to find ways to support families in need of help in coping with or avoiding homelessness.

Our activities since our last report (October 2019) included:

1. EMERGENCY LAUNDRY: In late October 2019, PIHN asked if a new family could use our washer and dryer to catch up on laundry accumulated while they lived in their car before finding PIHN.
2. GATHERING and DELIVERING CHRISTMAS PRESENTS We did this in December 2019 for two PIHN families with eight children. Evangeline Bragitikos was our contact with PIHN and main organizer. Other committee members helped with sign-ups and gifts. The Hospitality Committee contributed cash collected from sales of Christmas decorations. Attender (now CHFM and PIHN committee member!) Paul DuSold and Marlena Santoyo made the deliveries.
3. COLLECTING FOOD and PERSONAL ITEMS: As PIHN helped more and more families avoid becoming homeless, they needed more material aid. In lieu of sheltering and hosting families in the meeting house in July, the committee urged the CHFM community to donate food and personal care items. PIHN Committee member Barbara Buonocore collected the donations on her porch and delivered them to the PIHN Day Center for distribution to families in need. Thanks to Jan Collins, we were able to send a notice to everyone who participated in hosting last year, using the information in SignUp Genius. We also made announcements after meeting and in the newsletter bulletins. The response was so generous that Barbara continued the collection until December!
4. DONATING FURNITURE and HOUSEHOLD ITEMS: Several CHFM households donated unneeded furniture and household items to PIHN families. Some donations

were coordinated to go directly to the new family, others were distributed by PIHN from their day center as needed. (NOTE: PIHN does not have a lot of storage space. If you have an item you want to donate, please contact PIHN or the PIHN committee [pihncom@chestnuthillquakers.org] beforehand to make sure they can handle it and to arrange for delivery.)

5. MATTRESSES IN THE BASEMENT – For over two years, CHFM stored a large donation of mattresses in our basement, which PIHN picked up from time to time as their associated families needed them. The final two mattresses were picked up in September 2020.

6. SORTING and LABELING: On Saturday October 17, six members of the PIHN committee and a helper gathered in the empty Social Room at the meetinghouse, well-spaced with masks on and the doors open, to sort, bag, and label a large donation of clothing and other items made to PIHN by another organization. It was lovely to see each other face-to-face and visit the meetinghouse.

7. COORDINATING CHRISTMAS PRESENTS: In December 2020, CHFM households provided and delivered Christmas presents to nine PIHN families with 14 children. Carla White coordinated with PIHN and matched CHFM and PIHN families. This year, CHFM donors arranged gift deliveries themselves. Additional CHFM families made generous donations of gift cards to PIHN for distribution to struggling families.

PIHN committee members thank all of the meeting members and attenders who pitched in to help struggling families in new and different ways, as well as continuing to provide Christmas gifts. We would welcome anyone who would like to join our committee!

In the coming year, we hope to let all meeting members and attenders know about PIHN's program, about the families in the program and about our meeting's long participation in directly helping families from homelessness to homes.

In March 2020, the PIHN committee sadly lost Evangeline Bragitikos, Signe Wilkinson, Jan Collins, and Nancy Cox, but we were happy to add Paul DuSold to our number. Our current committee members are Barbara Buonocore, Tee Bushnell, Paul DuSold, Diane Fiske, Marlena Santoyo, Tricia Walmsley, and Carla White (clerk). We welcome new members!