

MAIN LINE FAITH

Interfaith Hospitality Network celebrates a graduation

By DAVID ROBINSON

Beth David Reform Congregation on Vaughans Lane in Gladwyne welcomed three families as guests of Interfaith Hospitality Network of the Main Line this week. Monday evening featured a celebration for two graduates leaving the program. In attendance were the IHN guests, along with the volunteers from Beth David, Church of the Redeemer and St. Katherine of Siena in Wayne who shared the

joy of the graduation.

The IHN guests arrived at Beth David on Sunday, after their week of overnights at St. Mary's Church in Ardmore. They spend a week of nights at Beth David and work the IHN program at the Norristown center during the day to find housing, employment and schooling for their children.

"We are hosts about four or five times a year," Judi Price of Beth David explained amid the flowers and balloons. "We've been a participating congrega-

tion for over 15 years. There are about 60 volunteers active at Beth David during the week we are the host. Every night, two families bring in the meals and two people stay overnight with the guests. There are people to help set up when the guests arrive and to assist the move at the end of the week. Kitchen volunteers make sure the supplies are in and that the kitchen is clean. Sometimes we have to help with transportation, and other volunteers come in to play with the children."

Beth David's Karen Wilson is a volunteer and on the board of IHN. "We're very anxious to get new congregations to participate in the program," she said. "Anyone who has ever been involved in the program will tell you they begin by thinking we are giving something to the guests, but soon realize that they actually give so much to us."

Carole Marchand, director of IHN, brought a cake and spoke to the gathered volunteers, guests and graduates. "This is

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Welcoming guests of the Interfaith Hospitality Network of the Main Line to Beth David Reform Congregation in Gladwyne are (from left) Jacki Pearman, Judi Price, Judy Leib and Rabbi Jim Egolf.

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Celebration at Beth David

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our first dual graduation," she said. "One of our graduates has found housing in Reading and will be transitioning to a new program while she attends Reading Community College to become a Licensed Practical Nurse and other graduate will be attending Montgomery County Community College in Pottstown with the plan to become a teacher. In both our graduates, I saw not only growth and spirit, but also energy as they worked to achieve their weekly goals. As many of you know, in our program, every week, the goals get harder, but they never gave up. I'm so very proud of how they kept their heads held high and were so very strong through this process. They chose IHN to change their lives, and you volunteers gave your time and energy to help them, and I want to thank you all."

One graduate spoke of her appreciation to all the volunteers and of her gratitude that God had brought them into her life. The other graduate noted that her experience with the caring people at the churches and synagogues made her determined to have her own daughter become a volunteer some day, "to help others the same way you helped me."

The Interfaith Hospitality Network-Main Line is committed to helping homeless families in the community achieve lasting



DAVID ROBINSON/MainLineTimes

Karen Wilson, board member of IHN, and Carole Marchand, director of IHN of the Main Line, came for the graduation party.

independence. IHN-ML has an 83 percent success rate in facilitating the families' return to self-sufficiency. Successful graduates are also supported with additional two-year Mentoring Program. Guests arrive for housing at a host facility once every three to four months. They reside at one of the 10 host facilities from 5 p.m. to 7 a.m. for a full week, rotating among all of the host congregations over the course of the year. Typically there are three or four families (12-15 people) participating in the program each week. The host congrega-

tion supplies dinner, bedding, breakfast and supplies to pack lunches for the upcoming day. The guests are taken to the Learning Skills Center in Norristown each morning. There, they shower, do laundry and generally prepare to go to work or school.

Anyone interested in assisting the Interfaith Hospitality of the Main Line either financially or as a volunteer at one of the synagogues or churches hosting guests through the year, may visit the Web site ihncares.org for further information.