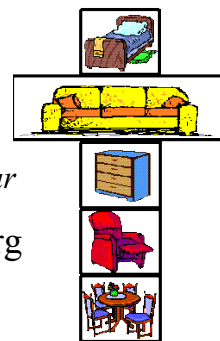


Epworth Furniture Ministry

“Being disciples of Christ by providing quality used furniture and basic household items to individuals in our community who are in need..”

FurnitureMinistry.org



Epworth Furniture Ministry

2014 Annual Report

February 10, 2015



Epworth United Methodist Church
4855 W. Central Avenue
Toledo, Ohio 43615-2237

Epworth Furniture Ministry 2014 Annual Report

The Epworth Furniture Ministry (EFM) began in 2008 and was created to provide quality, used furniture and basic household items to families in our community who are in need. Most of our clients are starting life over with little to nothing at all. This is an opportunity for us to offer hope and dignity to those in our community who have felt hopeless and invisible.

The EFM basically collects donations of quality used furniture and household items from donors throughout the Toledo area. The furniture is brought to the Perrysburg warehouse where it is held until re-gifted to families in need. Then once per month, Selection Saturday, the furniture is re-gifted to families identified by our ten partner agencies as being in need of furniture. The families participate in the process by arranging their own transportation to bring the furniture to their residence.

Because of increased donations, in part due to the advertising the truck affords, a new channel of furniture re-gifting was developed for excess furniture donations. The new channel provides furniture to second tier agencies that distribute the items to their clientele. In 2014 the second tier agencies were Western Avenue Ministry, Standing Together Against Real Slavery, US Together and the Ability Center.

2014 Highlights

A review of the 2014 furniture ministry activities can be expressed in the number of families served or number of furniture items gifted, but the real story is found in how the Lord touches the lives of those involved with the ministry, both receivers and the givers. If you talk to anyone involved with the furniture ministry you will hear them talk about doing the Lord's work, feeling the Lord's presence in what they do and an invaluable gratitude for the gift of helping those in need. Whether it is donating a sofa bed that someone will use to get a restful night's sleep or helping a client select a dinette set where the family can share a meal, the Lord's work is felt.

Selection Saturday is when those in need harvest the fruit of our labors. Every third Saturday of the month about 25 EFM volunteers open the doors of the Perrysburg warehouse for the families to select their five pieces of furniture plus blessings (household items). Volunteers help the families select furniture and blessings. Somehow, volunteer loaders are able to load all the items onto the families' vehicles. It is quite common to see tears of joy flowing from the volunteers as the families drive off with a vehicle jammed pack with furniture.

Every Selection Saturday provides heartfelt stories of individuals struggling to survive every day and how the furniture ministry provides the basic necessities of a bed to sleep on, a table to eat from or a couch to sit on. In the fall an elderly gentleman waited patiently for his turn to select furniture then diligently went through the warehouse selecting the five items he needed to fill his empty apartment. When the items were loaded on the truck he told the volunteers he felt like a child because he had his own bed to sleep on that night. The Lord's work being fulfilled.

In 2014 the furniture ministry provided 1,694 pieces of furniture to 149 families, impacting 438 family members. This was made possible by the estimated 3,000 hours donated by about 70 volunteers throughout the year. These volunteers answer the phone, schedule pickups, drive the truck, pickup the furniture, work with the partner agencies, help the clients select furniture and household items and load the client's truck. It takes a **CHURCH FAMILY** to make this happen.

In February the furniture ministry hit a milestone: the 500th family was served. The family consisted of a single parent with children living at home and the furniture provided a sense of home that was needed for the family. Since February an additional 71 families were served.

The furniture ministry not only ministers to those in need of furniture but also to those who donate furniture. Take for example a donor who recently lost a loved one and is tasked with emptying a houseful of furniture by the end of month. In most cases the furniture ministry helps the grieving donor by arranging a special pickup (using our special agents who are available during the week) to meet the donor's time constraints. Having the furniture removed before the deadline and knowing the furniture will be re-gifted to a family that has nothing comforts the families.

In addition to furniture, the furniture ministry re-gifts blessings. Blessings consist of bedding, small household appliances, china, silverware, and towels. The Epworth Family has been very generous in donating blessings as evidenced in the fall church wide appeal for towels. The ministry has a policy of giving a towel set to each family member but the stock of towels was perilously low. The Epworth Family responded with 325 towel sets, enough to supply towels to 80 families of four.

The EFM truck has greatly increased the furniture ministry exposure to the community. Non-Epworth donors see the phone number or web site on the truck and call to schedule a donation pickup. A number of phone calls start off with, "I saw your truck in my neighborhood and have some furniture to donate." In 2014 the EFM handled approximately 2,400 phone calls/emails.

While the majority of furniture donations come from individuals, local businesses and agencies provided another source. Last fall a local motel donated 65 queen mattresses and another motel donated chairs, dressers, and night stands. A regional church donated 50 restaurant chairs it received from a local business. The furniture ministry has been truly blessed with donations.

The increased donations are both a blessing and a challenge. At times there was more furniture than the existing 3,000 cubic foot warehouse could hold so an addition 1,500 cubic feet of adjacent warehouse space was obtained. Today, all 4,500 cubic feet of warehouse space is fully utilized and the ministry is looking for more space.

The added warehouse space allowed for the creation of a client waiting room where the clients can sit and have a cup of coffee while waiting to select their furniture. Prior to this the clients sat in their vehicles or outside the warehouse in all types of weather. The client waiting room is stocked with children's books (donated by Epworth members), magazines and Bibles.

The increased donation volume caused not only warehousing challenges but also re-gifting challenges. One solution to the re-gifting challenge was to have two Selection Saturdays per month but volunteer staffing issues presented an issue. EFM tried having the partner agencies increase the number of clients recommended but this has not been as successful as anticipated.

The Western Avenue Ministry (WAM) located in the South/Broadway area let us know that it would take any and all excess EFM furniture. Thus, began the second tier agency channel of re-gifting. Along with WAM, STARS (Standing Together Against Real Slavery, a human trafficking prevention group on Toledo's Eastside), the Ability Center and US Together have become second tier agencies.

In 2014, EFM delivered 90 pieces of furniture to WAM, 40 pieces to STARS, 10 pieces of furniture to US Together and 3-4 specialty beds to the Ability Center. This second tier re-gifting channel is in addition to the normal partner agency (Selection Saturday) channel.

Significant effort was made to improve the efficiency of the EFM operating model. The intake process with the partner agencies and clients was modified to streamline the process and help process the clients. A new volunteer information system was implemented permitting volunteers to sign up electronically for Selection Saturday. Pickup volunteers, free loaders, were organized into crews for the scheduled Saturday pickups.

One of the benefits of the improved intake process was the addition Zepf as a new partner agency. The partner agencies provide the critical step of vetting the individuals as to being truly in need of furniture. Utilizing partner agencies to vet the clients reduces the number of EFM volunteers needed and the partner agencies obtain help (furniture) for their clients. The partner agencies are:

- YWCA Shelter
- Family Outreach Community United Service (FOCUS)
- Mercy/St. Vincent's Healthy Connections
- TASC of Northwest Ohio
- Cocoon Shelter
- The Friendly Center
- Bethany House
- Harbor
- Family House
- Zepf

Discussions with other area agencies seeking to partner with EFM occurred throughout the year. Cherry Street Missions and St. Joseph's Catholic church talked to EFM about working together with their respective furniture programs. It was determined that EFM did not have the resources, volunteers, necessary to form a joint arrangement with either agency. However, EFM does make donation and client referrals to these and other area agencies.

Overall, 2014 was a fantastic year for the Epworth Furniture Ministry. See the 2014 summary data on the last page for a statistical look at the ministry.

Overview of Process

The furniture ministry process is simply picking up donated furniture items, getting the clients from the agencies and re-gifting the furniture items to those in needs. The furniture ministry's operating model is formed around the three fundamental areas of: donation acquisition, agency/client intake and Selection Saturday. A brief overview of the process is given below.

Donation Acquisition. Donors call or email the EFM number with a donation pickup request. All phone calls go directly to voice mail where the message is converted to an email. The phone answering volunteer returns the call or email and solicits information about the nature of the donation. If the furniture is usable the donor is scheduled for one of the four Saturday pickups and the volunteer records on the pickup roster the name, address, phone number and furniture being donated.

Once the Saturday pickup roster is filled, a routing is developed that minimizes the travel time and distance the pickup crew. The donors are called to confirm the pickup and to provide an approximate time the pickup truck will arrive. Finally, a volunteer coordinates about 30 drivers and free loaders to create pickup crews for the four Saturday pickups.

If the donation is very large, e.g., half or full truckload, a special pickup may be arranged. A volunteer contacts the special agent team (volunteers available to work during the day) to arrange for a crew to make the pickup. Depending on the availability of volunteers the special pickup is made.

The ministry also accepts blessings such as bedding, towels, dishes, utensils, and small appliances. Many donors drop off blessings at the church while other donors include blessings with the furniture picked up. The blessings go to the warehouse and are sorted and made ready for the clients.

The pickup crews bring the donated furniture to the Perrysburg warehouse where it is unloaded, sprayed, and placed in storage locations. An inventory of critical items is taken before Selection Saturday so the intake volunteers can assist the client in making choices of items needed with items available.

Agency/Client Intake Process. Throughout the month a volunteer works with the partner agencies and potential agencies answering a wide variety of questions and inquiries. The volunteer also monitors how each partner agency is performing and provides feedback to the agency.

About two weeks prior to Selection Saturday the intake volunteer notifies the partner agencies of the number of clients the agency can suggest for that month. Once the agency identifies the clients, the volunteers physically visit the clients at the agency and review the details of the Selection Saturday process with the clients.

Selection Saturday. Prior to Selection Saturday volunteers are preparing the warehouse for the clients. This preparation involves grouping furniture by type and sorting and packaging

blessings. Dishes, utensils, towels and other items are packaged into sets, that is, dishes and utensils are packaged to serve four people.

On Selection Saturday a team of about 25 volunteers is on hand to assist the clients select furniture items and load these items onto the clients vehicle. When the clients arrive a hospitality volunteer registers them and shows them to the client waiting area. The clients are served on a first come first served basis. A personal shopper volunteer guides each client through the warehouse while the client selects five furniture items. As the client selects furniture, volunteers bring these items to the loading area and then load them along with the blessings onto the client's vehicle. The ministry serves an average of 13 clients each month.

2014 Leadership Team

The volunteers providing leadership to the furniture ministry during 2014 are:

Ed Bardi, Chair	Peter Machin
Martha Chapman	Michelle Richards
Janice Harris	Keith Webb
Merilee Jahnke	

2014 Summary of Activities

<u>Clients:</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2008-2014</u>
Families Served	149	131	571
Total Family Members	438	360	1694
<u>Agencies Served:</u>			
FOCUS	14	14	60
YWCA Shelter	15	27	175
Mercy/St. V's Healthy Connections	24	25	106
Cocoon Shelter	2	4	24
TASC of Northwest Ohio	34	17	64
Bethany House	9	4	30
Harbor	41	25	97
Friendly Center	4	1	5
Family House	14	5	19
Zepf	4	-	4
Other	-	-	10
<u>Volunteers:</u>	3012	2505	11012
Total Volunteer Hours			
<u>Furniture:</u>	1426	910	3991
Total pieces of furniture			