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Organizations help families bring home the furniture

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By Lindsay Hocker, lhocker@qconline.com

When a Rock Island woman decided to leave her apartment and purchase a home, she thought it would take months to furnish it.



Photo:

"We would have just only had our bedroom furniture, pretty much," Gloria Sonnier said.

Ms. Sonnier was surprised when Jenny Hager, Bethany for Children & Families vice president of marketing and development, told her she was welcome to any of the furniture used to stage the home the nonprofit was selling.



[More photos from this shoot](#)

Photo: Stephanie Makosky

Bill Steinhauser, president and CEO of Bethany for Children and Families, and Steve Price, of Davenport, transport a refrigerator to a van Friday at the Freedom Christian Center in Davenport. The center donated the refrigerator to Bethany for Children and Families and it will be given to someone in need.

"I just grabbed her and hugged her I was so glad," Ms. Sonnier said.

Ms. Sonnier said after buying the house, which was donated to Bethany and then renovated for sale, she was "pretty well spent," so receiving some furniture and appliances was a huge help.

"It was wonderful. It took one more thing off my plate I had to worry about," she said.

Ms. Sonnier is one of many recipients of Bethany's Family Furniture Assistance Program. Bill Steinhauser, Bethany president/CEO, said the program has given more than 700 pieces of furniture to people in need this year.

Mr. Steinhauser said the program started a few years ago, when case managers asked if there was assistance for foster parents who needed beds in order to foster children. He said word got around the community, and soon people were coming to Bethany asking if they could get help as well.

Bethany employees took out a newspaper ad requesting items and turned to Augustana College and St. Ambrose University after seeing that items like futon beds, dressers and personal refrigerators were getting tossed at the end of the school year.

Mr. Steinhauser said the colleges have been very helpful, and Bethany has been able to relocate many unwanted items to families in need, and sparing the items from ending up in the landfill as well.

Bethany accepts clean "gently used" beds and other furniture. For cribs, Mr. Steinhauser said the organization prefers newer designs, and doesn't accept any on a recall list.

He said furniture is given to people on a first-come, first-served basis. Bethany maintains a list of people in need of items, and calls a few at a time when something becomes available. People remain on the list until their needs have been filled.

The Oasis, 1925 13th St., East Moline, also helps those in need of furniture, household goods and clothing. The Oasis opened in November and is a ministry of Faith Walk Outreach Center.

Faith Walk Outreach pastor Rev. Scott Culley said in its first two weeks, the Oasis has given away six couches, three dining sets, 10 dressers, and four or five living room chairs.

"As soon as we get a dresser in, it seems to go right back out. Same thing with couches and chairs," Rev. Culley said.

The Oasis accepts any furniture in good condition, with the exceptions of beds and children's furniture, because of safety concerns.

Rev. Culley said the Oasis was started because this year marks the church's 25th anniversary, and the church wanted to take a bigger step in helping the community. He said the donations and people who volunteer have made it possible to offer help at no charge, with no questions asked.

"If you have a need, it's here for you," he said.

Rev. Culley said furniture is often needed by people who have had to move and were unable to take their furniture with them, including single moms who have to start over.

Mr. Steinhauser said people in need of furniture are sometimes leaving domestic abuse situations or getting into permanent housing after being homeless.

He said the program helps make their success at a new start more possible, and makes things better for them because "moving into an empty apartment is depressing."

Mr. Steinhauser also said people who take in kids that aren't their own, such as grandparents raising their grandchildren, sometimes need furniture for the children, because they might not have the financial resources to afford the unplanned expense.

He has interacted with donors while scheduling and picking up furniture donations, and he said those experiences have been really rewarding for him.

"I've met some incredibly good people in this community," he said.

Bethany also accepts monetary donations to help pay for the cost of picking up items. Donations to Bethany can be designated to the Family Furniture Assistance Program.

To donate or get help furnishing your home

* Bethany for Children & Families' Family Furniture Assistance Program: To donate an item or get on a list for a furniture item, call (309) 797-7700 if you're in Illinois, or (563) 324-9169

if you're in Iowa. Donors can schedule a time to drop off the items, or a time for someone from Bethany to pick them up.

For more information visit www.bethany-qc.org.

* The Oasis, 1925 13th St., East Moline, a ministry of Faith Walk Outreach Center: To donate or get furniture, visit the Oasis on Thursday, Friday, or Saturday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Donors can drop off furniture then, and those looking for furniture can see if there's anything there they need. For more information about the Oasis, visit www.fwwoc.org.