

Love INC links people in need to volunteers from a network of area churches. Our mission is to transform lives and communities, In the Name of Christ.

New Gap Ministry Update: CarePortal

In the last LINC, we introduced our new Gap Ministry, CarePortal, a procedure designed to help struggling families stay together and not lose their children in the Foster Care system. I'm very pleased to share that it has been a huge success. Since February, 209 children have been served! 12 churches are fully active and 10 are currently in the enrollment process. 95% of requests from DSS have been fully met by our churches. Multiple churches have continued to follow up with the families and have entered additional needs through their own churches.

Church teams report an openness to prayer while they are meeting needs and requests. The Department of Social Services have called their experience with CarePortal, "A light in the darkness" and report that their social workers feel better supported and more resourced.

Again, the Love INC CarePortal connects churches to families in need through a vetted request process with local child welfare agencies and an online platform. The portal works perfectly with Love INC's already-established vetting practices.

Participating church members are equipped to be the *direct providers* of care. In church training, they are encouraged to form relationships with these neighbors, pray with them, and this is exactly what is happening! Church members not only meet physical needs, but have the privilege of speaking life



into families who may not otherwise be treated with dignity. CarePortal delivers hope.

Listing the needs on the portal simplifies how the church can respond. A church can choose which needs it is best suited to address. The goal of Love INC's CarePortal is to empower and strengthen families through the local church, helping it complete its mission of assisting our neighbors in need. Keeping children with their families is working!

If you would like your church to be a part of this initiative, go to the enrollment link and sign up:

<https://system.careportal.org/enrollment/church>

How CarePortal Works:

A caseworker identifies a high-impact need of a local child or family in crisis — like a crib for a new mom trying to reunify her family or a mentor for a youth transitioning out of foster care.

They submit a request through CarePortal, which immediately notifies the closest local churches and community members who've joined the network.

Each church can respond directly back to the caseworker to meet the need, or they can engage other churches and community partners who want to help.

Whether it's one church that responds, or a community of churches, businesses and individuals working together... CarePortal makes vital connections possible through an easy-to-use platform.

Every request presents the opportunity for churches to make meaningful connections. Sometimes, connection means meeting one need at just the right moment. At other times, connection starts life-changing relationships.



Blessings Over the Last Year

The past is not meant as a place to linger, but sometimes it is beneficial to look back at where you have been. Looking back into the months behind can create a compass point to assess how far you've come and provide a reading as to the direction ahead—it helps create a blueprint for the future. In doing so we are able to take note of the things that could have been done better, improvements that can be made in the present, and new things to focus on going forward.

Everyone's life has its share of unexpected events that throw our lives into chaos. It's these unexpected, "you are my last hope" kinds of phone calls we receive regularly at Love INC. On one such occasion this year, a disabled woman suddenly lost a substantial amount of monthly income, which put her in a precarious position needing help with housing. But GOD!

The staff prayed with her, but that wasn't all. Because God calls those who will serve Him, a pastor and a church body were there to assist her with her immediate need. The Love INC staff was then able to connect her to a local agency for housing assistance going forward.

Another such example of an unexpected life event occurred when a single mother who was raising her teenage son on very limited income was diagnosed with late-stage cancer. This is a perfect example of a community effort to help a neighbor in crisis. A social worker from a local agency reached out to Love INC asking if financial assistance could be provided to help this woman with her immediate needs and to establish funding for the future. Local churches banded together in a remarkable way to provide the necessary finances. It was the cooperation between local agencies and churches that resulted in meeting her needs for an entire year! That was an amazing feat that only God could have orchestrated.

Our Love INC volunteers have consistently provided important services for the community. Those things ranged from delivering personal care items to the elderly and disabled to picking up useful items for our neighbors from Kiwanis Club, and delivering food to needy neighbors just to mention a few.

A couple of specific services provided by volunteers are worth mentioning. A volunteer not only serves a neighbor but often becomes aware of a current need beyond what was originally stated. That happened this year when a volunteer was at the right place at the right time—a "divine encounter" you could say.

During a routine delivery, a client confessed that she hadn't been eating because one of her dentures was missing a tooth, and that made it difficult to chew. The volunteer called the office for suggestions on how

to help this lady. The solution turned out to be a simple trip to Walmart where the volunteer purchased a denture repair kit. The volunteer lovingly went above and beyond the call of duty and repaired the denture. What a difference a volunteer can make in a person's life!

Love INC provides myriad community services. For example, one of our volunteers committed to take a sight-disabled neighbor shopping; others partnered to deliver furniture to the needy; still more volunteers distributed personal care items at a Care Closet in a local church—and they also ministered with prayer for each person who was served. Then there was a single mother in Scottsville who needed a number of repairs made to her house. A church group in her area completed some of the work and gave her advice on how to approach the more complex repair work.

The well of donations has run deep, and we at Love INC are so grateful! The community has been very generous in their donations of household items, linens and furniture. Love INC is able to bless many neighbors, meeting their needs for practical necessities like dishes and linens that can make an apartment a home.

God has given each of us the gifts, skills, and abilities to meet needs in our community and beyond. As a church body we are called to use our gifts and talents to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Rom. 13:9). This scripture is wonderfully carried out in projects completed through the efforts of our local churches. For instance, a disabled gentleman needed a couple of upstairs rooms cleaned out. A church group committed to complete that for him. In addition to the work done, they ministered to him and prayed with him. This project not only blessed this man but the workers as well.

When Holidays Are upon Us

The beginning of the holiday season can be most challenging for our low-income and fixed-income neighbors, especially when there are children in the household. Our list of neighbors requesting help for Thanksgiving dinner tends to grow quickly. This past year was no exception. Thanks to the generous donations from individuals and church families throughout Charlottesville and Albemarle County we were able to give out 75 grocery gift cards for the Thanksgiving holiday.

But there are always those people who suffer in silence rather than ask for help. Perhaps they don't know where to go or whom to call, so they simply try to "make do." Last year, the staff at Love INC decided to reach out to our neighbors who had not often contacted us, low-income families with children and single mothers, with an offer to provide Christmas gifts for their children. With this, the Adopt-A-Family was born.

Just as the little boy in the book of John chapter 6 who donated his lunch, the Love INC Adopt-A-Family program started out as a heartfelt effort—a way to provide Christmas gifts for less fortunate children in our community, but it turned into so much more. With the help of the community, we were able to provide Christmas surprises for 14 families and a total of 27 children. We were also able to include a grocery gift card for each family. It was

Continued: Blessings Over the Last Year

as though we were on that mountain top when five loaves and two fishes fed five thousand. Only God can do that; only love for one another can do that!

Each group or individual who volunteered was matched with a family and sent an email with the child's first name, age, and clothes sizes. Any specific interests the child had were also included. This Love INC outreach was bathed in prayer as the emails went out.

We were really excited and hopeful about this special program. We were assured that God had heard our prayers when one person, who didn't know about the program, called asking if Love INC was doing anything for area children because her work group wanted to get involved in kids' Christmas gifts. That was amazing!

On the appointed date, Christmas gifts began to be delivered to the Love INC office. As the office filled up with gifts for children, the overwhelming generosity of all of the donors left us speechless.

We notified the families that Christmas gifts were ready to be picked up at the office. When the parents came in, they were met with so much more than they had expected. The bounty of Christmas gifts was overwhelming—and they had been provided by perfect strangers. Some of the parents were

Helping our Neighbor in Need

It's always a blessing to see our neighbors in need become no longer in need! Recently, we received a request from a Region Ten worker about a client who was moving into a new apartment and needed household items. Love INC Charlottesville-Albemarle was able to play an important part in making that person's new house a *home*.

One of the Region Ten workers was very appreciative of the help Love INC provided. She mentioned on the phone that it is amazing that one organization was able to find her client housing; while another organization (Love INC Charlottesville-Albemarle) helped her client with household items. The caseworker said it was wonderful the way different organizations were able to play such vital a role in helping the community, and we at Love INC are grateful to be part of it!

Here at Love INC we are working hard to help our neighbors. As the Bible states in Galatians 6:10, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith." We are grateful that every day we have the opportunity to work for the good of all that call or come into our office. Each day is another opportunity to do what the Lord desires of us to do as Christians. ■

so blessed they were brought to tears.

There are a number of projects, large and small on our waiting list to be completed in 2024. To mention a few, two single retired ladies of low-income status need the outside of their houses painted and the paint needs to be provided; a single retired disabled gentleman needs his roof repaired; rooms need to be painted; an elderly lady needs to have slip-resistant strips purchased and installed on her ramp. These are just a few of the outstanding projects waiting for faithful volunteers to commit to and complete in 2024. Imagine what blessings everyone will receive in completing these tasks!

So now it's up to you. Who will step up to meet these challenges in this new year? We hope many of our volunteers will continue to say, "Here I am, send me." ■

By Jane Deming

The Least of These

Each month seems like a whirlwind of activity in the Love INC clearinghouse and while the "prize" doesn't come with a trophy, it's giving high priority to Jesus' call to "serve the least of these my brethren."

We're always amazed at the number of calls we receive for assistance. Many, we refer to agencies such as Pathways in the city of Charlottesville or the Department of Social Services in Albemarle County. And although we are not a direct funding source, when there is a legitimate need that will get someone back on their feet, we are able to direct our neighbors in need to a resource.

One recent blessing occurred when we received a request for a queen-sized bed from a neighbor at the Crossings in Charlottesville. We were actually able to locate a king-sized bed—an upgrade! A volunteer provided transportation and the neighbor in need who suffers from PTSD had his bed delivered. As the mattress was brought into his room, tears streamed down his face. "God bless you! God bless you!" he repeated several times. After completing the move, we had a word of prayer with him and his tears turned to sobs of gratitude.

Sorrow turns to joy here at Love INC on a regular basis. We have witnessed joyful recipients giving thanks to God for our ministry. A drug-addicted woman fighting hard to regain custody of her children was able to pick up a bed for her son and clothes for herself, along with some much-needed kitchenware. Another woman picked up car seats for her children. She also needed various clothing items and we supplied those as well. These folks are not shy about showing their appreciation!

Here at Love INC Charlottesville-Albemarle, the "joy of the Lord is our strength," and we are blessed many times over to show the Lord's power to our neighbors and our community. These are but a few of the many glad stories that unfold daily as we serve the Lord together. ■

Mission, Mission, Mission!

Love INC's mission is "to mobilize local churches to transform lives and communities In the Name of Christ." To mobilize is to marshal for action. In other words, identify people in need for the church to assist. Churches sometimes think our mission is to find volunteers or to meet needs, which leads them to misunderstand their relationship to the ministry. Our mission is not to seek volunteer's from the church or to do the work but simply to give the church opportunities for Christian service...what they are called to do. Isn't the role of the church to respond with the love of Christ to the neighbors that Love In the Name of Christ connects them with?

Love INC should be a tool in the church's toolbox to help them fulfill their mission, which, should be the same as ours; "to transform lives and communities, In the Name of Christ?"

Without the churches, Love INC does not exist. Love INC is churches working together to reach out to people in need. Our neighbors in need. The Church is the hands and feet of Christ, not Love INC. We are supposed to stay in the background with the church being front and center in the community. **CarePortal is a perfect example of churches working together!**

Romans 12:3-8 lists the gifts we are given. The question is, are we willing to use the gifts and talents God has given us to help our neighbors in need? Simply meeting a material

need doesn't transform anyone which is why Love INC does not focus on the requested need as most other organizations do. Love INC focuses on the *person!* How do you transform a life without having a relationship with that person?

Love INC is a bridge that connects neighbors in need with the people, resources (relational, emotional, spiritual and material) and the love of God in local Christian churches. Love INC is a strategy to help congregations help their neighbors in need.

Love INC is a cooperative effort between churches and community agencies to provide effective help for people in the community...

To transform lives and communities, In the Name of Christ! ■



Blessings,
INSERT SIGNATURE
Raymond Klein
Executive Director



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Bill Mack
Elaine Callaghan
Isabel Coffin
Jane Deming
Beth Fraser
Dan Harris
Delores Hubert
Dave Kamienski
Susan Keeney
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Vicki Morgan
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LOVE INC Contact Hours

Monday through Friday
9:30 A.M.— 4 P.M.

Telephone Line

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