



Recycling Furniture for Families 2022 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Dear Neighbor,

As this year comes to a close, we reflect on and celebrate 20 years in this great community.

Still, too many local families are living on the cusp of poverty or rebuilding after tragedy. With the economy more in flux than usual, it's our most vulnerable neighbors who live with the greatest risk.

At Recycling Furniture for Families (RF4F), we serve McLean County families and individuals who need furnishings to get back on their feet and make their new surroundings feel like home.

They need a fresh start. They need a helping hand. And they need a sense of stability and security. **Having household items to call their own makes all the difference.**

Since 2002, we have served more than 11,000 families, including 23,300 individuals, with the home necessities they need and the sense of well-being they deserve. Thanks to our community of supporters, we've offered more than 102,700 large furniture items, plus countless small kitchen items and linens.

With an eye on the next 20 years of community service and partnership, we know we need to invest in our warehouse to continue our life-changing mission. Our downtown building was built in 1950, which means it brings both character and challenges.

We project critical repairs and maintenance to our warehouse to require \$75,000 over the next year. This includes a new roof, a new parking lot, and resurfacing the front of the building so that our clients, volunteers, and small staff can collaborate in a safe environment.

Your financial support is essential to the safety and stability we provide to local families. We ask that you give the gift of turning lives around.

Donate by visiting rf4f.org/donate or by mailing a check to 515 N. Center St. in Bloomington.

Sending blessing and gratitude to you and yours,

Executive Director Frank Downes
& the Recycling Furniture for Families Team



Creating Connections with Taryn Schroeder

If you've called the warehouse or walked through the office, you've probably met Taryn Schroeder. She's worked with Recycling Furniture for Families every morning for the past year doing "a little bit of everything."

Taryn manages the front desk, confirming appointments and donation pick-ups/deliveries, helping coordinate the truck schedule, filling out paperwork, and mailing newsletters and donation forms. She even spends some time in the warehouse organizing and cleaning furniture.

She got connected with RF4F through Vera Traver, a community advocate and one of our newest Board Members. Taryn and Vera live together and when the job opening became available in the office, Vera encouraged Taryn to apply. After volunteering a few times to make sure she was the right fit, she's been part of the small RF4F staff ever since.

"We do awesome work. It's for people who are trying to get their first place, or we serve a lot of people fleeing domestic violence. And I've met some really good people from the community, including some great volunteers," shares Taryn.



Taryn's position is part of Illinois Able's Senior Community Service Employment Program and National Asian Pacific Center on Aging's "Experience Works" project. The aim is to train adults over 55 on new job skills so they can not only have more independence and financial stability for themselves, but they can also be part of the community at the same time.

This job has given Taryn a new sense of purpose: "This has been a great opportunity for me to do something during the day and get out in public and put myself to some use."

Working with people from the community has become Taryn's favorite part of the job, despite being hesitant in the beginning. She explains, "I was really shy when I first started, but now I like talking on the phone and helping people who come through the office."

And seeing people's reactions—both client families and volunteers—can be overwhelming sometimes, in the best way. Taryn recounts, "I've seen people cry when they get their furniture. And I've seen volunteers cry too, saying the families we work with are so nice and appreciative."

“ Client families come in looking depressed and leave with a big smile. They're always so happy when they receive their furniture. ”



Volunteer Spotlight: Tim Thul

After 30+ years living in the community and raising three children with his wife, Tim Thul was searching for a way to give back. When he heard a sermon at Eastview about being of service, he quickly got connected with RF4F.

For the past year, Tim has been driving the RF4F truck to deliver furniture to households in need and pick up furniture from households with extra to share.

"I instantly found this volunteer role to be perfect for me. I didn't need any special skills to get started—just a willing heart and a strong back. I love volunteering here. It is so organized and the warehouse team makes it so easy to show up and know exactly what's in store for my two-hour shift. Everything about it is simple and straightforward with strong boundaries."

Having a clear, 2-hour shift makes it convenient for Tim to plan his volunteer role around his job at State Farm. He has been disappointed with some volunteer and ministry opportunities in the past, feeling frustrated when he's shown up not knowing what to do or how long he'd be expected to stay.

To Tim, RF4F runs like a well-oiled machine: **"This is the most organized volunteer opportunity I've ever had.** I just show up on time and everything is ready. The truck is neatly loaded, the map ready, we call the family expecting us, and we get going."

Seeing the families who benefit from the furniture is a highlight for Tim. "It's heartwarming and heartbreaking at the same time to see their gratitude. It might be a single mom with three kids standing in front of an empty apartment, who now have a home full of furniture. The kids are excited to have beds, the mom to have a dresser."

And knowing that the furniture he picks up and delivers is good quality is satisfying to Tim: "It's not junk furniture. I see the furniture we pick up and then see it go out later as it blesses the recipients."

After each shift Tim serves, he finds he is more blessed than he is blessing others: "If you are not participating in something like this, you're robbing yourself of a blessing. Plus, I get to meet and volunteer with people I truly enjoy."

Tim's advice: get involved with RF4F. **"Be blessed, meet new people, and actually make a difference."**





Recycling Furniture For Families

A Christ-centered ministry helping families in need

515 N. Center St.
Bloomington, IL 61701

Thank you for helping
your neighbors in need.

www.RF4F.org

Know Your Neighbors

Get to know the families and individuals who use our services to get back on their feet:

- 30% overcoming homelessness
- 16% living with a disability
- 7% escaping an abusive situation
- 4% veterans

On average over the past 20 years:

- Annual Households Served: 547
- Annual Household Income: \$9,816
- Family Size: 2.5
- Female Head of Household: 66%
- Age of Head of Household: 35

Total Items of Furniture Provided: 102,733

These are the essential furnishings that make our clients' new surroundings feel like home.

