



ISAAC — DOING JUSTICE

*An interfaith organizing network of congregations and strategic partners
working together to build a more just community*

July 2008



Lena Haynes with keys to her own apartment. *Photo: Amy Peterson*

Lena's story

ISAAC's impact on housing

I LIVED AT THE MISSION with up to 50 other women at night, sleeping on a mat on the floor. Not knowing who was next to me. Showering with up to 10 women. Thank God for the Mission, but it is not home.

I am one of the first people to get a County Housing Voucher, which is "Housing First" and services if you need them, after. To me it felt like a miracle, paid for by the City and County. For the last year I have lived in my own apartment. I no longer have to be out by 6 am nor in by 9 pm. I am able to have my own possessions around me. **I am one of the first people to get worth back. a County Housing Voucher...To me it felt like a miracle** schooling and job seeking, and not worry about where I am sleeping tonight. There are a lot of people still homeless in need of "Housing First" instead of just shelter. After a year I have graduated to *permanent* housing."

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Dartnman's story

ISAAC's impact on jobs

I DID 100 APPLICATIONS for jobs. It's very hard with a felony record and no work history. I was in prison for 21 years, since I was 15 years old. I got my GED and took some college classes in prison, but then the college classes were all cut. I've been home a year now. I'm trying to better myself, do good. I went to church, got baptized. McDonalds took a chance on me. I've been working there a year now.



Dartnman Atkins at his new job on construction of the I-94/131 interchange.

Photo: Amy Peterson

I heard about RCAR at church. It's a five-week training, Road Construction Apprenticeship Readiness. I had to take 3 tests—math, reading comprehension, and work keys, then a drug test and a physical—just to get in. RCAR was beautiful. The whole class visited work sites and got certified in CPR and MIOSHA. The teachers were great teachers.

I made a speech at RCAR graduation in May: "This program has been the greatest experience of my life. You are life changers. You have given myself and my

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SAVE THE DATE!

ISAAC 2008 PUBLIC MEETING

Thursday evening

October 23

at Galilee Baptist Church
1216 N. Westnedge Ave.,
Kalamazoo

COME!

*Support solutions for
our community:*

- Jobs/Economy/
Transit
- Youth Violence
Prevention
- Early Childhood
Education

Spread the word!

*Help us get
1500 people there!*

ISAAC

*Interfaith Strategy
for Advocacy & Action
in the Community*

Gamaliel Foundation Affiliate

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Lena's Story *from page 1*

Lena Haynes gave this powerful testimony at the ISAAC Issues Convention in May. Having Lena speak was a special celebration for ISAAC because, back in 2003-04, ISAAC did an important piece of the work that made Lena's local housing voucher possible.

At the first ISAAC Issues Convention in June 2003, the ISAAC Housing Task Force was formed. It found out, by interviewing local leaders with expertise on affordable housing, that our County's Housing Commission had very little power. It could not seek grants or own and manage property—the "full powers" granted to housing commissions in most cities and counties. Task force members talked with County Commissioners about how we hoped they would commit to righting this situation. Then at the first ISAAC Public Meeting, in October 2003, the Chair and several other County Commissioners stood before the 1500 people in attendance and pledged to set up a committee, with ISAAC represented, to look into increasing the Housing Commission's powers. In June 2004, the County Commission voted unanimously to give the Housing Commission the full powers allowed by federal law!

ISAAC's work, plus a great deal of hard work by County and City staff, County and City Commissioners and other community groups, has resulted in the innovative local voucher program that provides *homes* for people like Lena who were homeless.

Twenty formerly homeless individuals and families succeeded at keeping their own apartments in 2007, because of the County voucher program. At least 40 more are expected to do the same this year.

Dartnman's story *from page 1*

classmates a higher goal to strive for. You have given us hope again. Thank you for helping me realize that I am a success and that I will succeed in life.'

After RCAR, I was picked up by the Ironworkers. I go to work at 6 am and get home at 2:30 or 3:30, working on I-94 and 131. I also work at McDonalds from 10 pm to 4 am, so I can get ahead."

The RCAR program that Dartnman credits with changing his life was established because of two years of effort by ISAAC and the other Gamaliel of Michigan affiliates. After many meetings with State leaders, they got the State of Michigan to use a portion of its federal transportation funds for a Road Construction Apprenticeship Readiness program—as the Federal Highway Bill specifies! Then ISAAC, JONAH, and the Poverty Reduction Initiative formed a SW Michigan table with Michigan Works, KRESA, "You are life changers" MPRI, M-DOT, NAACP, labor, elected leaders and others. They recruited the low-income residents for this new path to a career, not just a job.

Dartnman is one of 23 graduates in the first Southwest Michigan RCAR class: 8 women and 15 men, Caucasian, African American, Hispanic and Native American—3 of them veterans, 5 ex-offenders. All passed rigorous testing to qualify, then completed intensive training.

More of Dartnman's speech at graduation: "I would like to thank God for blessing us all to be here today. Words cannot express my deepest appreciation to all the women and men who dedicated their time, energy and money to making this program a success. The feeling of accomplishment is something positive that will follow us for the rest of our lives."

Join a new task force!

Jobs/Economy/Transit Task Force

Co-chairs: Tom Powell, (temp), 1st Congregational and Scott Keeler, St. Catherine of Siena



Mondays, 7/7, 7/21, 8/4, 8/18, 9/8, 9/22, 9/29, 10/6, 10/13, 10/20 at 6:30 pm

First Congregational Church
129 South Park St.

Youth Violence Prevention Task Force

Co-chairs: Wendy Flora, Christian Church – Disciples of Christ and Kim Ross, Rock of Revelation Apostolic Church



2nd & 4th Tuesday, 6:30-8 pm
Christian Church - Disciples of Christ, 2208 Winchell Ave.

Early Childhood Education Task Force

Co-chairs: Rev. Carol Richardson, Christian Church - Disciples of Christ and Shay Cobb, Open Door Ministries COGIC



2nd & 4th Thursday, 7 pm
Open Door Ministries COGIC
416 Phelps Ave.

The new task forces formed at the Issues Convention on May 20 have just begun their work, doing one-on-ones with people with expertise on their issues. By October 23, when 1500 people will be at the ISAAC Public Meeting at Galilee Baptist, each task force will have narrowed their focus to a winnable policy change they will present and ask elected officials to publicly support.

Or join an ongoing effort

Housing Task Force

Co-chairs: Tobi Hanna-Davies, St. John's Guild & Kathy White, Galilee Baptist



2nd & 4th Monday, 1:15-2:45 pm

Diocese of Kalamazoo,
215 N. Westnedge Ave.

CB Alliance of SW Michigan

Community Benefits Agreements

Co-chairs: Rev. Milton Wells, Open Door Ministries and Chad Miller, Carpenters Union

2nd Friday, 10:45 am,

Chamber of Commerce,
346 W. Michigan Ave



Be an ISAAC Sustainer!

Your pledge is a simple and powerful action that, collectively, will make a huge impact on our ability to **transform society with a vision of community, hope and God's abundance for all people.**

It's quick and easy to pledge!

Choose an amount to invest monthly in ISAAC by Visa or MasterCard, electronic funds transfer, check or cash

www.isaackalamazoo.org
341-4213

isaac@isaackalamazoo.org

Single donations are welcome too!

Become a more powerful leader!



An Organizing Institute

Go to Gamaliel Leadership Training

Teaching ordinary citizens to unleash power within themselves to collectively impact social, political, environmental, and economic decisions affecting their lives.

Gamaliel "Weeklong" Leadership Training

Sun 7 pm-Sat noon

Offered three times:

- **July 13-19** Camarillo, CA
- **Aug 10-16**
Plymouth, MI *
- **Nov 11-17** Techny, IL

"Ntosake" Women's Leadership Training

Jan 29-31, '09 (just once/year)
Florissant, MO

ISAAC pays for training for members of dues-paying congregations and organizations.

Meals and accommodations are included. You only need to pay for your transportation.

****So take advantage of the training in Michigan!***

Call ISAAC, 341-4213

President's Message



ISAAC appreciates the continued support of the community by being involved in our 2008 Issues Convention. The participants, comprised of congregations and organizations in the Kalamazoo and Portage area, adopted three new task forces based on issues originating from our Faith and Democracy campaign. These task forces will invest in our youth of today and our future for tomorrow. I am pleased to announce that ISAAC is developing task forces around the issues of early childhood development, youth development and jobs. We also will continue our work with housing and community benefits agreements. I am asking those who have an interest and a passion for these issues to connect with ISAAC as we shape a healthy and vital community of ONE in this region, with God's help.

I am especially pleased to welcome **St. Barnabas Episcopal Church**, which joined ISAAC following the Issues Convention. Alleluia!

*Overseer Daniel Cunningham
President of ISAAC*

New ISAAC Task Forces!

- **Jobs/Economy/Transit**
- **Youth Violence Prevention**
- **Early Childhood Education**

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SAVE the DATE!
ISAAC 2008 Public Meeting
 Thursday evening
OCTOBER 23



3 new issue areas chosen by 250 people from 20 congregations!



ISAAC Issues Convention

May 20, 2008
 at St. Luke's
 Episcopal Church

