A Reason to Celebrate

Especially during the holidays many Atlantans are cozied up with loved ones around a celebratory feast, looking forward to presents, warm beds and thinking about their many blessings. The opportunity to raise a family in that kind of environment is a blessing that helps secure children’s futures.

“For many homeless and low-income families participating in the Initiative for Affordable Housing’s (IAH) program, that kind of environment is foreign,” said Lisa Wise, Executive Director of IAH. “We are often the first time these families have known stability and have had a reason to celebrate at all. Having that kind of hope truly changes the course of lives, especially for children.”

To say Tarsheka’s life has been a struggle is an understatement, and it has never been easy. When Tarsheka was 3-years-old, her mother committed suicide, leaving Tarsheka and 14 siblings from different mothers with their father in Columbus, Ga. With no other option, Tarsheka moved to Ohio to live with her grandmother who, sadly, passed away when Tarsheka was in her early teens. The siblings she knew were not faring well either – a brother in prison for many years, and a sister who died from HIV/AIDS complications. Finally, at 14-years-old, Tarsheka had no choice but to couch surf with friends and eventually ended up with no high school diploma, no couch to sleep on, no roof over her head, and no reason to celebrate.

A myriad of hard times and struggles are a common thread among IAH families, but they share a desire to create a better future for their families. From courageous decisions to get out of abusive relationships at all costs and finding shelter at Atlanta’s City of Refuge, like Tarsheka Ratliff and London Holmes (pictured at right with their families), to James Colton and his then 4 year-old son living in their truck (pictured at right with his oldest daughter and niece), these parents are learning what it takes to create reasons to celebrate.

After 3 months with IAH, Tarsheka and her two boys, ages 8 years and 8 months, are settling into their new life. A roof over their head, beds to sleep on, childcare to count on, food on the table and a job – Tarsheka is celebrating stability and making her own education a priority as she prepares to earn her GED.

IAH is also giving London and her four girls reasons to celebrate after one year in the program. Raised by her grandmother in an unstable and

(Continued on page 2)
constantly on-the-move childhood, London thought she had found a future with a man she followed to Atlanta. That future abruptly ended when London had to choose homelessness over domestic violence. After spending time at Atlanta’s City of Refuge, receiving government assistance with childcare and, now, IAH resources, London is setting goals and striving for a better future for her family.

Through it all, London has found reasons to celebrate in her girls, evidenced by their names: Sincere, age 9, Treasure, age 6, Journey, age 2 and Promise, age 13 mos. Their smiles say it all – they are loved, stable, learning and ready to take on their futures.

James, who has spent the last several years teaching himself to be handy, was hired by the Initiative as part of the 24/7 maintenance crew for their properties when his 6-year-old son’s school principal found out that the pair were living in the back of James’ SUV. Deplorable living conditions at his Uncle’s home forced them to find someplace cleaner to rest their heads. Now, with help from IAH James has a roof over his head and can help provide security and stability for his son who lives with him full time. James also supports 5 other children - 3 teen-aged daughters and twin boys aged 2.

James and his son have been with the Initiative for 8 months and his sights are set on work in Atlanta’s hot R&B scene while continuing to help IAH and widening his sphere of influence and opportunity.

Currently, 13 families are benefiting from IAH’s homeless and working family programs. Like Tarshika, London and James, these parents are working hard, learning new ways to cope, and changing habits to help create a brighter future for their families. IAH makes it possible by providing a safe place, stability, structure and even helping them find reasons to celebrate.

Put Your Donated Dollars to Work for Homeless Families

Initiative depends entirely on donations to support our work with homeless families. Since the loss of federal HUD funding two years ago, we are only able to provide housing and services for 12-15 families per year. Your donation to Initiative’s homeless program will provide help for participating families in specific ways.

$50 provides
- One week of utilities for a family in an Initiative program
- Welcome baskets for new families entering the program (laundry detergent, bleach cleaners, sponges, dish detergent, dish towels and dishcloths)

$75 provides
- School supplies and school clothes for a child in the program

$100 provides
- A monthly food voucher for a child in the program to help them grow

$300 provides
- Housing for one person for one month

$1,000 provides
- Housing and supportive services for a mother and children for one month

$2,500 provides
- Job training and support for one month
- Holiday and Back-to-School drives for children in the program
- An “Extra Wish” for families Unbudgeted expenses for additional activities and items outside the family budget (e.g. Scout registration fees, bikes, beds/bedding, personal care items, etc.)

Donate now at www.affordablehousingatl.org/donate
Providing 364 Units of Affordable Housing for Working Families

The Initiative for Affordable Housing's program is designed to answer an ever-growing need for affordable housing for low-income families and individuals in the Atlanta area. The program has two components:

- **Homes for Homeless Families** (green dots) Provide safe, secure housing for families participating in IAH's homeless supportive services program.

- **355 Units of Affordable Rental Apartments** (red dots) Located in four apartment complexes in DeKalb County, they include housing for working families and seniors.

### Initiative’s Housing in the Metro Atlanta Area

1. **Kirkwood Gardens** - 43 Units
2. **Prince Avondale** - 85 Units
3. **Magnolia Circle (Seniors)** - 84 Units
4. **Sol Luna Park** - 143 Units

### Put Your Donated Dollars to Work for Initiative’s Affordable Housing Program

This is what your donation to Initiative's affordable housing program will buy:

- **$20 provides**
  - Gardening tools for our community gardens at each property
- **$25 provides**
  - Financial planning, literacy education or other personal development classes
- **$50 provides**
  - Food vouchers for emergency family situations
- **$80 provides**
  - New software for the Business Centers located at each complex
- **$200 provides**
  - Printers for the Business Center at each complex
- **$500 provides**
  - New computers for the Business Centers

Donate now at [www.affordablehousingatl.org/donate](http://www.affordablehousingatl.org/donate)
Initiative for Affordable Housing would like to thank the following supporters for their valued generosity:

ADM Associates
All Saints’ Episcopal Church
Alternative Apparel
Amity Homes
Atlanta Hartsfield International Airport
   – Department of Aviation
Cinnabon
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West Elm

A special thanks to the Initiative Board of Directors and the neighborhood groups, businesses and individuals for their contributions of funds, pro bono services, and furniture/household items. Thanks to our volunteer communication team for their work on this newsletter and especially to Irene Yan for her design and production services.

The Shenandoah Rose Garden Club’s Holiday Hope and How you Can Help

As a community-based nonprofit organization, Initiative for Affordable Housing relies on the contributions of funds, time and the talents of its volunteers and donors like the Shenandoah Rose Garden Club. The Club has been adopting an IAH family at the holidays for the past 5 years, buying toys, clothes, gift certificates for food and addressing other needs. They were driven to help create holiday hope following a tour of the re:loom facility as a club field trip.

Here just a few ways you can have a direct impact on the work of Initiative and in the lives of those we serve:

TIME
- A few hours a week to help sort and cut clothes for re:loom
- 1-2 hours sorting and delivering donated items to homeless families
- 3-4 hours playing bingo or other games with seniors at Magnolia Circle Apartments

DONATIONS
- Cars, furniture, working appliances, school/office supplies, gently used clothes and toys, holiday decorations, etc.
- Clothing, material, thread, yarn, buttons, scissors and other sewing/craft accessories for re:loom, Initiative’s job training and employment program

TALENT
- Two hours teaching beginner computer skills at apartment complexes in the evening
- 3-4 hours a week coordinating donation pickups and volunteer events

MONEY
- Your donations DO make a difference:
  - $10 a day will house one person and keep them from being homeless
  - $5 a day pays for public transportation for a homeless mom to get to and from work
  - $3 a day pays the gas, electric, water and phone for one homeless child in an Initiative house
  - $3 a day pays for food vouchers so children have enough food to help them grow

Donate online using PayPal at www.affordablehousingatl.org

re:loom
re:loom needs donations of fabric that volunteers can recycle into materials for weaving. Material should be clean but can be torn or stained. We can use:
- Clothing, any kind
- Surplus material
- Sheets, towels, curtains, tablecloths, napkins and blankets
- Buttons and belts
- Heavy scissors
- Sewing-related items

Donations are accepted at the Weavehouse, 3032 N. Decatur Rd., Scottdale, GA, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., or bags may be left on the Weavehouse porch.

Want to help or bring your group for a re:loom Weavehouse tour?
Call 404-299-9979 to find out how.
Trinity Mercantile Design Co. owners Lisa Turner and Wallace Bryan credit the community with their success, and creative solutions for giving back is part of how they show their appreciation. Their partnership with re:loom and IAH is a great example of how they're reshaping what giving back looks like by investing in sustainability, contributing to economic growth and engaging the local community.

“We believe in what re:loom is doing,” said Wallace, “and we want to support their mission.”

From keeping fabric samples out of the landfill and working with re:loom weavers to upcycle the material into elegant totes for their customers, to inviting the community to support their Angel Tree, their strong belief in giving back is evidenced by the long list of local Decatur organizations they support. Their upcycling initiative was featured in the February issue of Atlanta Magazine this year.

“Our work with IAH started with the Angel Tree,” said Lisa. “It was one way to help homeless moms of IAH not be so stressed with the burden of gifts during the holiday season,” said Lisa. “Now we see residents of Decatur – people who aren’t even customers – coming in with their families to choose their angels.”

This year’s tree has more than 200 angels to choose from, and they are flying out of the store in record numbers.

An Earthly Angel | Frances Bankhead

Frances Bankhead is a true angel on Earth. “I just want people to know that someone is here.”

A willing and able community servant, Frances started making scarves for homeless women and children 3 years ago and more recently began bestowing her gifts on families in the Initiative’s program. She stopped counting how many she has made and donated over the years. It takes about 2 hours for each scarf, and she’s certain she’s invested over 500 hours in service to others since she began her outreach with Atlanta’s broader homeless community.

“Knitting and crocheting help me relax and it’s my gift, and a great way to give back,” she said. “Anything I can do to help people is worth my effort.”
re:loom Transforms Wear-tested Uniforms

n 2017, Delta Air Lines launched a pilot initiative to test thousands of garments from their new uniform collection. After the employee pilot, the Delta uniform team set out to find a creative way to give these garments new life.

“For items that were Delta branded and couldn’t be donated directly, we decided to get creative and have a number of partners who are helping to make fun repurposed products,” said Ekrem Dimbiloglu, Director – Airport Customer Experience. “Our latest partner is re:loom, a local Atlanta organization, that is weaving rugs, keychains and other colorful products from the Zac Posen [uniform] designs.”

More than Meets the Eye

re:loom products have a powerful impact on our community, from providing jobs and job training for homeless and low-income people, to keeping textiles out of our landfills. Here are just a few ways that purchases from re:loom are more than meets the eye:

- A chance for re:loom weavers to earn an income and participate in the economy
- Volunteer opportunities for individuals, families, and school, civic and corporate volunteer groups
- Recycling and upcycling of old uniforms, other clothing and fabric to help corporations pursue their social responsibility and sustainability goals
- New life for old clothes and fabrics with special meaning
- Diversion of tons of clothing and textile refuse from landfills
- Income from the sale of beautiful, locally handwoven rugs and home/fashion accessories to help support the re:loom program

Ringing in the season | re:loom, and ReStore

The retail partnership between the Atlanta Habitat for Humanity ReStore and IAH’s Job Training and Employee Program, re:loom, creates sustainable change and fuels resources dedicated to affordable homeownership opportunities in Atlanta.

“Shoppers love to browse and buy re:loom’s handmade items here at the ReStore. It was an honor to put the spotlight on re:loom’s mission of employing homeless and low-income individuals to weave these beautiful products at our after-hours event in early December,” said Cathy Walls, Director of ReStore Operations. “It was an exciting evening of learning, shopping and making a difference together in the community.”

The ReStore’s sales from products like these along with donations of home improvement materials, furnishings and appliances support Atlanta Habitat for Humanity and its mission to transform communities by acting as a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization.
Refuge at re:loom

One of re:loom’s newest weavers brought her weaving trade with her all the way from Afghanistan. Maryam, a single mother of two young children, came to America in February, 2018 seeking refuge for her family. She was resettled in Clarkston, GA with New American Pathways, a resettlement agency.

“In Afghanistan and Pakistan we didn’t have one happy day,” she said. “Here, life is better. Here we are happy and comfortable.”

She attributes much of her happiness to her job at re:loom where she applies her skills as a weaver to help create products that create hope and refuge for families not unlike her own. Her story was featured on the Today Show earlier this year as part of a story highlighting Clarkston’s unique attractiveness to refugees. Home to more than 30% foreign-born citizens, the city is known as “The most ethnically diverse square mile in America.” Maryam is proud to be part of the fabric of Clarkston and is grateful for the refuge she has found weaving her life’s craft into beautiful pieces of art at re:loom.

If you’d like to learn more about Maryam’s story, search the Today Show’s website at www.today.com and look for Clarkston, GA.

re:loom Weavers Create Stunning One-of-A-Kind and Custom Products

The weavers of re:loom can create a wide variety of custom and individually-designed products, including:

[A] Table Runners
[B] Rugs
[C] Bracelets

For more information about these and other unique and custom designed products, go to re:loom.org or contact Lisa Wise at 404-299-9979
Who We Are & What We Do

OUR MISSION: To provide permanent, affordable housing to homeless and low-income families. Initiative is also committed to the provision of necessary supportive services to empower families to reach their personal goals and independence.

WHO WE ARE: Initiative for Affordable Housing, Inc., is a private non-profit agency that serves homeless and low-income families. Founded in 1990 by two churches with long histories of social involvement in the local community, Initiative operates with the belief that safe, stable housing is essential, and that housing is most successful when additional resources are provided to strengthen and stabilize families.

WHAT WE DO: Initiative provides homeless women and children with a special program of housing and intensive social services to help them attain employment, financial literacy and permanent housing. Unique in its holistic approach, the Homeless Program began in 1990 and provides long-term customized social services, financial literacy training and many other resources while families live in Initiative-owned housing. Since 1996, Initiative has also developed and operates affordable rental housing in DeKalb County. Families who work in low-wage jobs are able to realistically live on the wages they earn in safe and decent housing by renting one of Initiative’s 364 apartments or single-family houses. Our job training and employment program, re:loom, provides jobs and job skill training for homeless and low-income adults in weaving, sales, customer service, problem solving and decision making. The weavers recycle used clothing into handwoven gift products for sale.

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Be sure to visit our websites at
www.affordablehousingatl.org and www.reloom.org

INITIATIVE STAFF

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES 404-299-9979
Lisa Wise Executive Director
Claire Sellers-Sneed Social Worker
Carol Sowell Business Administrator

SITE MANAGEMENT
Frieda Dent Asset Manager
Donna Rose Magnolia Circle 404-243-1553
Linda Langford Kirkwood Gardens & Sol Luna Park Apartments 404-288-5633
Ronda Anthony Prince Avondale Apts. 404-501-0556

EMPLOYMENT SITE
Tammy Carden Operations Manager
re:loom Weavehouse 3032 N. Decatur Rd., Scottdale, GA 30079, 404-247-4134

INITIATIVE HOUSING SITES

Prince Avondale – 85 Units – Renovated 1999 TEL 404-501-0556
965 Nottingham Drive, Avondale Estates, GA 30002
One & Two Bedrooms, Community/Computer Center

Sol Luna Park – 143 Units – Renovated 2004-2005 TEL 404-288-5633
3850 Memorial Drive, Decatur GA 30032
One, Two And Three Bedrooms, Community/Computer Center, Rose Garden

Magnolia Circle – 84 Units Of New Construction TEL 404-243-1553
100 Dash Lewis Drive, Decatur, GA 30034
Independent Living For Seniors 62+, Energy Efficient, Bird/Wildlife Sanctuary

Kirkwood Gardens – 43 Units – Renovated 2005 TEL 404-378-6563
1929 Hosea Williams Drive SE, Atlanta, GA 30317
One & Two Bedrooms, Intown Location, Energy Efficient, Hardwood Floors, Courtyard With Fountain, Community/Computer Center