

## Friends In Action Brings Hope and Friendship to Families in Need

[www.iworksmc.org](http://www.iworksmc.org)

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Interfaith Works is sincerely grateful to The Wolpoff Family Foundation for its generous support of the Friends In Action (FIA) program that brings hope and friendship to families in need.

Through homeless and housing programs, case management, emergency support, eviction prevention, and vocational services Interfaith Works strengthens and supports more than 20,000 Montgomery County residents each year who are seeking a better today and tomorrow.

FIA provides intensive case management, mentoring and supportive services for vulnerable, unstable families at risk for homelessness. FIA links client families with teams of trained volunteer mentors who provide friendship, role modeling, advice and counsel to help these fragile families stabilize and work toward economic and social independence. Families and mentors are supported by Friends In Action professional case managers who provide wrap-around social services for clients and training and ongoing support for mentor teams.

One of Interfaith Works' FIA mentors, Mary Dixon, recently shared the following story about how mentoring has touched her life:

I still get calls, maybe once or twice a year. "How are you?" "We were worried; we heard you got hit with a big snow storm." "How is your family?" They still care. The friendship still exists and it is real. So much has changed for me since Friends in Action came into my life! I am stronger; I smile more; I am optimistic; I am surrounded by true friends - those who care about my destiny, in good times and in bad times. The ironic part is that I am part of a mentoring team, not a mentored

The Wolpoff Family Foundation, Inc.  
9841 Washingtonian Boulevard  
Suite 410  
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

P 301.917.2358  
F 301.917.2398

[info@wolpoff-familyfoundation.org](mailto:info@wolpoff-familyfoundation.org)

[www.wolpoff-familyfoundation.org](http://www.wolpoff-familyfoundation.org)

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family. The families we have mentored over the last seven years have had an impact on me (more than they may ever realize) and I always hope that we have had an impact on them, as well.

As our case workers have trained and supported us, I have become more resourceful in helping our families reach their goals. I am an organized person and I like tangible goals listed on the Family Plan. I especially like the challenge of helping a family attain goals. One more thing to check off their list!

Yet, as much as a tangible action plan is necessary to help a family become independent and move out of poverty, I realize that's not the most important goal. The real poverty comes from solitude, from feeling alone, ashamed, depressed, or embarrassed. When families take the initiative to change their condition, they reach out and welcome relationships into their lives. This is a huge step! I know from my experiences how difficult it can be to ask for help, I want to do it all myself.

My day brightens when someone calls me to see how I am doing, or when I meet a friend for a cup of coffee or a conversation while the kids enjoy the playground. My world opens up. I am loved. I can look to all that is good and true and beautiful. I want this for everyone! And because of what my friends have shown me, I am able to share that with others. I do not mentor so that I can claim some sort of responsibility for checking off goals, I mentor because I am a friend, and because I love, and because I am loved. I mentor because I see the smile, the tear, the glow, the challenge, and the joy in someone taking the initiative to change their condition.

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