



PROFILES OF HOPE: Meet John McNeil, an IOH donor, volunteer, advocate and board member

I grew up in New Orleans during the 60's in a family of eight. We lived in a lower middle class, blue collar neighborhood. Our family didn't own a car and used public transit or walked where we needed to go. My wardrobe consisted primarily of hand-me-downs, and my three brothers and I shared a bedroom. The whole family ate on a picnic table in the kitchen and shared one bathroom. My father worked long, hard hours and struggled to meet the needs of our large family. As a child I didn't know the details of my parents' finances, except what I heard in frustrated arguments. I just knew we had a simple house, food at every meal, went to Catholic school (on financial scholarships), and lived on some kind of financial fringe. What our family did have, however, was our neighborhood, school, relatives and local church parish that "looked after" the McNeil family. There were people we could count on. Our family avoided any major catastrophe - such as foreclosure, eviction, lack of meals or utilities - because of this outside support.

Fast forward to today as I serve and donate to IOH: I see my childhood family in the families living there. They are no different than my family of origin, or my family today. These families work very hard and want great things for their children. What they lack is the outside support my family relied upon; so, when hardships hit, these families could not avoid catastrophe and lost their housing.

Because of the opportunities I received growing up, I could provide an even better life for my family (as a husband and father of four), than my parents could for theirs. This is the goal of IOH: to equip parents to live better lives - financially, emotionally and physically - so that they in turn can equip their children to live better lives. And so it goes, each generation strengthening - not crippling - the next.

IOH provides safe transitional housing, teaches essential life skills, provides the opportunity to gain financial traction, and breaks the cycle of poverty for the next generation. I believe there is no better investment of one's love, service or financial contribution than the strengthening of families, which is the beautiful mission of IOH.