

## Getting to know Kathy Izard

(Editor's Note: This is the first in an on-going series of interviews and Q&A's with WIF members. Please submit your ideas of members we should interview).



Kathy Izard, a WIF member since 2004, has always been committed to giving back. As a girl, she joined her family in volunteering in their border city of El Paso, TX. As an adult, Kathy wanted her four daughters to have a similar experience, and in 1995, the family started spending Sunday mornings volunteering in the Urban Ministry Center's soup kitchen.

More than a decade later, Kathy joined forces with Sarah Belk in creating and coordinating the Urban Ministry Center's first annual fundraiser, True Blessings. Not only was True Blessings a tremendous success for the Urban Ministry Center, it was also a turning point for the Urban Ministry Center and for Kathy.

Through the planning of True Blessings, Kathy got to know Denver Moore, one of the keynote speakers. Formerly homeless, he is the co-author of the New York Times bestseller, "Same Kind of Different as Me."

While touring the UMC, Moore asked Kathy: "You mean to tell me you do all this good in the day and lock them out to the bad at night?" Kathy said she'd never really given it much thought. It was a soup kitchen, a place for the homeless population to address basic needs, a referral center. But she began to realize that the Urban Ministry Center could do much more than just "good in the day"; it could help house the homeless.

Kathy researched Roseanne Haggarty, a pioneer of the "housing first" model, with New York City's Common Ground. This successful model is based on the notion that the homeless are much better equipped to address other aspects of their life – whether employment, health or addiction – when housed. In Kathy's words, "amazing things can happen."

Around the same time, Liz Clasen-Kelly, an Urban Ministry Center staff member, was writing op-eds in the Charlotte Observer advocating for this housing first approach. A pilot program was funded, and then Kathy led a team raising more money for an expanded facility, called Moore Place.

Aptly named after both Denver Moore and the Charlotte philanthropists Pat and John Moore, the 85-unit permanent supportive housing complex has been successful: a UNC-Charlotte study found that housing the tenants saved the City \$1.8 million in health care costs, with 447 fewer emergency room visits and 372 fewer days in the hospital.

Kathy was the keynote speaker at this year's True Blessings luncheon, sharing *her* incredible story with nearly 1,000 guests – and receiving a standing ovation.

While Kathy remains involved with UMC, she has recently shifted her emphasis to yet another big challenge: establishing the Charlotte area's first residential mental health care center in Charlotte, HopeWay.

WIF has continued to inspire Kathy to give back to our community and to pursue her passion of helping others. Kathy credits her involvement with the WIF communications and grants committees with helping her to "think critically and strategically," and to "realize she wanted to do more – to take something that doesn't exist and make it happen."

Indeed, Kathy has made things happen. And she's inspiring more WIF members to make things happen, every day, in Charlotte.