



Media Contact:
Juliette Coulter
juliette@coultergroup.com
214.394.5532

Interfaith Family Services Raises \$294,000 at 7th Annual Interfaith Auxiliary Luncheon

DALLAS, Texas, April 15, 2022 – More than 300 people attended the 7th Annual Interfaith Auxiliary Luncheon benefiting Interfaith Family Services, whose mission is to empower families in crisis to break the cycle of poverty. The sold-out event was held on April 8th at Brook Hollow Golf Club and raised more than \$294,000—\$48,000 of it raised the day-of from generous attendees moved by the powerful stories.

Guests dressed in an array of colorful spring fashions arrived early to sip wine, take photos at the step and repeat, and catch up with friends and family. Floral centerpieces decorated the tables in pastel shades of pink, blue and green.

Having emceed all the previous luncheons, NBC 5's Meredith Land welcomed guests. Reverend Hannah Buchanan with Highland Park United Methodist Church led the invocation followed by a Chicken Milanese Salad and desserts of Chilled Lemon Souffles and Chocolate Pot de Crème.

Land introduced the co-chairs of the Interfaith Auxiliary Luncheon – Elizabeth Shuford Conroy and Lauren Shuford Laughry – who also are cousins, business partners and longtime supporters. Laughry's mother, Kathi Shuford, and sister, Adriane Shuford Crosland, served as honorary chairs.

Laughry said, "My mom has been an Interfaith supporter as long as I can remember and started this family tradition for us. Adriane co-chaired the luncheon last year with her sisters-in-law, Sandy Crosland and Ali Treaster. When they called and asked us to consider being this year's chairs, we loved the idea of keeping it in the family."

Conroy added, "Lauren and I sell real estate together. So, as you can imagine, we are particularly aware of how a home is central in a family's life. A home, by definition, is the place you live. It's four walls and a roof. But really, it's so much more than that. A home is safety, comfort, security and stability."

Kimberly Williams, CEO of Interfaith Family Services, spoke about the organization's mission. "Hope can be tough to find for too many families in our region. Just over a third of Dallas families are considered 'asset poor,' meaning they don't have savings to help them through a crisis. These families are incredibly vulnerable to both poverty and homelessness."

That's why Interfaith has a formula and resources to help families. Williams said, "First, we eliminate barriers that cause instability in the first place, with housing or rental assistance. Next, we equip parents to overcome poverty, with career and financial coaching. Finally, we educate children to help break the cycle of generational poverty."

This formula works because nine out of 10 clients exit with permanent housing, and four out of five exit employed with a livable wage are still employed a year later.

Next, Shay O'Dwyer-King, vice chair of the Interfaith Family Services Board of Directors, told her personal story of having been through a miscarriage and divorce, ultimately moving home with her parents temporarily. Now remarried with a 3-month-old daughter, she said, "Not everyone has a soft place to land like I did. But as a community, we can help create that – at Interfaith. We can all play a part in creating a softer landing for someone else who's struggling."

O'Dwyer-King introduced Interfaith graduate Jessica Bisor, who shared her personal story of having an autoimmune disease and dealing with a difficult pregnancy that left her unable to work. After a short time with relatives, Bisor looked for other options and found Interfaith. Bisor said, "I went in [to Interfaith] ashamed of having to start over as a single mom, but the staff's encouragement was sincere, and I left with a renewed hope of better days ahead." Since her son was born, Bisor has started her own business as a notary and a loan signing agent. Guests responded with applause as she shared photos of her healthy son.

Land congratulated Bisor and the work of Interfaith and asked the attendees to reach deep to support more 'Jessica Bisors.' A whopping \$48,000 was raised the day of the luncheon.

Special thanks to the generous sponsors:

- ❑ Hope Sponsor: Sapphire Foundation, Inc. – Adriane and Andy Crosland
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ABOUT INTERFAITH FAMILY SERVICES:

For 37 years, Interfaith Family Services has empowered families in crisis to break the cycle of poverty. The organization offers solutions to poverty through both residential and non-residential services. Their Family Empowerment Center houses all programming modeled to eliminate the barriers that keep families in crisis from achieving stability. Services include rent and utility assistance, GED/ESL and vocational training, extended-hours childcare to clients who are currently unemployed, financial coaching to reduce debt and increase savings, and career coaching to develop clients professionally – all at no cost to families. For families who are homeless, Interfaith Family Services owns 23 lovingly decorated and fully furnished apartments that provide transitional housing for six to nine months. They work simultaneously to educate and equip children through the Hope & Horizons Program; this special program is modeled to stabilize at-risk children through a combination of arts and crafts that emphasize creativity, play therapy to address emotional and social issues, individualized tutoring to address common academic gaps, and field trips and camps that expose children to the larger world. The program also includes a self-care and wellness component to help families develop and maintain healthy habits. This holistic combination of services produces results that elevate entire families out of poverty. Approximately 93% of its families' transition to permanent housing, 78% create a savings safety net with \$1,569 on average in savings, and 89% of graduates maintain employment one year later. For more information, visit www.interfaithdallas.org.