

June 21, 2006

Ms. Michelle D. Monse
President
Carl B. & Florence E. King Foundation
2929 Carlisle Street, Suite 222
Dallas, TX 75204

Dear Ms. Monse,

Because of the King Foundation's efforts to address the needs of the indigent by helping them move toward economic independence and providing supportive services to individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, I think you will be interested in hearing about the innovative work being done by the Dallas Furniture Bank, the only non-profit of its kind in North Texas. We also work to help the homeless - by empowering them and giving them the tools to begin a new life.

PURPOSE OF THE DALLAS FURNITURE BANK

Imagine a family with no home, no shelter, starting each day not knowing where they will be at its end. There are at least 9,000 individuals and families in Dallas who face this; they have no place to sleep tonight. Forty-eight percent of the homeless in Dallas are women and children, the fastest growing segment of the homeless population.

Now imagine the family – armed with an amazing will to escape the streets and aided by what our social services can offer – makes it out. They leave behind the streets, the shelters, and the fear to embark on a new journey of self-sufficiency and, at last, permanent housing. The parents feel a triumph at providing a roof over their children's heads, but then face the sad fact that, for them, furniture is a luxury. This story is all too common for Dallas' homeless. They pinch pennies, learn skills, and do whatever it takes to gain employment and get the necessary cash for food and rent – but there is usually no money left over. As a result, 75% of the families and individuals in transition have no furniture whatsoever. Children sleep on hard, uncomfortable floors. Families dine without tables, pressing their backs against kitchen walls, huddled together without any chairs.

The Dallas Furniture Bank (DFB) is the *only* independent, non-profit agency in Dallas County whose mission is to provide furniture that meets basic living needs to families and individuals who are transitioning out of homelessness, or to others who are in need. Working with 58 agencies serving the homeless and underprivileged in the Dallas area that refer their clients to us, the Dallas Furniture Bank provides basic household furniture to homeless families with the goal of helping them achieve self-sufficiency, self-esteem, and long-term stability.

We fill a void that the other social services agencies cannot provide. We believe that if a reasonable level of comfort, dignity and self esteem are provided, adults will have a better chance of maintaining steady employment and remaining self-sufficient. A furnished, livable home environment that allows them to eat in comfort, rest well and interact together as a family will dramatically reduce the potential of their falling back into homelessness. In a positive environment such as this, children, too, will benefit and even thrive.

WHO WE SERVE

The DFB serves the homeless, battered mothers and children in retreat, victims of natural disasters, and others requiring emergency assistance in Dallas County. The fastest growing segment of the homeless population both in Dallas and nationally is no longer individuals, but families. The average household size served by the DFB consists of four people with an average of 3 children. Sadly, the majority of the children served are younger than 10 and almost 20% are under the age of three. Many of our families are headed by single mothers raising their children on their own. In 2005 the Dallas Furniture Bank served approximately 323 families and approximately 969 children for a total of 1,292 unduplicated people served.

HOW WE HELP

The Dallas Furniture Bank's only program is to provide furniture that meets basic living needs to families and individuals who are transitioning out of homelessness or whom are otherwise in need of basic furniture. The DFB is a member of the National Furniture Bank Association (NFBA) which currently has more than 50 members across the nation. The DFB collects and stores usable, basic household furniture - cribs, beds, dressers, sofas, tables and chairs - through donations from the furniture industry, businesses, hotels, motels and individuals. Social service agencies who serve the homeless join the DFB for a \$50 annual membership fee. They then refer their pre-qualified clients to us and we set up appointments for them to visit the DFB and "shop" for furniture at a small cost; most items can be purchased for \$20 or less.

DALLAS FURNITURE BANK PROGRAM GOALS

In order to achieve our mission to provide furniture that meets basic living needs to families and individuals in need, the Dallas Furniture Bank (DFB) developed the following goals:

1. Provide furniture to a minimum of 300 families representing 1,200 children and individuals per year.
2. Increase the amount of donated furniture by 25% in 2006.
3. Pursue \$50,000 in additional funding from foundations, corporations, and individuals.
4. Actively engage and involve Board of Directors in advancing the goals of the DFB.
5. Increase Dallas Furniture Bank's visibility in the community.

EVALUATION AND SUCCESS

To ensure the Dallas Furniture Bank's program is of the highest quality and effectiveness to those we serve, we follow a rigorous evaluation process using a combination of internal and external methods. The findings are then incorporated into program planning. Finally, there is an annual process of comparing accomplishments and program outcomes with program objectives and the overall mission of the DFB.

Detailed records are kept on the following outcome measures:

1. Number of families and individuals served, with date of service
2. Demographics of those served
3. Number of social service agencies served
4. Number and types of furniture that has been received
5. Number and types of furniture that has been distributed and to whom
6. Client satisfaction with services provided

A CRITICAL NEED AND OUR SPECIFIC REQUEST

The demand for our services grows daily. Dallas shelters and other social agencies are facing unprecedented needs and even greater pressure to support a homeless population that has grown at up to 17% in a seven-month span. The effects of Hurricane Katrina which hit the Gulf Coast last August greatly impacted our service abilities. Since opening our doors in late 2003, DFB has served over 600 families representing 2,400 children and individuals. **In 2006 alone we have experienced a drastic 250% increase in the amount of families and individuals seeking our help.** Currently we are still assisting Hurricane Katrina evacuees who have been anxiously waiting to receive service from us since last year. On top of this, we still receive new calls daily from our regular clients as well as additional evacuees requesting our service.

While the DFB presently does not have enough furniture in our inventory to assist the majority of the requests that we receive, we remain committed to ensuring that hurricane evacuees as well as our member agencies and their clients are served. As we never planned on experiencing this type of drastic increase in the number of people seeking our services, we desperately need funds to provide help to the people on our waiting list in 2006 and 2007.

We are requesting \$25,000 from the Carol B. and Florence E. King Foundation to help us carry out our *only* program of providing furniture to those transitioning out of homelessness. A total of \$10,000 will support partial

salary expenses for our Executive Director to provide direct program service to our clients. As we only have two professional staff people, our Executive Director’s duties are approximately 80% program specific. Approximately \$10,000 will underwrite the costs of transportation costs for the pick-up and delivery of furniture items to those in need. This includes vehicle costs, gas, insurance, maintenance etc. The remaining \$5,000 will be dedicated to increasing our furniture inventory by purchasing critical items that we do not have in stock. Our primary requests are for beds for adults and children, and cribs for infants. The resources from our community donations generally do not consist of bed sets. We have established relationships with local vendors so that we may purchase these items at wholesale costs.

PROGRAM BUDGET

The total cost of the Dallas Furniture Bank’s program is \$222,978. We currently have raised the following funding:

RECEIVED IN 2006

[names and amounts omitted]

COMMITTED IN 2007

[names and amounts omitted]

TIMELINE

Receive funding Dec. 06/Jan 07	Identify most needy families currently on waiting list and within partner agencies to receive furniture assistance.	Meet families one-on-one to identify their furniture needs. Refer to other social agencies if there are additional issues: (legal, food, domestic violence)	Inventory warehouse to see if we have everything to fulfill furniture needs for selected families.	If additional items are needed (not in inventory) work through channels to receive donations and purchase critical items through wholesale vendors to meet client needs.	Invite clients to visit warehouse to “shop” for their cribs, beds and other basic-needs furniture.	Deliver furniture to clients and follow-up to ensure client satisfaction.
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I hope this overview gives you some insight into the DFB’s current and future needs and limited abilities to serve these overwhelming requests. I look forward to an invitation to submit a full proposal for your fall funding cycle.

We have changed lives, and are continuing to change lives with each table, chair, bed and crib we deliver to a family in need. But our work is far from done. If even one child in Dallas sleeps on the floor tonight we must continue. But we cannot do it without your help. Your support will keep children off the floor and into a warm bed and will ultimately help us transform a house into a home for the families and individuals we serve. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide additional information, answer your questions or give you a tour of our facility. I thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,
/s/

Tina L. Robertson, LMSW
Executive Director
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