

Industry News

Dallas Furniture Bank helps turn houses into homes

By Sarah Beth Costello

DALLAS — While four walls, a roof and floor may provide basic shelter, a house is not livable or comfortable when furniture is nonexistent. But for many people living below the poverty line, furniture is a luxury they simply cannot afford.

“So often, families are in homes for a few months, but they’re sleeping on the floor,” says Aliah Henry, executive director of the Dallas Furniture Bank. “They might have a place to stay, but without furniture some would sit in an empty house or go back to a shelter.”

That’s one of the reasons the Dallas Furniture Bank exists — to provide families with dining tables, chairs, sofas, beds and home accessories to transform houses into real homes.

“Oftentimes we think of furniture as being secondary but it’s just as important as food and shelter. If I get anything out in terms of advocating, I really want people to understand that having basic furniture items in a home provides stability, peace and hope for families to succeed.”

*Aliah Henry,
Dallas Furniture Bank*



This bedroom was part of the You Make My Home Smile Project in July, a quarterly event sponsored by Dallas Furniture Bank. The July recipient was a formerly homeless single mother and her three children.

Established in 2003 by Sheryl Fields Bogen and Jerry Szor, the Dallas Furniture Bank has helped more than 9,000 people in the past 10 years. DFB is the only business of its kind in the area and assists 300-400 families per year. Last year, it surpassed that average and served 511 families.

The Dallas Furniture Bank is partnered with more than 35 social service agencies in the area that send qualified referrals for men, women, children, families of domestic violence, victims of natural disasters, seniors, veterans, refugees and many others.

Located in Carrollton, Texas, DFB maintains an 11,000-square-foot warehouse full of gently used donated furniture. DFB typically receives donations from people who have older and gently used furniture to pass on, and bulk donations from hotels and furniture stores. DFB sends a truck to collect the furniture three days a week and brings the pieces back to the warehouse where they are inventoried and cleaned.

DFB is also sponsored by Freed’s Furniture, a local store that donates about 35 discontinued and older furniture pieces to DFB on a monthly basis.

“We started working with (Freed’s) warehouse in terms

of taking their discontinued items or mismatched items and utilizing those,” said Henry. “Honestly it just spiraled.”

She said the retailer “is giving back to the community and making sure furniture doesn’t end up in a landfill by supporting our effort to make sure furniture can get recycled to families in need.”

Freed’s Furniture not only donates monthly, but also advertises for the Dallas Furniture Bank on its website and local television. Freed’s staff has also been trained to talk to customers about donating their gently used furniture to DFB after upgrading to something new from Freed’s.

“One of the biggest things that’s important to know is that furniture stores can donate in bulk and donate items that are discontinued or maybe that sat on the floor for a year,” said Henry. “Those are items that we can really use.”

Qualified families are referred to the Dallas Furniture Bank by partnering agencies. Typically, families can choose up to five furniture items (which might include a sofa, chairs, dining room table or a bed) and three accessory items.

In addition to the warehouse, DFB sponsors two projects. One is an annual



At the Freed’s store in Dallas are Sheryl Fields Bogen, Chandana Narayan, Lynne Mabry and Aliah Henry, all with the Dallas Furniture Bank; Howard Freed, owner of Freed’s Furniture; and Randy Lavercombe, Ashley Furniture.



Now the family can enjoy meals together at a nice dining table and chairs, thanks to the You Make My Home Smile Project

community baby shower and class on safe sleep where mothers receive a free crib for attending. The other is the You Make My Heart Smile project, a quarterly event in which a family in need is referred by a partnering agency to receive a surprise home makeover with furniture and home accessories.

“The DFB team selects gently used and new furniture and home accessories to make their house a home,” said Henry.

On Feb. 19, DFB will host its ninth annual CHAIRity FriendRaiser, the Stars and Stripes Luncheon, from noon to 1:30 p.m. at the Belo Mansion & Pavilion in Dallas. The

event will include a spotlight presentation to honor Howard and Debbie Freed of Freed’s Furniture with the Heart for Homes Award, and a keynote address from former Dallas Cowboy Roger Staubach.

Henry emphasizes the importance of furniture in bringing comfort and unity to families.

“Oftentimes we think of furniture as being secondary but it’s just as important as food and shelter,” said Henry. “If I get anything out in terms of advocating, I really want people to understand that having basic furniture items in a home provides stability, peace and hope for families to succeed.”