

Meet HOST

Homeless Outreach & Support Team

HOST is a boots-on-the-ground, grassroots approach dedicated to connecting unhoused Ames residents to community resources and services. Whether you need immediate help or long-term solutions, HOST is here to navigate your individual journey. HOST is:



Julie
Mental Health Advocate
City of Ames Police Department



Susan
Licensed Social Worker
Mary Greeley Behavioral Health



Kathy
Service Center
Administrator
The Salvation Army of Ames



Becky
Social Worker
Alternative Response to
Community Health (ARCH)



Nick
Paramedic
Alternative Response to
Community Health (ARCH)

HOST has helped many individuals find their way back to secure housing. Here is one of their stories.

Meet The Family

Mom and her 6-year-old daughter arrive in Ames. Mom fled an abusive relationship out of state and the pair found their way to Iowa. They arrive in town with nowhere to go.

Their journey starts with staying at The Bridge Home.



The Bridge Home provides Emergency Shelter to over 2,500 people annually. People seeking shelter come from many different backgrounds and experiences.

Of households experiencing homelessness in Story County, 43% include at least one child.

Getting Connected

Mom enrolls her daughter in the Ames Community School District and connects with the school's Family Resource Support Advocate, who is also the Homeless Liaison for the district. The Student and Family Advocate is part of the HOST Service Provider Meetings.

HOST starts connecting with mom multiple times each week. HOST helps provide clothing for the daughter to wear to school and for mom to wear to job interviews.

Each public school district is required to appoint a staff person to serve as the Homeless Education Liaison. This ensures a child experiencing homelessness has access to the same programs and services as all other students.

HOST has relationships with multiple clothing resale shops which provide clothing at no cost.



Gaining Momentum

CIRHA and Eastwood of Ames provide low-cost housing to qualified applicants through programs like Section 8 and HUD's Project-Based Vouchers.

HOST assists mom with applying for housing programs like Central Iowa Regional Housing Authority (CIRHA), Eastwood of Ames, and Home For Awhile.

Mom lands a stable job and starts working.



In Story County, 39% of households pay more than 30% of their income on housing.

Story County has a shortfall of affordable housing units.

Finding Community

HOST connects mom with Together for Good. They are able to help with crisis hosting, respite care, and mentoring.

Boys and Girls Club provides childcare for the summer. HOST requests a scholarship for the daughter and she receives coverage for the entire \$200 membership fee.

Together for Good connects volunteers from local churches with parents and vulnerable children. Volunteers host children during moments of crisis, for shorter periods of time as respite relief, and help support parents through relationship building.

Boys and Girls Clubs of Story County provides after school and summer care for 6-18 year olds.

In 2025, they served 206 kids in their Summer Club program. Approximately 40 of those kids received a scholarship this summer.



Taking Steps

ACCESS - Assault Care Center Extending Shelter & Support
- provides crisis response, shelter, and support to survivors of domestic and sexual abuse.



Home for Awhile
is a partnership of local churches who provide three months of housing to those who have been recently evicted or are nearly homeless.

Mom is diligent and calls the ACCESS shelter many times a week to ask about openings. After many weeks, coming close to her exit date at The Bridge Home, there is an opening with ACCESS. Mom and daughter move to the ACCESS domestic violence shelter.

While staying at the ACCESS shelter, HOST continues to help mom apply for the Home for Awhile program. They are selected as the June recipient family.

Going Home

HOST helps mom and daughter move from the shelter to their Home for Awhile apartment.

The HOST team continue to help support the family and navigate their journey to permanent housing.



So far, HOST has helped 31 households like this family move into housing of their own.

A Week in the Life of HOST

Monday

Outreach at Ames Public Library from 11 am to 1 pm. As HOST becomes more established, there has been an increase in the number of requests for assistance.

Tuesday

The HOST steering committee meets to plan for the Friday meeting. Lists of requested items are prepared so they can be submitted for purchase.

Thursday

Street outreach day. This starts with outreach to individuals, like checking on people at their residences. Most outreach time is spent at the Romero House.

Friday

HOST and community partners meet to discuss individual needs. This is an opportunity for the larger group to use a team approach to provide support to those in need.

Community Resources

HOST partners with many local organizations including:

- ACCESS
- Ames Community School District
 - Ames Public Library
 - Ames Police Department
 - The Bridge Home
 - City of Ames
 - Home for Awhile
- Mary Greeley Medical Center
 - Optimae LifeServices
- Primary Health Care Ames (PHC)
 - Romero House Ames
- The Salvation Army of Ames, Iowa
- Story County Alternatives Pre-Post Arrest Diversion Program
 - United Way of Story County
 - UnityPoint Health - Eyerly Ball
 - The Well Resource Center
- YSS

References

The Bridge Home

www.thebridgehome.org

City of Ames/Story County Homeless Action Plan

www.cityofames.org/Resident-Services/Community-Solutions-to-Addressing-Homelessness

McKinney-Vinto Homeless Education Resources

www.educate.iowa.gov/pk-12/essa/guidance-allocations/homeless-education-resources

CIRHA

www.cirhahome.org

Eastwood of Ames

www.chihousing.com/eastwood-of-ames

Story County Housing Trust Fund Housing Assistance Plan

www.storycountyht.org

Story County Health Needs Assessment

www.storycountyiowa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/16586/2025-PRC-CHNA-Report---Story-County-Iowa

Together for Good

www.tfgood.org

Boys and Girls Clubs of Story County

www.bgcstory.org

ACCESS

www.assaultcarecenter.org

Home for Awhile

www.cornerstonelife.com/hfa

This exhibit was created by the staff of the City of Ames, Ames Public Library, and Mary Greeley Medical Center. Thank you to HOST for sharing their expertise and experience, and to our family for sharing their lived experience.

If you would like to host this exhibit in your space, please contact: webref@amespubliclibrary.org. To request a presentation by HOST for your organization, please contact Susan Moore: MooreS@mgmc.org