

The Community Foundation Women's Fund Vanderburgh Finalist Summary for

Ozanam Family Shelter Project

Background: Ozanam Family Shelter is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that provides safe, temporary housing and supportive services for families experiencing homelessness. We are the only shelter in the Evansville area that keeps entire families together, including mothers with their children, fathers with their children, and couples with their children, during their time of crisis. With 18 rooms and an average stay of 45–90 days, Ozanam serves approximately 80 individuals each day, most of them children. While in shelter, families receive three daily meals, hygiene items, clothing, and 24/7 staff support. Our case management program helps families remove barriers, secure employment, and connect with community resources so they can achieve long-term stability and self-sufficiency.

Statement of Need: Because of the constant daily use by dozens of families, much of our shelter's essential equipment has reached the end of its service life and can no longer keep up with the heavy demand. Our bunk beds are worn and in need of replacement to provide sturdy, comfortable sleeping arrangements. The commercial dishwasher that supports hundreds of meals each week is increasingly unreliable, and our washers and dryers are aging after years of continuous operation. While Ozanam always ensures that every family has clean linens, doing so often requires us to purchase them directly, which places a strain on our limited operating funds. Replacing these essential items through this project is necessary to ensure that Ozanam can continue to provide a safe, dignified, and supportive environment for the families who rely on us every day.

Project Description: The Essential Equipment Upgrade Project will replace and improve core furnishings and appliances needed to care for families experiencing homelessness. The project will provide twenty-five durable metal bunk beds with shipping, a new commercial dishwasher with professional installation, three commercial washers and three commercial dryers, and new linens including 200 full-size sheet sets, 300 twin sheet sets, and 200 pillows. All items will be commercial-grade or high-volume quality to withstand heavy daily use. The Women's Fund grant will be used to purchase and install this equipment, with Ozanam directly managing the project. With more than three decades of experience operating the only family shelter in Vanderburgh County, Ozanam is uniquely qualified to ensure the project's success.

Project Outcomes: This project will directly improve the living environment for approximately 300 families served annually at Ozanam. By replacing outdated and overused equipment, families will benefit from sturdy and reliable bunk beds for nightly use, a dependable commercial dishwasher to maintain sanitation for more than 1,000 weekly meals, and functioning washers and dryers that ensure clothing and bedding can be kept clean. Providing fresh linens and pillows will also promote health, dignity, and comfort for both children and parents. Success will be measured through equipment reliability, staff reporting, and client feedback on safety and comfort. Most importantly, this project will allow Ozanam to continue providing a safe, stable, and dignified environment where families can focus on securing permanent housing and long-term stability.