



CONTACT:

Deborah Carr, Interfaith Community Services, 520-297-6049 x4222 (office), 520-307-8002 (cell) or dcarr@icstucson.org

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Interfaith Community Services Integrates Single Moms Program in Strategic Expansion

As a mission-oriented organization with a budget of \$6 million and 36 staff who support the work of 750 compassionate volunteers, Interfaith Community Services (ICS) serves 40,000 people annually across the Tucson metro area. ICS provides a host of wraparound support programs that include food banks, rent/utility assistance to prevent homelessness, case management, financial literacy and job search help for those in distress as well as programs to allow seniors to live with independence at home. As part of its new strategic plan, ICS seeks to deepen its programs to empower those in financial crisis to find a path to stable and self-sufficient lives.

Concurrently, for the past several months, a Tucson-based nonprofit known as Helping Hands for Single Moms Tucson (HHT) has engaged in a search for a partner to enhance its infrastructure, efficiency and impact to meet the growing demand for its proven program that improves the economic well-being of single moms and their children as they pursue a college education. HHT has a wait list of over 60 single mom scholars who are attending college, working and raising a family on their own. Over the last two years, 86% of participants have graduated with an average 3.5 GPA and now earn an average annual salary of \$42,000. As Lia Pierse, HHT Executive Director, notes, "Children of single mothers are five times more likely to be raised in poverty than those raised by two parents. This integration enables us to break the cycle of poverty for more Tucson families by empowering single mothers to successfully graduate college and better their own lives and those of their children. We couldn't be more excited about the opportunity to partner with ICS and the long-term impact this will have on our community."

Both the HHT and ICS Boards voted at the end of September to integrate the HHT program into ICS under its new name, Single Mom Scholars. ICS is a recognized partner in Pima County for its expertise in providing basic needs services as well as its strong commitment to help those in crisis build self-sufficiency. Adding the HHT program to the ICS continuum of services will provide greater resources to benefit Tucson's single mom college students and create a comprehensive approach to reduce generational poverty and provide long-term solutions for self-sufficiency. While ICS continues to grow its resources for emergency assistance, the addition of the Single Mom Scholars program will triple the investment of ICS in self-sufficiency programs.

Effective on October 10, 2017, Pierse has assumed a new position as ICS Self-Sufficiency Director and will continue to oversee the Single Mom Scholars program. HHT Board President Ryan Sermon was also nominated to join the ICS Board of Directors. The HHT entity will be dissolved and Single Mom Scholars will be fully integrated into the programs offered by ICS. K. Daniel Stoltzfus, CEO of ICS, will continue to lead the combined entity, and he notes, "The integration of HHT and the Single Mom Scholars program will be a powerful new resource to combat poverty by empowering single moms and their families to a new level of economic self-sufficiency." A formal announcement on the integration will be made at the upcoming Single Mom Scholars "Strut 4 Success" fashion show at 2:00 p.m., Sunday, October 29th at the Westward Look Resort. To join us, please visit <http://strut4success2017.eventbrite.com/>.

For more information on this integration, please visit www.icstucson.org

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About Interfaith Community Services (ICS):

Interfaith Community Services helps those in financial crisis find self-sufficiency through the ICS Food Banks, emergency financial assistance, personalized case management, financial literacy skills building and job search assistance programs and enables seniors and disabled adults to stay independent at home with transportation and mobile meals. ICS offers compassionate support by connecting more than 750 volunteers, 102 diverse faith community partners and caring donors with Pima County's most vulnerable residents. ICS has received Charity Navigator's highest rating of four stars for eight years in a row for its fiscal responsibility, operational excellence and transparency. For more information, go to www.icstucson.org or call 520-297-6049.