

“Do all things with great love.”

This quote by Mother Theresa is one that resonates loudly in the work that Humility Homes and Services, Inc. does daily with the over 250 individuals we serve on any given day in the year. Being able to serve those experiencing homelessness and helping those most vulnerable in the community would not be possible without Sr. Mary Ann Vogel, CHM. As the founder of our agency, Sr. Mary Ann has been a stable and consistent presence, not only in our agency for the last 30 years, but also in the Quad Cities community. She has been a mentor, leader, and a friend to many. She is a believer in systemic change and advocating for what is right.

In 1989, Sr. Mary Ann and other members of the “*Dream Team*” as they were later called, boarded a bus to Washington D.C. to attend the National March for Housing Now! Inspired by this march and wanting to affect greater change, the *Dream Team* returned home and started Humility of Mary Housing, Inc. (HMHI) for single mothers and their children who were experiencing homelessness in Davenport. Their goal was to end homelessness in the Quad Cities area for single mothers and their children within 10 years by providing transitional housing; a place where mothers would receive support, a chance to go to school and make their lives better for their families. Sr. Mary Ann played an integral part in building community will, obtaining funding, and providing the direct support to the clients in the program. She even lived in one of the properties as a “House Mom” and provided childcare for the mothers, as needed. Her focus has always been on helping children and families to be successful in life.

Through her work with HMHI, Sr. Mary Ann was not only able to assist mothers and children meet their basic needs in their time of need but was able to affect lasting change for the mothers served. She ultimately helped to break the generational culture of poverty. The program’s very first mother and client, Connie Coopman, had these thoughts to share regarding Sr. Mary Ann:

“I have had the pleasure of knowing Sister Mary Ann Vogel for 30 years. She was the first positive experience I had in finding a solution for housing for myself and my newborn daughter to move us out of homelessness. I walked into an interview with her carrying my child and walked out with the reality of being able to provide hope and a safe shelter for us as I continued the pursuit of my dreams of completing my education and caring for my child.

Sr. Mary Ann’s longtime passion and commitment to end homelessness has become her lifetime effort. I know that without her commitment and leadership, I would not have had the same outcome to my situation. I was able to finish my education, secure a job and career and move on to become a homeowner myself. From this great start, my daughter was able to continue on and is now an educator in Des Moines, serving the financially challenged in the community as a teacher of 4-year-old children in the Head Start program.

She has made a difference in the lives of hundreds of Iowans and continues to do so daily. She has made Iowa a safer and better place for many. The support through her work not only gave me a roof over my head, but a foundation under my feet. I am forever indebted to her caring and lifetime of work to make permanent improvements in the lives of Iowans and to lead them out of homelessness.”

In 2008, believing in what is right led Sr. Mary Ann to take another leadership role to help all individuals experiencing homelessness and expanding the reach of HMHI. When the former John Lewis Coffee Shop Emergency Shelter was scheduled to close, leaving no emergency shelter for men and women over the age of 18 in Davenport or the surrounding towns in Iowa, Sr. Mary Ann advocated again to for the Sisters of Humility to take over management and operations of this emergency shelter and it was named Humility of Mary Shelter, Inc. (HMSI).

She, along with the former Executive Director, generated community funding, obtained federal funding, and hired staff in just 3 weeks to ensure that the shelter would never close. This ensured that the over 70 individuals currently in the shelter would not go without. This shelter, under Sr. Mary Ann’s leadership as Finance Director, former interim CEO and now a Board Member, grew from being a 30-day stay Emergency Shelter to an incorporation providing a Permanent Supportive Housing Program for the chronically homeless, a nationally recognized Veteran’s Program, a Rapid Re-Housing Program for individuals and families, affordable rental units, and a Fresh Start Donation Center.

This submission talked about the two agencies that Sr. Mary Ann Vogel helped create from the ground, but her mission to help Iowans is not just seen through these agencies. It can also be seen through her work with her Congregation that began over 30 years ago with the founding of HMHI. She was a K-12 Chemistry teacher of lower income students and tutored many Iowans to ensure they were receiving the education assistance needed to be successful. At the same time, she helped in caring for orphans at St. Vincent Home in Davenport. Seeing this amount of poverty and wanting to affect change by ensuring everyone has a place to call home is why she and the “Dream Team” worked tirelessly for 30 years to create what has become Humility Homes & Services, Inc.