



Standing in the GAP

FOR PEOPLE IN NEED

Jake is turning five years old, but his mom can't afford to give him a birthday party. She's on her own with three children to provide for, and there just isn't money for anything extra right now. **Love INC of the Tri-Cities in Grand Haven, Michigan,** realized there were many families in their community without means to celebrate their children's birthdays, so they developed a special ministry to help meet this need. Through the Birthday Boxes Ministry, families from a local church provide low-income parents with everything they need to throw a birthday party for their child. Each birthday box is specially created for a child and includes a meal, cake, gifts, party plates and cups, balloons, streamers, and favors for the child's guests. Each year, more than 75 children in this community receive a special birthday blessing through this ministry that "stands in the gap" for families in need.

Love INC affiliates across the country are developing a wide array of Gap Ministries to help meet unique, unmet needs. As Love INC works with people in need, it discovers gaps in services in the community—specific, ongoing needs that are not currently or sufficiently being met through agencies, government, and existing church ministries—and fills the gaps by working with churches to organize services or products

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to meet those needs. As churches and Christian volunteers in the Love INC network develop a Gap Ministry, new resources become readily available to help the poor.

Typically, either a church or Love INC provides the space to operate the Gap Ministry, and other churches in the Love INC network support the ministry by providing volunteers, services, and/or products. Love INC helps churches

succeed in ministering to the poor by referring people with verified needs to the Gap Ministry and offering church members specific, manageable opportunities to meet those needs. As churches work together, they demonstrate the unity of the Body of Christ, giving a powerful testimony to their community.

At the heart of Gap Ministries is the truth that God cares about every need a person has and desires to meet each one, demonstrating His intensely personal love. As Scripture says, "And my God will meet ALL your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Because every community has different gaps in services to the poor, Love INC affiliates have developed a diversity of Gap Ministries. For example:



Clothing

Babies are constantly growing and changing, and it seems like they outgrow their clothing almost overnight. Keeping a little one properly clothed can be an overwhelming expense, especially for a single mother. Through Bundles of Blessings, **Love INC of the Heart of Florida in Summerfield, Florida**, provides gently used baby clothes to mothers in need. Church volunteers sort and wash donated sleepers, shirts, pants, dresses, sweaters, coats, bibs, socks, and shoes for babies up to 24 months. The ministry also offers gently used maternity clothes. As their little ones outgrow the clothing, mothers bring the items back to Love INC to be washed and given to other families in need.

Other Gap Ministries to meet clothing needs include:

Back-to-School Clothing • Career Clothing • Coats • Men's, Women's, and/or Children's Clothing • Footwear • Formal Wear • Handmade, Knitted Hats, Gloves, and Scarves • Laundry Services • Resale or Thrift Store • School Uniforms

Family Support Services

Lack of transportation is a problem for many people. Some are not physically able to drive or take public transportation, while others can't afford to. When people lack reliable transportation, they can't get where they need to go to receive necessary medical care, shop for basics such as food, or hold a job. In response to this issue in their community, **Love INC of Boone County in Lebanon, Indiana**, created a ministry to provide transportation to people in need. Over 25 volunteers from local churches are organized to drive homebound people to appointments, shopping, and employment. Along the way, volunteers develop relationships with those in need and

demonstrate the love of Christ through their caring words and actions.

Other Gap Ministries to meet families' needs include:

Barber and Beauty Services • Bicycles • Car Maintenance and Repair • Car Seats • Child Care Services • Children's Books • Children's Reading Program • Christmas Gift Program • Foster Care Kits • Gas Vouchers • Gifts Closet • Holding Crosses • Musical Instruments • Personal Care Items • Pro Bono Professional Services • School Supplies • Small Engine Repair • Sports Equipment • Summer Camp Scholarships and/or Camp Supplies • Tutoring • Utility Assistance • Vehicle Donation

Food

Good nutrition is essential for healthy living, but nutritious food, like fresh meat, can be costly. **Love INC of Benton County in Corvallis, Oregon**, helps provide good nutrition for people in need in their community through the F.A.R.M. (Feeding Area Residents Meat) Ministry. Each year at the county fair, donors purchase livestock at 4-H auctions and turn the animals over to Love INC. The livestock is taken to local butchers for processing and wrapping, the cost of which is covered by a local organization. The meat is then stored in the freezers of local churches until it is distributed to help feed local families. Last year, Love INC of Benton County provided more than 20,000 meals with fresh meat to people in need through the F.A.R.M. Ministry.

Other Gap Ministries to meet needs for food include:

Canning Classes • Dairy and Fresh Produce • Food Backpacks for Children • Food Bank or Pantry • Gardening Program • Grocery Delivery • Holiday Food Baskets • Hot Meals or Meal Delivery • Moose Road Kill Recovery (fresh meat) with U.S. Wildlife Service • Recipes Using Ingredients from Local Food Pantries • School Breakfast





Health Care

Love INC of Bedford County in Everett, Pennsylvania, has a medical equipment ministry to benefit the high population of elderly people in their community. Many people cannot afford the cost of purchasing the medical equipment they need to care for themselves or a loved one; through Love INC, they can borrow whatever they need. Love INC collects and cleans hospital beds, electric scooters, wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, commodes, bathtub lifts, and shower benches. Church volunteers deliver the equipment for families to use as long as they need. Love INC also provides care items such as adult diapers, bed pads, and liquid nutrients. Through this ministry, Love INC is helping extend the quality of life for seniors in need in their community.

Other Gap Ministries to meet health care needs include:

Health Clinic • Health Fair • Hospice Service • In-Home Care • Prescription Medication Advocacy • Pro Bono Medical Exams • Visitation

Life Skills

How do you feed a family nutritious meals on a small budget? How can you get the best value when you shop for groceries? These are some of the skills people are learning through cooking classes offered by Love INC of Greater Cushing in Cushing, Oklahoma. Through Love INC, three local churches are working together to provide classes to people in need who would like to develop simple culinary skills. The classes cover topics such as basic cooking, nutrition, meal planning, and wise grocery shopping. Class instructors create meal plans using ingredients available from the local food bank and provide students with recipes. Students also receive cooking utensils and cookbooks to enhance their ability to cook meals for their family.

Other Gap Ministries to meet needs for life skills include:

Addiction Recovery Resources • Budget Classes • Budget Counseling/Mentoring • Computer Equipment • Computer Skills Classes • English as a Second Language (ESL) • Job Search and/or Placement • Job Skills Training • Life Skills Classes • Marriage Classes • Mentoring • Parenting Classes • Prisoner Re-entry Support • Resume Assistance • Support Groups

Shelter

Each Christian has skills and talents that God can use to demonstrate His love to people in need. Through Love INC of South Albuquerque in Albuquerque, New Mexico, handy men and women are using their skills in home repair to serve the poor in their community. Volunteers from 13 churches work in teams to provide assessments and do minor home repairs for disabled and low-income people. Using materials provided in part by Love INC, volunteers fix leaky plumbing, repair washers and dryers, replace appliances, start up heaters and air conditioners, patch roofs, and clean up yards. Through their labors of love, these volunteers are meeting real needs and providing a true witness of Christ to their neighbors.

Other Gap Ministries to meet home needs include:

Adopt an Elder Program • Appliances • Baby Furniture • Bedding • Bunk Beds • Cribs • Emergency Shelter • Fans and/or Air Conditioners • Firewood • Furniture • Hand-made Blankets and Quilts • Home Maintenance Classes • Home Makeovers • House Cleaning • Household Items • Moving Assistance • Painting Assistance • Personal Care Kits • Short-term Housing • Snow Removal • Wheelchair Ramps • Yard Work Assistance



Gap Ministries

To help affiliates develop and grow Gap Ministries, the Love INC National Headquarters has introduced a **free tool kit** that provides steps on how to identify unmet needs in a community and create new Gap Ministries to help churches meet those needs. The tool kit includes how to develop the ministry's operational structure and procedures according to national best practices.



Love INC

toolkit

Love In the Name of Christ

