

## Making Space: Clearing the Way for a New Beginning

By Liz Lombardi, IAC Center Social Work Intern

The purpose of this project was two fold: first, it was meant to be a way to help address a very real struggle that expectant parents face: the challenging waiting period before their new baby/child comes home permanently. Second, it was intended to be a sort of karma-gearred project. By “clearing the clutter” from their own homes, expectant parents were indirectly helping other families through their (as it turned out, very generous) donations to several different charities. It was a project that was firmly based in the philosophy that “good begets good.”

The first thing that needed to be done was to decide upon the charities that this project would support. We had to take into consideration the fact that we would potentially be getting a wide range of items, from business suits and casual clothing to house wares such as lamps, dishes and (several) coffee makers. After researching our potential options, three charities were decided upon: Dress for Success, a non-profit organization that provides interview suits and career development to low-income women, Furnished With Love, a store in Monmouth County, NJ that caters to the needs of the working poor. It sells donated, gently used furniture and house wares at reasonable prices so that less financially secure families can still furnish a home they can be proud of. In some cases, Furnished With Love even donates furniture outright to those who cannot afford their fees. Realizing that we might need a “catch all” charity, we chose the ever-popular Good Will.

Based upon the dates that our expectant parents' group met, three drop-off dates were identified for group members to bring their items for donation. Flyers were designed and distributed to raise awareness that this project was underway and it was discussed at meetings. While designing the flyer, I came across a quote that I felt might sum up the feeling that many of our couples were experiencing: “Between the wish and the thing, life lies waiting.” It remains a moving thought for me.

The results were outstanding. In truth, I never thought that this project would be embraced as wholeheartedly as it was. Honestly, when cleaning out your home, it really is easier to just throw things away: dump them on the curb and wait for the garbage man to magically make them disappear. It takes a great deal more effort to sort through your things, pack them up, put them in your car, drive them to the IAC Center and

then load them into another car. The fact that so many people opened their hearts and emptied their closets was testament to the fact that these people not only believed in the project, but that they also believed in the project's philosophy. The power of our outreach was also clearly seen by the fact that donations were made by people who weren't even directly affiliated with the IAC Center. We were inundated with dozens of bags of clothes, dishes, lamps and countless coffeemakers (apparently, our group members have decided to go caffeine free). It took two separate trips to load my car with all of the donated goods. Despite the fact that the result created more work than we ever anticipated, it was well worth it: I was incredibly moved, deeply gratified, and very proud.