



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### When did Room in the Inn Shoals begin?

Room in the Inn Shoals was started by Krista Manchester and Beth Howard in October 2014. We had previously started the warming center in December of 2013. Our first official season began in January 2015. We just completed our 5<sup>th</sup> winter.

### Can just anyone stay with Room in the Inn?

We welcome anyone to stay at Room in the Inn, provided they follow our 7 Simple Rules and their guest agreement. If they follow these guidelines, guests can stay the entire 5 months we are open. They must be sober and go through a background check and our daily security check-in process. Because we partner with churches and schools, sex offenders are not allowed to stay with us. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion (creed), gender, age, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation.

### Why are you only open from November through March?

The mission of Room in the Inn is to provide food, shelter and kindness to anyone in need during the coldest months of the year. We are operated entirely by volunteers. Maintaining a year-round program would be impossible. The other reason we are only open during these 5 months is because the limited timeframe gives the guests a sense of urgency to secure housing and employment if they are able.

### Do the guests sleep at your center?

No. The guests come to the Intake Center each day at 4pm. Here they go through a security check-in process, get supplies as needed, store their belongings and hang out until the host group picks them up.

### If they don't sleep here, where do they sleep?

They sleep at different host churches each night. Each church that participates with RITI has purchased cots and bedding and sets these up in their building. At 6pm, the host church (or churches) for the night come to the Intake Center where they pick-up the guests they are keeping for the night. They drive them back to their church, feed them dinner, let them sleep, feed them a light breakfast and then bring them back to the intake center by 8am. Room in the Inn is not open during the day.

### How many beds do you have each night?

The number of beds we have available each night depends on how many host churches have signed-up for that night. Each church typically hosts between 12 and 16 guests. If more than one church hosts per night, we are able to have 24-32 beds. Our average number of guests per night is 28.

### What do you do if you don't have enough beds?

On nights we don't have enough beds, we do a bed draw. All of the guest's names are put in bowl, and bed tickets are drawn randomly based on the number of beds we have for the night. If a guest gets a no-bed ticket, they are given a sleeping bag and food for the night and then they are guaranteed a bed for the next night. On nights that it is freezing or bad weather, we make sure everyone has a bed by implementing our emergency bed overflow procedure.

### How do you get host groups and what are they responsible for?

Any host church/group that participates with Room in the Inn purchases their own supplies (cots and bedding, etc.) to host. They go through a training and then sign-up for the nights they would like to host. Because we partner with churches who are open to the public no additional insurance is needed to use your building to help homeless people. Having transportation or showers is not required to host.

### What do your guests do during the day if you aren't open?

There are now 2 different homeless day centers that operate M-F for about 4 hours per day. Guests can go there to get out of the weather and have access to some additional resources. On days that it is freezing or on holidays, Room in the Inn stays open all day.

### What other services does Room in the Inn help provide our homeless community?

Some of the additional services besides food and shelter that we are able to provide are basic hygiene and warming supplies, helping our guests apply for housing through other agencies and providing basic medical support. We have a computer/job center where volunteers help with job and housing applications, and provide assistance with them getting proper identification (things like driver's licenses, etc.)

### How does Room in the Inn get their funding?

Room in the Inn is entirely privately funded by individual, corporate and faith-based donations. We do not receive any local, state, federal funding/no plans to apply. Every dollar that is donated goes back into operating our program. We do not receive any local, state, federal funding. We are managed by a local Board of Directors and go through a regular financial review and audit.

### Since we began...

Room in the Inn has sheltered 521 guests since 2014.

- 89% of them are from Lauderdale or Colbert County
- 7% from surrounding Alabama counties – Franklin, Lawrence, Marion
- 4% from out of state
- 57 of our guests were military veterans
- 16 of our families had children under the age of 9 and 5 of our families had children aged 9-17
- Average age of a RITI Guest is 34 - Youngest independent guest of RITI was 16.
- 9 of our guests have been active college students.
- Since 2015, 42% of all Room in the Inn Guests have found jobs or housing while staying with Room in the Inn.
- During our 2018/2019 Season, 17 guests worked while staying with us. 14 of them were unable to stay employed because they didn't have adequate transportation.
- 31% of our guests are "chronically" homeless, meaning that they return to the streets after our winter season is completed.
- 4 our guests stayed with us due to being kicked out of their homes for coming out as LGBTQ.
- Room in the Inn does not allow registered sex offenders to stay with us. We work with local law enforcement agencies if sex-offenders attempt to stay with us. In addition, we cooperate with local law enforcement to identify any individual who has outstanding warrants.