

# “What Makes a House a Home”

## Calendar Contest

**Idaho Housing and Finance Association**

Communications: Special Event Marketing

**HFA Staff Contact**

Benjamin Cushman

[benjamin@ihfa.org](mailto:benjamin@ihfa.org)

## “What Makes a House a Home” Calendar Contest

### Summary

Every year, NCSHA receives a lot of entries, covering a lot of different programs. Many highlight the work that went into high-dollar, highly publicized campaigns that were a major focus of that housing agency that year. Of course, not all award winners need to be big, splashy campaigns. Sometimes it's the small initiatives that make a big impact. It won't be the flashiest entry you see, but our annual calendar content, “What Makes a House a Home” is proven to have a strong impact and big reward for those involved.

Idaho Housing and Finance's calendar contest inspires kids to be creative, confident and embrace their dreams of higher education after high school. Idaho children in elementary school, middle school and high school are asked to submit a colored drawing of a house and a short description of “What Makes a House a Home.” This [calendar contest](#) was created for children who live in income-based housing or who participate in housing programs throughout Idaho. One winner from each age category receives a \$1,000 IDeal scholarship funded by the [Home Partnership Foundation](#). [IDeal](#) is a 529 college saving plan created to help individuals and families save for college in a tax-advantaged way. In addition to the scholarship opportunity, every applicant is entered in a raffle for an iPad and 12 to 14 drawings are featured in the printed calendar.

The significance of this contest can be seen for years to come as our young winners continue to build their college funds and hopefully fulfill their dreams of going to college. Since 2021, the “What Makes a House a Home” calendar contest has donated \$9,000 in college funding to nine children around the state. Although this funding represents the start of a dream for a lot of children, the contest has also proven to be a “confidence-building experience” said Jennifer, mother of our 2023 elementary school winner, Rylee. Jennifer credits the “What Makes a House a Home” calendar contest with “motivating her to focus on her school work, because she sees it can be rewarding.” Another example of the power behind this contest comes from Amy, the mother of our 2022 middle school winner, Lorelei. Amy credits it with “encouraging Lorelei's creativity by making her feel recognized for her art.”

### Campaign achieves measurable results

The results of our “What Makes a House a Home” calendar contest have been staggering. We have seen some amazing drawings and some even better, heartwarming descriptions of what “home” means to children throughout the state. Unlike some other campaigns, the results and measurability of our calendar contest is found within the personal testimonies and conversations we've had with the families who have participated.

One of the biggest results we have identified is how the contest has made going to college seem like it's within reach. Being just 6 years old, college may not be on the mind of Rylee just yet, but it is something her mother thinks about often. Jennifer told us that no one in her family has gone to college, so knowing that she already has some money set aside for Rylee's education gives her hope. “I didn't see myself as having enough money to put her in college, so knowing that I have this \$1000 head start is motivating me to set aside more.”

## **Engages targeted audiences**

The “What Makes a House a Home” calendar contest was so successful because of the persistent and widespread outreach effort during the months before the application deadline. In order to effectively reach the specific group of children eligible to apply for the scholarship, we had to conduct outreach to our already existing group of partners and connections. Some of these partners include property managers, refugee organizations, housing voucher programs, school administrators, The Housing Company (Idaho Housing’s nonprofit property development arm) and more. We communicated the general premise of the contest with these groups in hopes of them engaging our target audience and encouraging children to apply. These various groups allowed us to more easily and efficiently reach children who live in income-based housing or participate in subsidized housing programs.

In addition to reaching out to partners and existing networks, we capitalized on advertising the contest at our own events. For example, we made sure to promote the details of the contest at our conference on Housing and Economic Development. This conference was full of over 600 potential contacts that could further promote the campaign. Word-of-mouth marketing proved to be very beneficial to this calendar contest as more and more people learned about this awesome opportunity for the children in their community.

The payoff of using all of these various marketing tactics was receiving 48 applications in 2023 which was a 30% increase from the previous year. We had plenty of drawings and applications to choose from while trying to narrow down the winners of each age group.

## **Benefits outweigh costs/effective use of resources**

Despite being a statewide campaign, the calendar contest required very few “out of office” expenses. The “What Makes a House a Home” calendar contest is a very low cost, high reward campaign. Every dollar spent is going directly into the pockets of young children who need it the most, with the exception of our in-house printing costs. The big reward and payoff of this contest is hearing how our efforts have changed people’s lives for the better.

“It’s a sense of pride,” said Jennifer, the mother of the 2023 elementary school winner. “I have the calendar up on my wall with her school schedule on it. It’s something she looks at every day.” No amount of money or financial cost can negate or devalue the power in which that statement has had on all of us.

By taking advantage of the resources available to us, we were able to pull off a successful calendar contest. Almost every aspect of the campaign was completed by Idaho Housing and Finance’s six-person, internal marketing/communications team. All of the outreach, marketing, theme development and printing was done in-house which definitely cut down on costs.

The only real expenses for this campaign was the \$3,000 for the IDeal scholarships, postage, and the purchase of an iPad. We were able to generate the \$3,000 scholarship fund from the [Home Partnership Foundation](#) which focuses on helping communities meet their most pressing housing needs. The minimal amount of expenses needed allows us to only spend money on things that will make a direct difference to our communities.

## **Campaign is replicable**

What makes this contest so replicable is that it costs very little and can be produced by a small, in-house team. Our communications team of six individuals pulled off the entire calendar contest with very little spent outside of our normal budget. In fact, most of the heavy lifting was done by our marketing coordinator who organized all of the outreach and submissions. We used a lot of our existing tools, resources and contacts to complete the campaign. For instance, we were able to call upon some of our specific contacts to promote it, utilize our in-house printing team to bring the drawings to life, and raise the scholarship funds through the Home Partnership Foundation.

## **Achieve strategic objectives**

Throughout the "What Makes a House a Home" calendar contest process, our goal is to inspire children's creativity, give them a platform to feel prideful and confident while opening the door to higher education. Following the conclusion of the contest this year, we received a flood of kind comments, thankful emails, and messages full of parental pride. Our 2022 middle school winner's mother, Amy told us we "have really encouraged her to make art and have made her very proud which is very cool to see. Thank you for having the contest."

## Visual Aids

### See the calendar

Download the full [2024 Calendar](#)

### Two of the “What Makes a House a Home” calendar contest winning entries



WHAT MAKES A HOUSE A HOME • 2023

Lorelei, an 11-year-old from Twin Falls, middle school winner: “What makes a house a home is a cat, family, and a good place to play.”



Rylee, a 6-year-old from Post Falls, elementary school winner: “My family is where we make memories and feeling comfortable like a place you belong and to be at peace.”

### See the featured entries

Use this link to get a closer look at the drawings selected for this year’s calendar: [2024 Calendar Entries](#)



**Alec, 17, Post Falls**

A house becomes a home when you feel loved in the house. Your belongings, family, and dreams all reside in your home.



**Fatima, 16, Twin Falls**

Family and who lives in it.



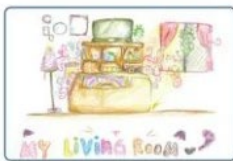
**Olivia, 10, Chubbuck**

What can make a house a home is animals. I think it can be that important because they put love and joy in your life.



**Brayan, 13, Driggs**

Homes are a place that memories are made and make you feel comfortable and protected.



**Vivian, 11, Caldwell**

It is the warmth you get when you lay down on a couch. The loving and welcoming feeling you get when you walk through the door. And a smile you get every time.



**Eva, 11, Moscow**

Love and family makes a home! As long as you're together you can make anywhere a home.



**Emmett, 8, Coeur d'Alene**

When you move into a new house and you are one week in you start to remember your old house and you think, I grew up in that house but I can start a new life.



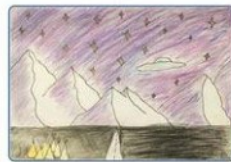
**Peace, 14, Coeur d'Alene**

What makes my house a home is when you come back to your house and see all of the things in your house or simply pulling up in your driveway. Also just enjoying the sweet relief of being back home after a long journey. That is what a house feels like, paradise.



**Rylee, 6, Post Falls**

My family is where we make memories and feeling comfortable like a place you belong and to be at peace.



**Character, 13, Coeur d'Alene**

What makes a house a home is a warm and safe place, you don't have to have a nice house to consider it a home. It can be a teepee like Native Americans, trailer, R.V., or even a school bus. You live off the land, you don't have to stay in one place. Like the Native Americans, they made their house/teepee feel like a home by having family and friends with them under the stars.



**Trenton, 12, Twin Falls**

It's not just the house or how it looks but the people who call it home and what their home means to them. A home to others may just be a house but every home has its own story like a book, a book that never ends. That's what makes a house a home.



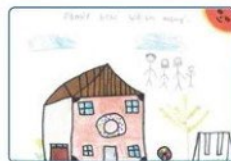
**Jaxsen, 12, Priest River**

What makes a house a home is to have a loving family. Good and healthy food. Last but not least to have a roof over your head and warmth with nice and happy brothers and sisters.



**Jaretssi, 8, Nampa**

What makes a house a home is a healthy and loving family that support each other. Another thing that makes a house a home is everybody bonds together and we enjoy activities together and sit together at the dinner table and are there to hear each other out.



**Konnur, 15, Idaho Falls**

I feel safe at home with my family. I feel happy at home with friends and family.