

*Welcoming our  
new Affiliates...*

Passaic County, NJ  
Cobb County, GA  
Genesee County, MI

## SIXTH ANNUAL

### Our Promise to Children

## BREAKFAST

No child should be homeless...

Please join us for an informative, one-hour free breakfast to learn how Family Promise is helping homeless families build brighter futures. You will hear the inspirational story of a former guest and learn how you can make a difference in the lives of homeless families locally and across the country.

**Wednesday, May 14**  
**9 AM to 10 AM**

**Baltusrol Golf Club • Springfield, NJ**

Please RSVP to Debra Miller,  
Director of Special Events, at 908.273.1100, ext. 16  
or at [dmiller@familypromise.org](mailto:dmiller@familypromise.org)

## Family Promise

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**Family Promise**<sup>®</sup> is a national volunteer-based nonprofit organization founded on the belief that Americans are compassionate people who want to make a difference. We are committed to help low-income and homeless families reclaim and maintain independence through our five program areas: Interfaith Hospitality Networks, Family Mentoring, Just Neighbors, Community Initiatives and Voices Uniting.



...a publication highlighting our work to help low-income families achieve independence.

## A message from the President...

Dear Friends,

I am always amazed to see how our Affiliates grow and change over time. They all start out with the same basic goal: to provide shelter, meals and assistance to homeless families. For most, that is just the beginning. I was reminded of this during my recent trip to Ohio, where I visited three long-time Family Promise Affiliates.

Every time a new Affiliate opens – providing temporary shelter and meals for homeless families – we celebrate. After all, changing lives is our core mission and getting a new Family Promise off the ground is a monumental undertaking. But as Affiliates grow, they add programs and services. So we also need to celebrate our more established Affiliates who have spent years building impressive track records and become real anchors in their communities.

My first stop was in Cincinnati, founded in 1991. While there, I spoke at a volunteer recognition event and was amazed to learn how many volunteers date back to that era. The Affiliate operates two emergency shelter networks and permanent supportive housing for 20 families. In 2013, between 85 and 90 percent of its 96 families moved into permanent housing when their stays ended. Cincinnati has a large new Day Center housing its impressive Child Enrichment Program, now in its seventh year. It served 268 homeless kids last year through a partnership with the University of Cincinnati Colleges of

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## Family Promise Helps Count the Homeless



*Counting the homeless in Mobile, AL.*

Every year, on a single day late in January, volunteers from Family Promise Affiliates take to the streets in their communities to help count the people living in shelters, in cars and on the streets. It's HUD's annual "Point-in-Time" count, a nationwide effort to document America's homeless population. The data is then submitted to HUD's Homelessness Data Exchange in April to produce a national report on homelessness to

Congress.

This year, the newly-reorganized Union County (NJ) Affiliate took part, providing a van and driver to volunteers doing the count. Family Promise President Karen Olson said, "It is important we do our part to make the count as accurate as possible. We owe it to each other and the families we serve to participate."

However, the exercise is far from perfect. The fact is, the PIT count provides only a narrow look at who is homeless. Not only is it difficult to count everyone on one night in late January each year, but HUD's definition of who is included in the count is too narrow to accurately assess the number of homeless families in America. For instance, it does not include families living doubled up or in pay-by-the-week motels. As many as three-fourths of the families we see at Family Promise

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## Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

Interns come to Family Promise from lots of places, but few come as far as Karsten Hempelmann, an intern with the our Philadelphia Affiliate. He's from Hamburg, Germany.

Hempelmann, 19, is the Affiliate's ninth intern from Action Reconciliation Service for Peace (ARSP), a German nonprofit formed after World War II to reach out to people who suffered under the Nazis. The organization later expanded its mission and now sends volunteers to projects promoting various social causes in 13 countries.

"In Philadelphia they are matched primarily with people serving homelessness," says Executive Director Rachel Falkove, who hired her first ARSP intern in 2005. "She worked out really well. The network had a big impact on her life – she became a social worker – so the next year I asked for another. They've become our materials management people."

Falkove says the year-long arrangement provides "a big boost, for not a lot of money". The German organization provides housing and transportation, while the network

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## President's Message

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Medicine and Nursing.

From there, I went on to Cleveland, which opened in 1998. In 2011, the Affiliate merged with New Life Community, which also served homeless families, and became Family Promise of Greater Cleveland. The new organization has seamlessly integrated staff, resources and programming. As I sat around a table with 20 staffers, it was evident how united they were around the same goals. Like Cincinnati, the Affiliate sponsors two shelter rotations. It also operates interim housing. Last year, they served 113 families, with roughly 90 percent securing permanent housing when they left the program.

My last stop was at Family Promise of Summit County in Akron, which was celebrating its 10th anniversary. After meeting board members, staff, and volunteer coordinators over dinner, I spent the night and visited a number of host congregations the following day. This Affiliate has a new Day Center, which is about to add kennels for homeless families' pets, thanks to a \$35,000 grant from PetSmart. They are poised to add a second emergency shelter program. And its director and board are thinking about founding a "social enterprise," or business, to fund its operations while providing job training for guests. While still only a vision, it's a powerful one.

Our Affiliates go above and beyond every day to create and implement innovative ideas and programs to help families. This is a testament to the caring and dedication of Family Promise communities across the country.

Sincerely,



Karen Olson

## Thinking Globally (continued from page 1)

contributes \$12,000.

Hempelmann signed on with ARSP after graduating from high school. "I wanted to have a little break from learning and improve my English skills. I also wanted to do something useful," he says. In Philadelphia he was surprised to find a big gap between the haves and have-nots, and so many homeless families. Germany has a homeless population, but it consists mainly of single individuals.

When his service period ends next September, Hempelmann plans to attend college to become a captain in the German merchant marine.

On a typical day he is busy with many tasks, including driving families to appointments and transporting furniture. He also organizes musical groups for teenagers and takes them to plays and concerts. When congre-



Karsten leading teens on a hike.

gations need a last-minute overnight host, he is happy to scrap whatever plans he might have. "I'll go and have dinner with the families. There are always pianos at the churches and that's cool, because I love to play piano," he says. "I also play chess with the teenagers."

## New Family Promise Board Member – Regina Feeney

**R**egina Feeney joined the Family Promise Board of Trustees in December 2013. Her introduction to Family Promise came as a guest at an "Our Promise to Children" breakfast. She was so moved by the experience that she wanted to learn more about family homelessness and how she could help. Following the breakfast, Regina began to get involved, serving as a breakfast table captain three times and on Family Promise's 25th Anniversary Gala committee.

Regina also volunteers with her church, St. Teresa of Avila, a Family Promise congregation. She and her children recently helped host families at United Methodist Church of Summit, serving and eating dinner with the guests and playing with the kids. Regina was also an overnight host. She said of the guests, "I couldn't imagine



Regina Feeney

walking in their shoes. It is eye-opening that, right here, there are families without a home." Her children had a wonderful and rewarding experience volunteering and can't wait to go back when St. Teresa's and UMC host again in a few weeks. According to Regina, Family Promise provides a unique volunteer experience for everyone. "There are not

many charitable organizations where a family can participate on different levels. At Family Promise, there is an opportunity for the whole family to help. You meet real people and see real life."

Regina worked in the financial industry for twenty-two years as a Managing Director, Equity Trading, for Merrill Lynch and Goldman Sachs. She serves on the Boards of the New Jersey Women's Tennis League, the New Jersey Women's Platform Tennis League and the Summit Boosters Association.

# A New Life for a Bergen County Family

**D**anielle Carter never liked asking for help. "I was so used to people not caring and being self-absorbed," she says. She was also inclined to solve problems on her own. But that changed when she and her year-old son found themselves homeless in Paterson, N.J.

Carter was married, working at a supermarket part-time, and in her first semester at community college when her world began to spin out of control. Her husband had lost his job and was living with a relative in New York while looking for work. Their relationship, already troubled, did not survive the crisis. Although her ex helped with the rent, their combined resources fell short. Rather than wait to be evicted, Carter notified her landlord that she would be leaving.

Carter went online to search for a shelter. The first place she found was full. But when she contacted Family Promise of Bergen County, New Jersey, "Their response was immediate. As soon as I told them my situation they asked me to come down to their office," she says. "I was so thankful. I'd been desperate."

Family Promise offered Carter a transitional apartment, where she and

her son lived for two years. During that period she restructured her life, moving from a dead-end job into a promising white-collar career. Thanks to financial aid plus a scholarship from Family Promise, she enrolled in an accounting course at a technical school, where she earned a GPA of 3.9. Ongoing rental subsidies from the Affiliate, meanwhile, allowed her to start saving money. Today Carter, 29, is the office manager at the Family Support Organization, a nonprofit in Fair Lawn, N.J.

Carter was overwhelmed by the amount of caring and compassion she found at Family Promise. "The case managers were also really hands-on. They were always asking, 'Do you need anything?' But I was still very reluctant to ask for help."

Until one night. It was 5:30 p.m., when she was driving to work. Unknown to Carter, her car had a broken taillight. Police pulled her over and discovered her registration had expired two days earlier. They towed the car, stranding her on the shoulder. "I called my caseworker, who said she'd call the Executive Director, Kate Duggan, who lived in the area. She came and took me to work," Carter recalls. "That's when I realized, there's nothing you can't



*Danielle and her son see brighter days ahead.*

ask them for."

Last May, Carter and her son, now 5, moved out of transitional housing into their own two-bedroom apartment. She remains in the affiliate's After Care program. Come June though, when she's due to receive a significant pay raise, she'll be self-sufficient. "Without the help of Family Promise, I really don't know where I would be," she told an audience at a fundraiser last year. "They not only offered me material assistance, but more emotional support than I've ever received."

## Family Promise Counts the Homeless

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come from precisely those situations. Many families not counted as "homeless" on one day in the last week of January 2014, arrived at Affiliates' doors the following day or week.

In contrast to HUD's total of 610,000 in 2013, the Department of Education identified 1.2 million children in public schools as homeless last year (more than 4 in 5 of whom do not meet HUD's definition), with another half million not yet of school age. Teresa Ramsey, Director of Family Promise of Coastal Alabama, participated in the PIT count in



*HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan joins national Point-In-Time count.*

Mobile, but she doesn't consider the totals reflective of the trends in her community. "I always use the

numbers provided by the schools," she said. "They provide a far more accurate picture of who is homeless in our community."

Although the PIT count may not accurately reflect the reality of family homelessness, it is important that Family Promise participate. According to Karen Olson, "Our entire organization—staff, volunteers, donors—serve as advocates for homeless families and we need to do everything in our power to act on their behalf. We're here to make sure all homeless families count."