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DONOR TOWN HALL
October 14 , 12 noon ET
 CEO Claas Ehlers, CIO Cara Bradshaw, and COO Sandy Miniutti will describe Family Promise’s COVID-19 response and outline the organization’s strategy going forward. Register for this free hour-long online presentation at:
www.familypromise.org/town-hall

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Highlighting our achievements in the fight against family homelessness



A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends,

The power of Family Promise has always come from being a local response to a national crisis. Volunteers serve families in their own communities, helping them keep or obtain housing, being neighbors.

But while the response is local, the outcome is national. In this newsletter, we see two examples of the national impact. On one hand, partnerships, like ours with Clayton Homes, are crucial for expanding opportunities for families. In addition to the donation of houses, Clayton has sponsored our *A Future Begins at Home* program focused on homelessness prevention. With the unanticipated advent of COVID-19, this national initiative couldn't be more timely.

But it's not only about bringing in more resources and partners. As April Goode's story illustrates, those in power need to understand the full extent and challenge of housing instability and homelessness and act to change the conditions that allow children to be without a home.

Your efforts—dropping off dinner, spending the night, helping a parent write a resume, investing in our solutions—are more than good works. They're part of a national movement.

Very best regards,



Claas Ehlers

Congressional Reps See Homelessness Up Close

This summer, two Congressmen who serve on congressional committees that address issues related to housing and poverty heard from families directly impacted by their policies. Family Promise and other nonprofits in the homelessness and youth sector co-hosted a virtual congressional

When the homeowner where Goode and her four children resided passed away, the family was forced to leave with nowhere to turn. Goode didn't have a history of homelessness or other troubles, which ended up working against her when she sought assistance.

“Every feeling you experience can't be statistically measured.”

“I couldn't get help because I'm not on drugs, wasn't beaten or battered, my kids didn't have health or mental disabilities,” she explained. “All the things I'd think would take me further ... were held against me. I was denied benefits.”

briefing, “Family and Youth Homelessness in the Wake of COVID-19,” featuring testimony from families who have struggled with housing during the global health pandemic.

The family was eventually placed in a hotel, but as Goode described, a roof overhead isn't the same thing as a home.

Single mom April Goode, a guest of Family Promise of Morris County, NJ, was one of the parents who shared their traumatic journeys with Representatives Steve Stivers (R-OH) and Danny K. Davis (D-IL).

(Continued on page 3)



A Homeless Family Navigates a Life Warped by the Coronavirus

April Goode and four of her children moved into a hotel room in New Jersey in February. She had no job and no car. Then the pandemic hit.



The Goode family's housing struggle was featured in a *New York Times* piece about the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on homelessness in the U.S. Photo credit: *The New York Times*

“I miss the volunteers and...will never forget the love, kindness, and life-changing experiences I had in this program.”
— Graduate, Family Promise of the Midlands, SC

FAMILY PROMISE

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Claas Ehlers

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Family Promise is a national nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization addressing the crisis of family homelessness in the U.S. Through a comprehensive set of solutions involving prevention, shelter, and stabilization, Family Promise empowers families experiencing or at risk of homelessness to reclaim and maintain their independence.

Why I Give: *The Value of a Home*



Guests at Family Promise of Santa Clarita have a new "home" made possible by a DAF.

For long-time Family Promise of Santa Clarita, CA, volunteers Dave and Kirsten Matthews*, buying a new home wasn't on their radar for at least several years. With two of their five children still in school, the family didn't plan to move any time soon. But it goes without saying, 2020 has been full of surprises.

Dave had just sold his business at the start of the year, and the couple set up a donor-advised fund (DAF) anticipating they'd use it to make larger charitable donations at the appropriate time. They didn't expect that time to come so quickly.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit weeks later, the Matthews predicted great need and wanted to be prepared to help.

"We expected a lot of people would lose their homes," said Kirsten. "We decided to keep

the fund liquid so we could access it quickly."

The health crisis forced Family Promise of Santa Clarita to relocate families to a hotel. The Matthews, who own several local rental properties, recognized the added expense and wanted to help. Their rentals were occupied, so they decided now was the time to put their DAF to use, and they purchased a home to serve as a shelter site for the Affiliate.

"The house will create a sense of belonging... a home for kids to do homework, play in the backyard, and ride a bicycle in the cul-de-sac," says Executive Director Roché Vermaak. "Even if our host sites don't open again [after the COVID crisis], our program will continue to flourish."

The Matthews appreciate the tax deductions associated with a DAF, and the fund allows them to make gifts anonymously as they prefer, but they especially like the flexibility it offers when it comes to philanthropy.

"The donor-advised fund gives us time to easily distribute gifts to charities as needs arise," Dave explains. "It's a good vehicle for us. In retrospect, we probably should have set it up years ago."

**Names changed to protect privacy.*

A Future Begins at Home

When her house was flooded by a city water main break right before Christmas, Sonya Allen and her two children moved into a hotel, but she knew her income couldn't keep them there for long. Then the family learned the house had been condemned. Fortunately, they found Family Promise of Davie County, NC.

Family Promise did everything in its power to ensure the family didn't have to celebrate the holidays in a shelter. They got the family into transitional housing and ensured there were gifts to open on Christmas morning. Family Promise coordinated transportation with the new school district and arranged after-school care so Sonya could increase her work hours and income. Family Promise also worked with Sonya on budgeting skills and financial literacy.

Three years later, Family Promise is still there for the family. Through the homelessness prevention and stabilization

program *A Future Begins at Home*, developed in partnership with manufactured home builder Clayton Homes, Sonya is a homeowner once again, this time on land that has been in her family for more than a century.

Sonya and her siblings were raised on property inherited from their great-grandfather. She'd always dreamed of moving back, but the existing home was uninhabitable and too costly to rebuild. The family's new home has the potential to appreciate, giving the family equity for years to come. The home is energy efficient and was furnished with donations from



Mother Nature took the Allens' house from them, but Family Promise and Clayton Homes have given the family the chance to rebuild their lives in a new home.

Belk, Mattress Firm, and Avocado Green Mattress.

A Future Begins at Home provides families at risk of homelessness with targeted intervention and incorporates the use of affordable housing solutions for graduate families. The Allens' home donation is the second of five planned this year.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST AFFILIATES!

Martin County, FL
Porter County, IN
Yucaipa-Calimesa, CA

And announcing the first-ever **regional Affiliate**: Family Promise of Greater Savannah, Bryan County, and Effingham County, GA, merged this summer to form **Family Promise of the Coastal Empire**. Although each county will maintain its own day center and volunteer base, their combined strength will enable them to provide enhanced services to families in the region. Executive Director Katrina Bostick was interviewed for the local news: www.familypromise.org/CoastalEmpire

Family Promise Virtual Innovation Summit

COVID-19 can't hold us back! In lieu of our national conference, Family Promise will host a **Virtual Innovation Summit** September 30–October 1, 2020 (1–6 p.m. ET each day). Throughout the two-day event, attendees will hear from CEO Claas Ehlers, renowned author, activist, and speaker Shane Claiborne, the Family Promise Guest Advisory Council, Family Promise staff, and outside experts.

A variety of workshops will cover timely topics relevant to nonprofit operations and the crisis of family homelessness.



September 30 – October 1

Registration is free! Go to:

www.familypromise.org/innovation-summit

and let us know you'll be joining us!

✓ **Do you write multiple checks for your charitable contributions?**

✓ **Is it a chore to track and record your gifts?**

✓ **Do you rush to make donations at year's end?**

If you answered yes to any of these questions, a donor-advised fund might be for you.

Check with your financial or other advisors to see if a DAF makes sense for your philanthropic intents.

CONGRESSIONAL REPS SEE HOMELESSNESS UP CLOSE

(continued from page 1)

"[I had] four kids in one room with two beds, no kitchen, no vehicle, no access to a local grocery store or pharmacy. We were about 45 minutes from my kids' school," she recalled, noting that it took two weeks to arrange for school transportation.

Then COVID hit. The school district provided loaner computers when classes went remote, but the hotel's unreliable Wi-Fi, combined with the family's instability, meant the kids' academics suffered.

When Goode found Family Promise, she received more support, including case

management and meals. But as a parent, nothing could prevent the distress she felt while watching her children suffer, even as they were on the road to recovery.

"My nine-year-old son slept in the tub in a sleeping bag because he didn't want to be in the same bed as his [older] sister because he's a boy," she remembered.

Goode described her overwhelming depression, embarrassment, and loss of dignity and spoke of the lack of information and accountability she experienced with agencies before finding Family Promise; most were merely referral services

that directed her elsewhere or offered suggestions without explanation or follow up.

For example: "When I was denied...food stamps, I was told I could appeal. But how would I do that? No information was [given] to me."

Policies stem from studies and research, but Goode urged Congress to consider the communities being served: "There's one thing I want you to know about homelessness. Every feeling you experience can't be statistically measured. There's no way you can measure the feeling of hopelessness."