

Volunteers Make the Difference

At Family Promise, every dollar donated returns \$3 in goods and services. There are 200,000 reasons for this impressive ROI: volunteers. Across the country, 200,000 dedicated volunteers prepare meals, assist with job searches, offer budget coaching, and find countless ways to serve families on their journey from crisis to independence.

Now, a new online learning management system called *Coassemble* will simplify the experience and provide a common protocol for training nationwide. Developed with Force for Good, JP Morgan Chase’s employee volunteer corps, the platform is in the pilot phase with a formal release scheduled later this fall. Modules cover an introduction to Family Promise, volunteer skills and responsibilities, and DEIA training.

Amber Young, Family Promise’s director of volunteer engagement, is spearheading the effort.

“People can go online at their convenience and access training sessions from their computers, tablets, and phones 24-7,” she says. “And Affiliates can monitor real-time progress.”

Despite the remote world created by COVID, Young notes volunteerism isn’t waning at Family Promise.

“People are engaging in so many ways,” she says. “Tutoring, yoga classes, financial mentoring—online platforms like Zoom allow more people to engage because they can give back safely and on their own time. The relationship-building component is still there, so volunteers still feel connected.”

CEO Claas Ehlers adds, “Volunteers have always been at our core. As we’ve grown, it has become imperative to expand our ways of engaging, empowering, and educating them. Volunteers make Family Promise possible, and we’re excited to bring even more people into our work—and our impact.”

Corporate volunteers are also making a difference. For example, at insurance company Progressive, two employee resource groups, Parent Connection and Network for Empowering Women, recently conducted a “Debunking Homelessness” initiative and collaborated on a donation

drive with select Affiliates. The Parent Connection employee resource group is currently hosting a “Home is Where the Art Is” campaign to supply artwork for Affiliate sites and graduating families’ new homes.

IKEA’s “A Place Called Home” campaign involves coordinating furniture delivery and assembly for Affiliate day centers and shelter sites, and Belk department stores have donated housewares and held Family

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Family Promise

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2020

177,474 served in 2020

28,398 episodes of homelessness avoided or shortened

200+ Affiliates

43 states

200,000 Volunteers

250,000+ PPE distributed






Virtual Volunteerism




ONLINE TUTORING

Help students being served by your local Affiliate succeed in school.




PURCHASE GROCERIES

Provide a meal for a family being served by your local Affiliate.



BECOME AN ADVOCATE

Spread awareness about family homelessness by sharing our posts!



Family Promise

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NEWEST AFFILIATE!

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Aiken, SC

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News From
Family Promise


“Family Promise made sure we had all the options and opportunities we needed. I wouldn’t have known where to start, but they helped us get on the right path and I haven’t looked back.”

— Family Promise graduate



Impact 2020

We’ve published our 2020 annual impact report! Visit familypromise.org/AIR2020 to learn how Family Promise has adapted to a new landscape and continues to engage volunteers and serve more families than ever.



News From
Family Promise

VOLUME 14
ISSUE 3
FALL 2021

Highlighting our achievements in the fight against family homelessness



A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends,

Housing is a delicate ecosystem balancing tenants and landlords.

It’s fair to say that this ecosystem has been in danger in recent years as housing costs have outstripped income. The health pandemic threatens to destroy whatever balance remains.

That is why an eviction moratorium was essential. It preserved public health, prevented massive disruption, and slowed the destruction of this ecosystem. But its effectiveness depends on money flowing to tenants and landlords. Right now, that current is barely a trickle.

It is not for the government alone to solve this problem; it must be a collective effort. We are proud of the way Affiliates have innovated programs to engage landlords, lead eviction prevention efforts, and expedite the disbursement of American Rescue Plan funds desperately needed by millions of families who have fallen behind on rent.

Housing may be a troubled ecosystem, but Family Promise’s network of volunteers, partners, and families in need is an example of a healthy, collaborative, and productive one. And that should give us all hope.

Thank you,



Claas Ehlers

Keeping the Wheels Turning

In the past year, Bianca* earned her associate degree and got married. Thelma increased her income, enabling her to get her driver’s license and a car. Expectant mom Caren continued to pay rent despite reduced work hours. William and his family remained in their apartment even after he was diagnosed with cancer and stopped working, halving his family’s earnings. Dara kept her family in their home despite an unexpected loss of income when her partner suddenly passed away.

COVID affected families across the country in individual ways, but one thing Bianca, Thelma, Caren, William, and Dara—and many others—have in common is Family Promise. The journey isn’t always straightforward and is never easy, but since 2020, 1,873 families at 106 Affiliates have persevered to overcome challenges and avoid the trauma of homelessness through prevention and diversion programs, part of Family Promise’s national initiative, *A Future Begins at Home*.


“We’re addressing homelessness by preventing it,” says Joe Nettesheim, executive director of Family Promise of Waukesha County, WI. “We avoid the emotional and psychological tolls a crisis like that takes. It makes the future more hopeful.”

Secure housing is like the hub of a wheel connecting numerous spokes that represent all the other aspects of life: employment, health, transportation, education, food, clothing. If a spoke breaks, the wheel becomes

less stable, especially for low-income families. A parent gets sick? That’s one spoke. That illness results in job loss? Two spokes. The reduced income means less money for food and clothing—two more spokes. Eventually, the wheel collapses.

“A car breaks down and next thing you know, a family can’t pay bills,” says Linda Smith, executive director at Family Promise of Butler County in Hamilton, OH. “Rent assistance or other support can keep them in their home without the chaos and expense of losing housing. Plus, it prevents an eviction on their record.”

Through donor-funded Innovation Grants and partnerships with organizations like Synchrony and Clayton, which provide funding and even housing for families in need, *A Future Begins at Home* enables Affiliates to intervene with an array of supports (case management, security deposits, rent or utility assistance, landlord mediation, and more) for families at imminent risk of homelessness.



For families facing a housing crisis, the ability to avoid homelessness spares parents and children from the traumatic repercussions of losing their home.

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FAMILY PROMISE

FOUNDED IN 1988

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.

Estate Planning
Made Easy

Developing or updating an estate plan? Visit freewill.com/familypromise or scan the QR code to access our free online estate planning tool.

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Why I Give

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: AMBER YOUNG

Amber Young has worn charity volunteer t-shirts since before she understood the word “volunteer.”

“My mom has worked at nonprofits my whole life,” Amber explains. “She ingrained in us that helping others was common sense. Volunteering is what our family does.”

These days, the t-shirt at the top of her pile reads “Family Promise.” As director of volunteer engagement at Family Promise National, Amber works with Affiliates to enhance the volunteer program nationwide. She’s spearheading implementation of an online volunteering training platform and reports encouraging feedback from the pilot, noting people appreciate its interactive content and ease of use.

“Technology and volunteer engagement connect with each other,” she says. “COVID showed us that even in a remote world, volunteerism still works.”

Amber is also involved in DEIA strategy for Family Promise. She serves on the Racial Justice Council and helps coordinate staff trainings.

“We’re diving deeper into this work, helping staff explore their history with race and

Amber Young loves spending her days surrounded by compassionate, dedicated people.

diversity and working with them to move forward,” she says.

Amber has worked in the volunteer space for more than a decade and brings a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to her role at Family Promise.

“I love that volunteers are so selfless,” she says. “Who doesn’t want to be surrounded by people like that every day?!”

See story on page 5 for more on how Family Promise is engaging volunteers across the country.

VOLUNTEERS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

(Continued from page 5)

Promise volunteer days for employees. Consulting and technology services firm

With Family Promise’s new online training program, volunteers can easily support families in crisis in person or remotely.

Capgemini’s upcoming “Impact Together Week” will engage employees with Family Promise, and the “Grow with Google” initiative will enhance workforce development programs.

“We believe solving family homelessness must involve the entire community,” says Ehlers. “We’re thrilled to have amazing corporate partners who embrace that belief and put it into action.”

For information on how you can help families battling homelessness, visit familypromise.org/get-involved.

Family Promise CEO Reappointed to NY Fed Community Advisory Group

CEO Claas Ehlers has been invited to serve on the Federal Reserve Bank of New York’s Community Advisory Group (CAG) for a second three-year term. A private-sector group comprised of leaders of philanthropic foundations and nonprofit and community development organizations from the region, the CAG provides the New York Fed a view of the issues faced by low-income communities across the Second District.

KEEPING THE WHEELS TURNING

(Continued from page 1)

Eva VanHook, executive director of Family Promise of Bradley County in Cleveland, TN, notes that “prevention bridges a gap,” but it’s not always a straight path to stability. She cites Bianca’s case: the family graduated from Family Promise but returned for rental assistance when COVID hit. They now receive financial guidance as they navigate their return to independence from the security of their home, rather than a shelter.

“It’s an opportunity for the relationship with this family to grow,” VanHook says.

Which is what it all comes down to at Family Promise...relationships. Affiliates work with families to overcome challenges, collaborate with landlords to prevent evictions, and train volunteers to accompany each family on its unique journey. As of August, 3,578 children had been spared the trauma of homelessness through *A Future Begins at Home*. Many Affiliates have doubled or tripled the number of families they serve.

Family Promise National Welcomes New Board Members

Dr. Victor Aloyo, Jr., is the associate dean of institutional diversity and community engagement at Princeton Theological Seminary where he serves as chief strategist on matters related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. He is also senior pastor of La Iglesia Presbiteriana Nuevas Fronteras and holds leadership roles with a variety of social service and philanthropic organizations. Aloyo brings more than 30 years of community engagement, multicultural relations, and congregational leadership experience to Family Promise.

Omar Minaya is the former general manager of the New York Mets and the Montreal Expos and now serves as a team ambassador for the Mets with a special focus on outreach to the Latino community. Born in the Dominican Republic, Minaya has been involved in microfinance work there, working with Esperanza International, a Santo Domingo-headquartered charity whose mission is to free children and their families from poverty through initiatives that generate income, education, and health. Minaya was appointed

to the President’s Council on Sports, Fitness, and Nutrition under President George W. Bush.

Case management and rent or utility support, landlord mediation, housing, and move-in assistance are just some of the ways Family Promise Affiliates help families at risk of homelessness regain stability and remain in their homes.

This is a good sign, as the Aspen Institute reports more than 6.5 million American households are behind on rent, amounting to an estimated \$20 billion in rent arrears. To date, Family Promise has distributed more than \$2 million to Affiliates for prevention and diversion programs. Homelessness prevention through *A Future Begins at Home* averages only \$816 per family (compared to the national average of up to \$16k to rehouse a family).

“It costs us as a society a lot more to allow families to become homeless than it does to keep them in housing,” says Family Promise

CEO Claas Ehlers, who cites another Aspen Institute statistic—an ROI on rental assistance of 200–460 percent.

As part of *A Future Begins at Home*, Affiliates awarded grants must match the funds they receive from Family Promise. This critical community support strengthens the spokes on the stable housing wheel.

That means families like Bianca’s can stay in their homes, spare their children unnecessary trauma, and focus on the future.

**Family names changed to protect privacy.*

A Race Against Time: The Eviction Moratorium

As this newsletter goes to print, the national eviction moratorium has been terminated, even as less than seven percent of the \$45 billion allocated by Congress for rental assistance has been distributed.

For families in need, the clock is ticking.

An estimated 7.4 million households are in rent arrears. Equally troubling is the shortage

of affordable housing. For unstable renters, the threat of eviction and its repercussions looms large. An eviction can haunt a family for years, tarnishing their financial history and impacting careers and future housing and traumatizing family members, especially children.

Family Promise is taking a leadership role in communities across the country

to decrease the risk of eviction for families in crisis. Many Affiliates are collecting and processing applications to help distribute federal rental assistance in a timely way, while others are working

with volunteers and community partners to implement local initiatives to serve families facing a housing crisis.

Landlord collaborations are a key element of this work. For example, a unique partnership between Family Promise

of Philadelphia and a local landlord association offers timely intervention if tenants encounter financial struggles. Family Promise of Linn County, IA, collaborated with property managers to help 30 tenants avoid the risk of eviction for rent arrears. In Cheyenne County, WY, Family Promise worked with a nursing school student and her landlord so the mom could remain in classes and keep her family stably housed. In Lake Houston, TX, Family Promise partnered with a landlord to eliminate the threat of eviction when a parent became unemployed, and Family Promise of Laurens County, SC, mediated with a landlord and family when a mother’s health necessitated a work leave.

Experts predict a flood of evictions when the moratorium expires. For now, Affiliates are proactively assisting as many families as possible. Their efforts have a ripple effect as community members and partners continue to find opportunities to collaborate on behalf of families in need. The race against the clock may be more of a marathon than a sprint, but Affiliates have trained well.

SAVE THE DATES!

FAMILY PROMISE WEEK

October 24–31, 2021

A week of events and activities to raise awareness of the issue of family homelessness and Family Promise’s role in addressing this crisis across the country. Keep an eye out for emails and follow us on social media for details!

FEEL-GOOD GIVING

September 29 at 4:00 p.m. ET

Philanthropy is a valuable opportunity to make a difference, but did you know there are ways to maximize tax benefits through charitable donations? Join us in a conversation with a financial planning

expert to discuss alternate ways of giving and learn how to support the causes you’re passionate about while increasing the power and impact of your gift.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF THE EVICTION MORATORIUM

December 1 at 2:00 p.m. ET

Join Family Promise leadership in a conversation about the effects of the eviction moratorium on families impacted by the health pandemic and hear how Family Promise is proactively addressing a growing affordable housing crisis. Details to come.

Family Promise Receives Top Charity Rating for 9th Year

For the ninth consecutive year, Family Promise has received the top **4-star rating** from Charity Navigator, America’s largest independent charity evaluator. This year, Family Promise earned a perfect score of 100 points, one of only 75 nonprofits in the country to do so.

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