

WELCOME TO OUR
NEWEST AFFILIATE!

Tulsa County, OK

Dare to Make a Difference! Cara Did!



Family Promise CIO Cara Bradshaw (right) pedaled with friends to benefit families battling homelessness.

Looking for a way to give hope to a family in need? It's easy to create your own FUN-raiser and ask friends and family to support Family Promise. Our Chief Impact Officer, Cara Bradshaw, recently participated in a bike race and raised over \$1,000 for Family Promise! Use your smartphone to scan our special QR code or follow this link to learn how easily YOU can make a difference:



<https://donate.familypromise.org/my-FP-Fundraiser>

FAMILY PROMISE®

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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.

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



A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends,

As fall approaches, we anticipate cooler weather, changing colors, and, except for Mets fans like me, the World Series. One of the first events to mark the change of the season is the start of school.

As I write this in August, retailers are promoting backpacks, supplies, and clothes to ready children for the new school year. But not all parents are back-to-school shopping. For many moms and dads, the basic needs of a roof overhead, food on the table, and a way to stay together take precedence. Despite a growing economy, wages have not kept pace with housing and living costs, and family homelessness has not abated.

Ending this American tragedy is not the province of any one sector. With Family Promise, we rally community stakeholders—congregations, volunteers, civic groups, corporations—as partners who shelter families, provide stabilization, and even prevent homelessness altogether to undergird long-term success. But our government's approach plays a critical role.

In this issue you will read about Family Promise graduate Kat Lilley who recently testified to Congress about critical legislation, the Homeless Children and Youth Act. The HCYA can ensure that vulnerable families and children get the

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Making the Voices of Homelessness Heard

Having overcome great obstacles, Family Promise graduates are often inspired to use their experiences to help others. This summer, several graduates ensured the voices of families battling homelessness are not forgotten.

Protecting the Most Vulnerable

In June, Kat Lilley, now a Family Promise Guest Advisory Council member and Deputy Director of Family Promise of Colorado Springs, spoke before the House of Representatives Committee on Financial Services to advocate for the Homeless Children and Youth Act (HCYA). Lilley shared her story to bring attention to the vulnerability of struggling families who aren't considered homeless as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

She also described a family who lived in squalor in an unsafe, low-budget motel and risked eviction because neighbors complained about their baby's crying. Despite extreme poverty, the only assistance they were eligible for under HUD's criteria was rapid rehousing since they already had some form of shelter.

As Lilley explained, "This family wasn't suitable for rehousing without addressing the vulnerability that made them homeless to begin with. Addressing only the direst family situations excludes some of society's most vulnerable. We're asking you to include individuals currently victimized because of their situations."



Kat Lilley has wanted to give a voice to homelessness since graduating from Family Promise.

The HCYA passed committee and goes to a House vote this fall.

The Path to Affordable Housing

Two graduates of Family Promise-Union County were invited to speak at a congressional reception in Washington, D.C., in July. The event, organized by Family Promise partner Monarch Housing, a New Jersey-based housing advocacy group, sent more than 350 supporters to the nation's capital to engage with New Jersey's congressional representatives about affordable housing.

Single mom Nichole Allen was two classes shy of her college degree when she came to

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

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opportunities they need to escape homelessness. Kat's words helped the HCYA pass the House Financial Services Committee; it goes to a full House vote later this fall. If the law had been in place when she faced a dire family crisis several years ago, Kat and her children never would have experienced homelessness.

You'll also hear about two Family Promise graduates who spoke about affordable housing at a congressional reception. More and more often, after returning from Family Promise to a stable life, families want to make the voices of society's most vulnerable heard.

Matching this effort to shape policy, Family Promise, in conjunction with the National Association of Realtors, has created a curriculum to teach Family Promise clients about tenancy. *Keys to Good Tenancy* is a significant joint effort, bringing together two organizations that share a similar goal: getting families into homes. As important as advocating on the issue of homelessness is, engaging the business community is just as vital. The resources to solve family homelessness exist in every community.

We look forward to seeing more families gaining housing as a direct result of both our work on policy and our broadening of the response to homelessness. For too many children, the afternoon bell at school signals uncertainty, instability, and insecurity. Working together, we can make sure that no child has to wonder where he or she will sleep tonight.

Very best regards,

Claas Ehlers

Why I Give DONOR SPOTLIGHT: SUSAN WATTS



Summit native Susan Watts became acquainted with Family Promise more than 20 years ago when a friend and Family Promise board member

introduced her to the national organization headquartered in her hometown. Impressed by the nonprofit and its model for putting families on the path to independence, Family Promise has been an important part of her life ever since.

"I first volunteered by preparing and serving meals for families," she recalls.

Susan had always viewed the lack of affordable housing in this country as a major problem and welcomed the hands-on opportunity to address the crisis. She witnessed firsthand the transformative effect Family Promise had on the lives of struggling families.

"Later, when I was invited to join the board, I didn't hesitate," she says. "I loved how Family Promise was helping families in my community get back on their feet, and I was ready to make a difference on a national level."

One of the meaningful ways Susan chose to help families in need was by becoming a founding member of the Legacy Society, Family Promise's planned giving association. She says the decision to include Family Promise in her estate plan was a simple one.

"I want Family Promise to continue to increase its impact, and I'd like to help that happen any way I can," she says. "The work is so important."

For information on how you can include Family Promise in your estate plan, please visit our website at www.familypromise.org/bequests-and-other-planned-giving-contributions or call Melissa Biggar, Director of Annual Giving and Donor Relations, at 908.273.1100 ext. 21.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING HOW TO MAXIMIZE THE IMPACT OF A GIFT TO FAMILY PROMISE?



For more information on how matching, planned, or recurring gifts can make a difference, go to:
<https://familypromise.org/donate>
and see the "Other Ways to Give"



Family Promise Makes Good Neighbors

In an effort to engage all sectors of the community in the solution to family homelessness, Family Promise is excited to launch *Keys to Good Tenancy*, a program that matches real estate professionals with families seeking housing. Working with the National Association of Realtors (NAR), Family Promise developed the program to address all aspects of tenancy, from understanding a lease, to home maintenance, to being a good neighbor.

As Family Promise CEO Claas Ehlers notes, "It's a perfect marriage. Family Promise and NAR share the same mission: putting people in homes!"

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putting people in homes"***

Working with Affiliates, realtors are trained to teach the course. Graduates receive a certificate of completion and become more desirable tenants. Initial feedback has been positive, and other groups have expressed interest, including landlord associations that recognize the value of educating tenants.

MAKING THE VOICES OF HOMELESSNESS HEARD

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Family Promise, which she credits with helping her graduate and become a teacher. Nichole wants elected officials to understand how essential comprehensive programs like Family Promise are to the fight against homelessness.

"Family Promise addressed my needs across the board," she said. "Homeless families need more than secure housing. I'm asking for no budget cuts to housing, an increase in affordable housing, and more well-rounded programs like Family Promise that address life skills."

Lawrence Mason and his family were evicted from their apartment and living in a

NAR crafted the curriculum with input from Affiliate Executive Directors and members of the Guest Advisory Council (GAC), a body of Family Promise graduates, who ensured the materials targeted the needs of families battling homelessness.

GAC member Tammi Hart sees great value in the course.

"It's a wealth of knowledge I wish I'd had years ago and can still use today," she says.

For realtors, the program presents an unparalleled opportunity to have a direct impact on children and families. Ryan Desch and Rob Hulse of the Lawrence (KS) Board of Realtors were instrumental in launching the program in their community.

"Families learn the essentials of tenancy and how to advocate for themselves," Hulse explains.

For Affiliates, the program will deepen relationships with housing providers, creating more opportunities for families to find housing. For landlords, better educated tenants mean fewer challenges. Family

Promise and NAR hope the curriculum will gain wider usage among all organizations that serve families facing homelessness.



Family Promise of Lawrence staff, Rob Hulse (far left) and Ryan Desch (far right) of the Lawrence Board of Realtors, and local real estate professionals unlocked the *Keys to Good Tenancy* this summer.

Dana Ortiz, Executive Director of Family Promise of Lawrence, KS, says things are already moving in that direction in her community.

"We've developed a valuable relationship with the real estate profession and started an important conversation in the community about homelessness," she says. "This can only benefit Family Promise and the families we serve."



Family Promise graduates Lawrence and Nichole and their families took their voices to Capitol Hill.