

Highlighting our achievements in the fight against family homelessness



## A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends,

The name Family Promise has always had two meanings. One is the promise we make to families to support them as they build a better life for themselves. The other is promise in the sense of the potential every family has to succeed if given the chance.

While “promise” has two interpretations, “family” has just one. Families may come in many different configurations, but they’re the single constant in our lives. Family is the home for the soul.

Every day I meet parents who have undergone hardship and made incredible sacrifices so they and their children could remain a family. I also encounter families who find their greatest purpose in serving together to help children in need have the future they deserve.

In this newsletter we read about the many steps beyond shelter that Family Promise takes to ensure that struggling families can stay together and have opportunities that give them hope for the future.

At the heart of Family Promise is, I believe, this quote from Maya Angelou: “I sustain myself with the love of family.”

Every family. Thank you for sustaining us.

Very best regards,

Claas Ehlers

# Big Initiatives for Family Promise’s Smallest Guests

As another school year begins, families in crisis are concerned about more than test scores. Children experiencing homelessness are more likely to require special education programs, repeat grades,

innovative playsets, like the one used by Family Promise of Hall County (FL), inspire creativity and teamwork.

Danielle Latlippe, the Affiliate’s daycare center coordinator, says the playset appeals to a range of ages.

“Kids from 18 months to 10 years play together,” she notes. “The playset keeps their attention and lets them be creative.”

## Housing Crisis on Sesame Street

Play is a vital component of childhood, but practitioners who work with children in need don’t always know how to best support those experiencing homelessness. With Family Promise’s expertise, Sesame Street in Communities recently launched a collection of online resources that build

awareness of family homelessness. Videos, a storybook, articles, and exercises offer

**When we make play the foundation of learning, we educate the whole child.**

tools and tips for service providers. And for the first time, *Sesame Street* features a Muppet who is experiencing homelessness. Family Promise Affiliates are incorporating

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## Family Promise Giving Day

October 25, 2019

This October, Family Promise Affiliates across the country will participate in Family Promise’s first Giving Day, a one-day online event to raise awareness of Family Promise and the crisis of family homelessness in the U.S.

“We’re bringing our communities together to raise one million dollars for families experiencing homelessness,” says Chief Impact Officer Cara Bradshaw. “More than 70 Affiliates will be online on October 25 to support this mission.”

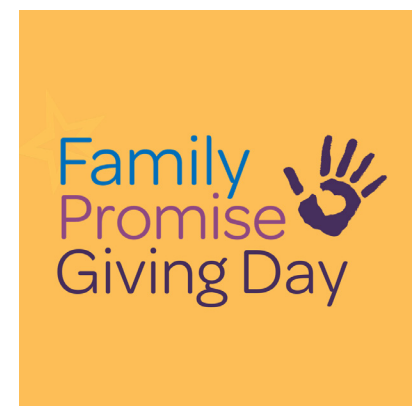
At Family Promise, we envision a nation in which every family has a home, a livelihood, and the chance to build a better future. What began as a local initiative in Summit, NJ, has become a national movement

that involves 200,000 volunteers and serves more than 90,000 family members every year.

Family Promise will change the future for 1 million children by 2030.

**Let’s start on October 25!**

For more information about Family Promise Giving Day, please visit:  
[www.fpgives.org](http://www.fpgives.org).



## 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.



# Upcoming Events

## FAMILY FUN DAY

September 28, 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
(rain date: 10/5) FREE

Memorial Field, Summit, NJ

A fun-filled day for the whole family: food trucks, bounce houses, games, and more!

Details at [www.familypromise.org](http://www.familypromise.org) and select “Events”

## FAMILY PROMISE GIVING DAY

October 25

[www.fpgives.org](http://www.fpgives.org)

Our first 24-hour online giving campaign to raise awareness and funds for Family Promise.

See box on page 4 and stay tuned for more details!

## GIVING DAY GALA

October 25, 6 – 10 p.m.

Summit House

395 Springfield Avenue, Summit, NJ

A child’s future begins at home. Family Promise will change the future for one million children by 2030 through community-based programs. Join us to celebrate the culmination of our first Giving Day!

More details to come.

WELCOME TO OUR  
**NEWEST AFFILIATE**

Cowlitz County, WA

# As Easy as Riding a Bike

Family Promise and local business Hilltop Bicycles recently co-hosted a bike clinic for 18 children from the Family Promise Union County (FPUC) program.

The event was made possible by a grant as well as proceeds from July’s *Tri for Family Promise* race where 10 Family Promise staff and supporters competed in the New Jersey State Triathlon, increasing awareness of family homelessness and raising more than \$12,000.

At the clinic, kids learned basic skills

like balancing, braking, and bike safety, and each child received a bike, helmet, lock, and water bottle. Children and parents were thrilled, and FPUC hopes to secure additional bikes for its day center in Elizabeth. Bike donations can be made to Hilltop Bicycles at 30 Eastman Street in Cranford.



Biking is a new favorite pastime for kids in the FPUC program.

# Creating Pathways for Success

People often take for granted the skills necessary for a successful, independent life. But low-income families don’t always have opportunities to develop these tools.

Family Promise Union County (FPUC) has created an educational workshop series that helps struggling families hone skills critical for long-term success.



Being educated on nutrition and healthy eating habits is just one stepping-stone on the path to success.

Classes range from practical skills for parents—basic home maintenance, budgeting, CPR/first aid—to kid-focused sessions like bike riding lessons and career exploration.

The home maintenance course covers topics such as household safety, basic repairs, and tenancy best practices. A financial management class reviews budgeting skills. There are nutrition, first aid, and health and wellness workshops, and a session that addresses the emotional impact of homelessness.

“While we’re teaching skills, we’re also looking at the subtle implications *behind* those skills, like how it feels to open a bill when you’re deep in debt,” explains Geleen Donovan, FPUC executive director. “Most of us develop these skills and any coping mechanisms without realizing it. But struggling families are more focused on day-to-day survival than creating a strong foundation to build upon.”

Volunteers who have offered to share their expertise lead most of the workshops.

# Why I Give DONOR SPOTLIGHT: THE FEENEY FAMILY

They say breakfast is the most important meal of the day, but Regina Feeney never imagined it could have such an impact on her family’s life. Ten years ago, she learned about the crisis of family homelessness at a Family Promise breakfast and knew that her family could help.

*“Family Promise addresses all the aspects of homelessness. That’s the best way to do it.”*

Since then, the Feeneys have supported Family Promise and families in the Union County program (FPUC). Regina is also a Trustee on the national board. The family has found volunteering in the shelter program especially eye opening.

“We’re all doing the same thing—dinner, homework, we sleep on a cot then get up for work and school. The difference is, for us, it’s just one night; for families in the program, it’s all they have,” Regina says. “As a family, it helps us appreciate what *these* families are going through.”

Regina and her husband Bernard believe it’s important for the family to volunteer together and say Family Promise has changed the face of homelessness for them. Certain moments stand out, like the time their eldest daughter Hannah, who studied Spanish in school, helped a Spanish-speaking child with homework. Or when they installed bunk beds for a family moving into their new home and received a letter saying how excited the sons were about their new beds.

“You get to know these families,” says Regina. “You have empathy for them. And you stop taking so much for granted.”

Son Griffin agrees, adding that he especially loves move-in days.

“The families are so excited. It’s great to be part of that, help make their transition as smooth as possible,” he says.

The Feeneys participated in the *Tri for Family Promise* fundraising race this past



Family Promise has changed the face of homelessness for the Feeney family of Summit (L-R: Bernard, Regina, Anya, Hannah, and Griffin).

summer, raising more than \$5,000 to help give children new bikes (see story on page 2). The siblings have volunteered with the Summit High School Family Promise Club, FPUC’s Girl Scout troop, and at the FPUC offices. The Feeneys enjoy connecting with

families on many different levels—from basic needs to basketball clinics to installing bunk beds.

“Family Promise addresses all the aspects of homelessness. That’s the best way to do it,” Regina says.

## BIG INITIATIVES FOR FAMILY PROMISE’S SMALLEST GUESTS

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these materials into their case management and sharing them with fellow agencies.

### The Girl Scout Promise

Children in crisis often have limited outlets to learn, explore, and grow. As another way to address this gap, Family Promise has turned to scouting.

Based on the success of the Girl Scout troops two New Jersey Affiliates formed for girls in their programs, Family Promise has partnered with Girl Scouts of the USA to develop troops across the country.

The goal is to expose girls to leadership opportunities and experiences they might otherwise never know.

Child experts say when we make play the foundation of learning, we educate the whole child. Serving more than 8,000 children each year, Family Promise recognizes the solution to family homelessness must include opportunities for recreation and growth that are critical to a child’s development.



A child’s future begins at home ... and with play.