

Join us for *An Evening of Celebration*



Family Promise®
25 years of providing hope and a
brighter future for homeless families

Please join us on Oct. 26, 2013 for a gala celebration at Fiddler's Elbow Country Club in Bedminster, N.J. as we mark 25 years of serving families. The festivities, recognizing the thousands of lives changed during that time through Family Promise, will include dancing, honorees, auctions and special guests.

Tickets are \$250 per person.

For information, please contact Debra Miller,
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Family Promise

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Family Promise® 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 message from
the President...**

Dear Friends,

The year 2013 is a special year for all of us at Family Promise. We are celebrating our 25th anniversary, a milestone as amazing to me as it is gratifying. We will serve our 550,000th guest this year, something I could never have foreseen when we began in 1988.

So much has been accomplished! When we started 25 years ago, our idea was simple – to provide food and shelter to homeless families. While we still do that today, that basic idea has grown into a professional and comprehensive approach for helping families achieve sustainable independence. Every day, Family Promise Affiliates across the country are refining and developing programs to strengthen families and enhance their prospects for stability. It's a giant undertaking, one we couldn't attempt without the support of our donors, volunteers, staff and board members.

And we've grown remarkably. Family Promise now has 182 Affiliates in 41 states across the country, mobilizing 160,000 volunteers in 6,000 congregations. The mere thought of so many communities, actively engaged on behalf of parents and children who are hurting, warms my heart. But we can also boast about their success – 75 per cent of the families find transitional or permanent

*(continued on page 4)***Family Promise Celebrates
25th Anniversary at
National Conference**

More than 370 people gathered in Atlanta for Family Promise's 12th National Conference, May 3-5, 2013. The conference, "Sharing Our Dream, Keeping Our Promise," coincided with an important milestone, as Family Promise is observing its 25th anniversary this year.

For Cheryl Schuch,

*Karen Olson, Aniah Buchanan, George Gay
and Claas Ehlers*

*"The people I met and bonded with
will be friends forever. I was so
blessed to be in the company of so
many awesome people and to be able
to learn so much."*

Edwina Reddick
Director, FP of Lawton

Director of Family Promise of Grand Rapids, Michigan, it was a time to learn from others. "What a wonderful experience for us all!" she said afterwards. "Thank you for devoting so much time and energy into making sure we have what we need to be the best that we can be. I cherished the time with my counterparts and

*Ambassador
Andrew Young*

learned so much from their experience and wisdom."

Andrew Young, the famed civil rights leader and former Congressman, Mayor of Atlanta, and United Nations Ambassador, opened the conference on Friday night with an inspiring keynote address challenging his audience to question why poverty exists in a global economy. He urged them to continue their work to end family homelessness.

The weekend's workshops covered everything from building a dynamic board to identifying and implementing innovative business models. "The

(continued on page 2)

25th Anniversary Conference

(continued from page 1)

only complaint I heard was that there was an overabundance of great workshops to choose from. That's a good problem!" said Family Promise Associate Bob Moore.

On Saturday morning, Family Promise Founder and President Karen Olson delivered an inspiring speech, "Promises Kept: A Look at 25 Years of Family Promise," in which she praised Affiliates for building communities and changing lives.

Then, Aniah Buchanan, until very recently a Family Promise guest, and George Gay, a former guest, provided poignant testimony about how Family Promise changed their lives. The morning program also featured a



Seigakuin Children's Choir

moving rendition of "Home Again," the Family Promise theme song, by the Seigakuin Atlanta International School Children's Choir. "There was not a dry eye around me. The emotion was not one of sadness, but of

passion, understanding and commitment to end the devastating cycle of homelessness," said Jess Hartfield, Director of Great River Family Promise in Minnesota.

At lunch came the news about "PetSmart Promise," an exciting new partnership between Family Promise and PetSmart. Joe O'Leary, the company's Executive VP of Marketing, announced that PetSmart will build on-site facilities at Family Promise Affiliates so families, kids and pets can remain together despite the crisis of homelessness. The program began one year ago at Family Promise of Greater Phoenix, and will be introduced later this year in Bozeman, Montana, Lake Houston, Texas, and Fayetteville, North Carolina.

The conference allowed time for fun as well. On Friday night attendees divided up into four teams to compete in Family Promise's first-ever game show night, modeled after the "Minute to Win It" hit game show. (Congratulations, Red Team!) On Saturday, the beautiful Fernbank Museum was the venue for dinner and dancing as attendees explored the museum's exhibits and showed off their dance moves.

"A fabulous training filled with learning and inspiration. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of it! Most importantly, thank you for giving hope to my family and so many other families throughout our country."

Dawn Dowden, Former guest, Current Director of Administration for Homes of Hope



Dancing with dinosaurs

Family Promise Partners with PetSmart

For a child who is homeless, having to give up a beloved pet can be shattering. At the national conference in Atlanta, Family Promise announced the launch of a new program to ease this age-old problem. In partnership with Family Promise, PetSmart, Inc., the nation's largest specialty pet retailer, will build kennel facilities at selected Affiliate Day Centers, allowing guest families to keep all members of their families together—including those with four legs—as they work towards sustainable housing and independence.

The program will be known as PetSmart Promise. It will provide a solution for parents and children searching for ways to keep beloved pets with the family, while helping



PetSmart's Joe O'Leary

raise awareness of the issue of family homelessness across the country. "Homelessness continues to be a huge problem in America," said

Joe O'Leary, Executive VP of Marketing for PetSmart.

The concept was tested in a 2012 pilot program at Family Promise of Greater Phoenix, where carpenters transformed excess space at the day center into a pet sanctuary able to house up to eight dogs and eight cats. Phoenix Director Ted Taylor said the program addressed a real concern for families, many of whom were reluctant to abandon their pets.

PetSmart plans to build on-site facilities at every interested Family Promise Affiliate over the next few years, but that's not all. It will also offer other options for keeping families and pets together, by providing boarding space in nearby PetSmart stores and sponsoring a foster program when on-site facilities aren't available. The

(continued on page 4)

Aniah Buchanan's Message of Hope

The people of Family Promise rescued her family from homelessness and gave them many material things, but their greatest gift was intangible, a former guest tearfully told attendees at Family Promise's 12th National Conference in Atlanta.

"They made me see hope," said Aniah Buchanan, a featured speaker on May 4, the second day of the conference. "What you do is not just about homelessness. It's about (making us) believe that our families can continue, that there is something to live for."

Buchanan and her children, then 6, 7 and 8, came to Family Promise in Montgomery, Alabama late in 2012, following a devastating car accident. In April of the previous year, Buchanan, a marketing director for a major retailer, had dropped off her kids at the sitter's and was on the way to a part-time second job when an uninsured SUV driver slammed into her from behind at a red light. She suffered severe injuries to both legs.

After many months, Buchanan recovered her ability to walk. But her insurance company did not cover all her medical bills, forcing her to empty her 401k savings account to meet daily expenses. Then, unable to find full-time work, she lost her home. A female friend took her in, but her apartment was already crowded. At times, Buchanan and her children were forced to sleep in their friend's car, and she grew despondent. A sympathetic acquaintance referred her to Family Promise, which took her in immediately. "I was so scared, I was shaking and trembling, but the director said, 'I'm not leaving you,'" she told the crowd. And, at their first church, "The people were so warm to us."

Buchanan ended her moving account with a thank you to Family Promise President Karen Olson. "She has changed my life and my kids' life," she said, looking directly at Olson. "I truly, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for what you have done, not only for my family, but thousands."

Buchanan also thanked Montgomery Director Beth Marra and "the wonderful people" who stood by her, through



Aniah Buchanan

(continued on page 4)

President's Message

(continued from page 1)

housing in just nine weeks, and many find jobs.

How does it happen? Because Family Promise cares for the whole person, not just pieces of their lives. No other government or non-profit agency meets the needs of the whole family like Family Promise. With our dedicated staff, committed congregations and caring volunteers, we are so much more than an organization. We are a compassionate community. Family Promise has managed to create communities in which it is okay for people to love one another, and that kind of love – unconditional love – is life-changing.

Thank you for your generous support and for all that you do.

Sincerely,



Karen Olson

Karen Olson Wins Woman of Achievement Award

The New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs of GFWC recently honored Karen Olson, President and Founder of Family Promise, by selecting her as a 2013 New Jersey Woman of Achievement Award recipient.

This award, co-sponsored by Douglass Residential College, celebrates the significant accomplishments of distinguished women in New Jersey who have demonstrated a strong commitment in leadership, humanitarianism, philanthropy, community service and the arts. Karen received the award at the 32nd Annual Awards ceremony on Monday, May 6, 2013, in Atlantic City, NJ. Linda Babeuf, NJSFWC President, said, "The NJSFWC Woman of Achievement Award represents an opportunity to acknowledge and reflect upon the extraordinary accomplishments and impact Karen



James Photography & Imaging

has made on the lifestyle of our state. Through incredible acts of kindness, Karen has given hope and a voice to those who otherwise might not have either. Karen's commitment these 25 years in New Jersey and around the country has made a life-altering difference to countless families. Karen is truly a Woman of Achievement, recognized proudly by Douglass Residential College and the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs of GFWC."

Family Promise Partners with PetSmart

(continued from page 3)

retailer has also promised to install fish aquariums in selected Family Promise day centers to help teach guests about the responsibilities of pet ownership.

Members of Family Promise Affiliates at the conference gave PetSmart Promise a rousing reception. More than a third wanted to participate, saying pets' continued presence would soothe

anxious children already stressed by so many changes in their lives. "We were thrilled to learn of the partnership with PetSmart! That will be an enormous help to children in the program," said Maggie Parrish, Board President of Great River Family Promise.

Aniah Buchanan

(continued from page 3)

good days and bad. "The days that weren't so great – those were the days that people came to my rescue. These are the things I will always remember, and my kids will remember," said Buchanan, who has since relocated to Atlanta and found employment with Flavaz of Favor, an inspirational talk show on Clear Channel Radio. "Thank you very, very much, Family Promise."

Family Promise-Union County Reopens

Longtime Family Promise supporters in Union County, New Jersey, had reason to celebrate on June 2, 2013, when the program re-launched and welcomed its first three families at Faith Lutheran Church in New Providence.

Union County was home to the first-ever Family Promise, which opened in 1986 as the Interfaith Hospitality Network. It continued serving the homeless for many years, but was suspended in June 2011 when the successor agency running the program decided to focus on housing development.

Veteran Family Promise volunteers said they were thrilled to be able to begin serving homeless families again. "I wanted the program back, and it's going beautifully. I have a plethora of volunteers," said Catherine Doremus, a retired teacher who is coordinating volunteer efforts at Christ Church in Summit, another pioneering congregation.

The program's first guests said they were grateful to have found shelter. Finding Family Promise was a "godsend," said A.R., mother of a 3-year-old daughter and teenaged son. Just days earlier she had been so desperate to find a safe place to stay that she flagged down a passing



First Baptist Church

policewoman on the street. "They make us feel like we are at home already. It's like one big family," she said.

The Affiliate will provide shelter for up to five families and 14 individuals at one time. Union County has 54 shelter beds, but they are

government-financed and restricted to families who are unemployed and on welfare. Family Promise guests are often employed or have been recently employed.

First Baptist Church in Elizabeth is partnering with Family Promise to provide a four-room Day Center with a family room and computer room for guests, and offices for staff. Renovations were paid for by grants from three foundations, and the N.J. Department of Community Affairs provided a grant for a van. Janice Wilkerson is interim director.

In addition to Faith Lutheran and Christ Church, the other 13 host congregations are: Church of the Little Flower in Berkeley Heights; Congregation Beth Israel, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Willow Grove Presbyterian Church and First United Methodist Church, all in Scotch Plains;

Calvary Episcopal Church, Central Presbyterian Church, St. John's Lutheran Church, Temple Sinai, and United Methodist Church, all in Summit; Temple Emanu-El in Westfield; Osceola Presbyterian Church in Clark; and Cranford United Methodist Church.

Welcoming our new Affiliates...

Linn County, IA

Great River, MN

Fulton/Dekalb County, GA

Rockingham County, NH

North Shore Boston, MA