



## A message from the President...

Dear Friends,

**M**argaret Mead once said, "The young, free to act on their initiative, can lead their elders in the direction of the unknown." I believe that—it was certainly the case for my children and the role they played in helping me to start Family Promise.

It was my sons, Brad and Doug, then 12 and 10, who encouraged me to help the homeless after I shared with them my encounter with Millie, the woman who opened my eyes to the plight of the homeless. I bought her a sandwich, and we talked. I felt I should do more after meeting her, but I wasn't sure if I should just put the experience behind me or try to take action. Brad and Doug knew—"Do something!" they agreed—which led to many trips into New York City, where we distributed sandwiches to the homeless people living in Port Authority.

Their encouragement and involvement meant so much to me as a mom. Our Sunday outreach trips became something we looked forward to doing as a family, learning lessons of compassion and hope together as we sought to make some small difference in the lives of the people we met.

Those early experiences planted a seed, one that blossomed into the national movement we all share today.

I am happy to report that both are still involved today. Both my sons are members of host congregations in New Jersey and

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## Stunning Report on Homeless Children

**A**t a February 2015 briefing of the House Homelessness Caucus in Washington, DC, congressional staff were informed that 2.5 million children—one in thirty in the US—were homeless during the 2012-2013 school year.

The *America's Youngest Outcasts* report was presented by American Institutes for Research/The National Center on Family Homelessness and was based on a count of homeless students done by the Department of Education (DOE). Increases in homeless children were counted in 31 states, and overall, the number of homeless students increased 8% over the previous school year. This is the third *Youngest Outcasts* report. In 2006, the data revealed 1 in 50 children were homeless; in 2010 the ratio had grown to 1 in 45.



The scope of homelessness in this report varies significantly from reports to Congress issued by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Department of Education uses a different definition of homelessness than does HUD.

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## Family Promise Metrowest: Interfaith Hospitality in Action

**T**emple Shir Tikva has been a support congregation for Family Promise Metrowest for several years, but, said co-coordinator Cindy Lombardo, the rabbi wanted to do more and become a host congregation. What prompted the switch? "The Islamic Center of Boston, located across the street, said they would partner with us," said Lombardo. "It takes a village to run host week, and when the Islamic Center said they would help, the energy seemed right."

The Islamic Center has been a support congregation for another Affiliate host congregation since 2013.

So partnering with its neighbor seemed natural. "We are literally a stone's throw away," said Islamic Center coordinator Ghazala Alam. "Working together to support Family Promise allows us to build interfaith relationships within our community."

To ensure the families in the program had a positive experience during their December week at Temple Shir Tikva, the congregation secured a donation of living room furniture from Jordan's Furniture, a local business. A grant from a local Jewish community foundation enabled the temple to buy beds, sheets, and other necessities.

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## President's Message

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my five grandchildren volunteer as well. My oldest grandson, Zack, helped to start a Family Promise Club at the high school in Summit, as a way of encouraging other teens to be involved. He recently was the Cat in the Hat for "Read Across America" at Family Promise-Union County, as the kids celebrated Dr. Seuss's birthday with green eggs and cupcakes and kicked off the program's new children's literacy program.

It is gratifying to see the legacy of the organization within my own family and the indelible impression that volunteering with our guests has made on my grandchildren. I know that the same is true for many of our volunteer families, where generations are coming together to help those in need.

*"I thank all the families who have incorporated Family Promise into their traditions..."*

Nationwide, nearly 25 percent of all our volunteers are youth. So many of them are blessed—volunteering with Family Promise gives children of all ages the opportunity to share their good fortune and give back to those in need.

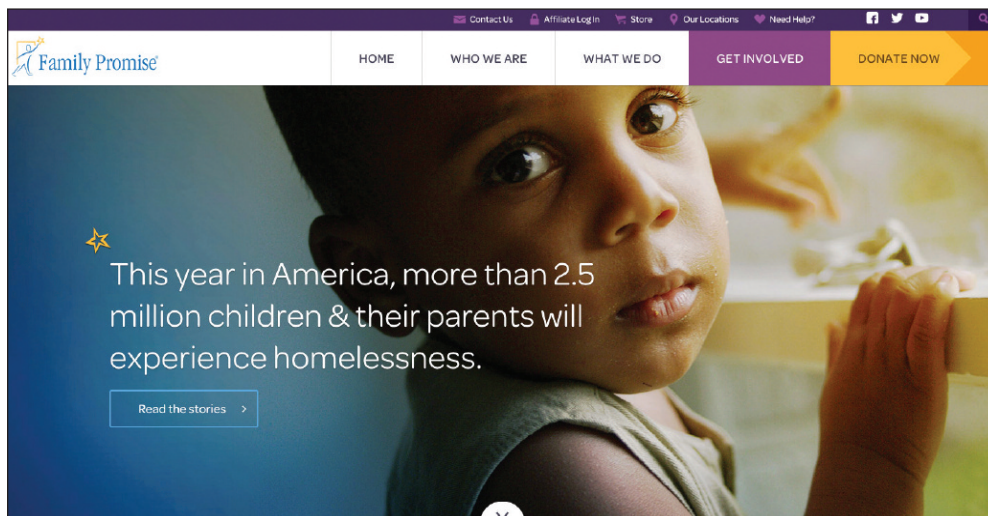
I thank all the families who have incorporated Family Promise into their traditions and all the children and teens who work so hard to help our guests. We could not do it without you.

Sincerely,



Karen Olson

## Our New Website is Here!



Family Promise launched our new website, [www.familypromise.org](http://www.familypromise.org), on April 28. We invite you to visit—our new home is streamlined and intuitive, with beautiful images and compelling stories throughout. It is designed to communicate our mission and vision clearly, while building the organization's brand as the nation's leading nonprofit serving homeless families.

The site serves a broad audience of current and potential supporters, corporate partners, volunteers, families seeking services, and Family Promise Affiliates nationwide. Visitors can easily find information on the issue of family homelessness, explore the opportunities available through

corporate engagement, link to Affiliates nationwide for local engagement or help, and support Family Promise through a completely redesigned donation page or by shopping in our new online store.

"It's so important today to connect with people emotionally when they visit your website," said President Karen Olson. "Whether someone is seeking help for their family or looking for a way to make a difference in their own community—we want our site to address their needs. To offer assistance or motivate them to join us in our fight to end family homelessness. Our goal was to show visitors who we are and why we exist—I think the site accomplishes that beautifully."

## Stunning Report on Homeless Children

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Families who are living with other family members, friends or neighbors ("doubled up") are considered homeless by the Department of Education but not by HUD. **Fully, 75% of the students counted as homeless by the DOE are not counted as homeless by HUD.** This greatly reduces the numbers of homeless persons in families and the percentage of family members among the

homeless across the country when HUD reports to the Congress annually.

Family Promise has long argued that "doubled up" families, as well as those temporarily in motels, should be counted as homeless. As Karen Olson commented in her conference President's address, "You can't end homelessness simply by changing a definition."



# A Family Promise Homecoming

Ten years ago, Sarai Williams walked into the Denver Interfaith Hospitality Network with a newborn baby. She had been living in a shelter that only allowed a 30-day stay, and, quickly approaching the end of her month there, she spotted the Affiliate on a resource list.

The visit changed her life forever. For the next two months, the staff helped Williams sign up for food stamps and other benefits she was entitled to as an unemployed single mom. The program helped her secure a voucher for low-income housing, which enabled her to move and secure housing. Williams says that her time in the program was special because of the kindness of the congregational volunteers, who always made sure that her daughter had clothes, diapers and formula, as well as a crib for every weekly stay in the host congregations. "The congregations and volunteers did so much for us," she remembers. "They took care of us."

Today, Williams is still praising the role that congregations and volunteers play in helping the guests in the Family Promise program. But now, she views the role from a different perspective, as a part-time case manager for the Affiliate she once called home, now known as Family Promise of Greater Denver.

Williams, who began her job in December, traveled a long way to return to the organization that launched her on her path to self-sufficiency. After she secured housing, she worked a number of low-paying jobs. "But I got tired of struggling, so I enrolled in college," she says. After changing majors, she focused on a career in social work, where she would be able to give back.

With her degree in hand, Williams applied for the case manager job with FP of Greater Denver. Because of the name change from IHN and a new Day Center location, she initially did not realize that it was the same organization that had helped her a decade before. During the interview, Williams shared her story with Executive Director Jolynn Snyder, and, together, they determined that Sarai was indeed a former guest of Family Promise.

"Sarai brings such a depth to the Affiliate," says Snyder. "None of the other staff members have been homeless; none of us are single moms. She shows our guests what is possible when we can overcome barriers. She has also participated in several speaking engagements, which helps bring the issue of homelessness into the community spotlight."

Her experience also helps inspire the guest families. "Many of our guests find it difficult to believe that they can go to college," she says. "But my story shows that it's possible."

Williams is thrilled to be giving back to the organization that helped her and her daughter, now 10, regain their independence. "I've brought my daughter to the Day Center, and she knows that Family Promise is the organization that helped us when she was a baby, when we needed a place to stay," she says. "It's just so wonderful to be here."



Sarai Williams

## Family Promise Metrowest

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The families are hosted in 10 religious school classrooms. During the week, the students who normally would use the classrooms made welcome and laundry bags and cards for the families.



Temple teens prepare dinner for Family Promise guests.

The Islamic Center helped the temple by handling set up and breakdown, as well as assisting with meals and volunteers. "Family Promise is an ideal outreach for our members—even a 6-year-old can understand what it is like for a family to be without a home," said Alam.

Of course, the Islamic Center is not the only congregation supporting the temple's host week. The Presbyterian Church of Sudbury, which became a support congregation for the Family Promise Metrowest Affiliate a little more than a year ago, is also pitching in. Coordinator Nadene Worth said supporting the temple was no different than working with any other type of congregation: "It's just about the families."

Family Promise Metrowest Affiliate Director Sue Crossley is thrilled with the religious cooperation in her community. Shir Tikva agreed to host during one of the Affiliate's "empty weeks," which was difficult to fill because it include both Easter and Passover. "At a time when the news is filled with so many reports of disunity and conflict around the world, the cooperation and community spirit of these three organizations is an inspiration to us all," Crossley said.

## Welcoming our new Affiliates...

Western Waukesha County, WI  
Cumberland County, NJ  
Columbia, SC  
Great Falls, MT  
Hendricks County, IN

## Planned Giving to Family Promise through Your Estate

By including Family Promise in your will, you will be providing an important investment that will positively impact children and their families facing homelessness. This meaningful legacy gift will enable Family Promise to provide more homeless children and families with food, shelter and all the support needed for a more promising future. Please contact Penny Lacovara at 908-273-1100, ext. 21 or [placovara@familypromise.org](mailto:placovara@familypromise.org) for more information.

## 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: Family Promise Program, Family Mentoring, Just Neighbors, Community Initiatives and Voices Uniting.