



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

A message from the President...

Dear Friends,

One of the joys of working with Family Promise is the opportunity it affords me to meet volunteers and guests as I visit Affiliates nationwide. When I speak to a father whose hope in the future has been rekindled, or when I see the smile on a young child's face as they listen to a bedtime story, I am reminded time and again of why I started Family Promise.

My role in the organization has changed over the years, and while I love my work in the national office, there is nothing like talking and connecting with guests and volunteers—the individuals who are the heart of Family Promise. I am always inspired by their stories. No matter where I go, I am reminded that Family Promise is not just an organization—it is truly a community—a community of compassionate people working together to make a difference in the lives of others. And I find in talking with guests, how much Family Promise has impacted and changed their lives. I saw this years ago when I started Family Promise and it continues to inspire me today.

Whenever I visit an Affiliate, I feel an instant connection to everyone present. When I hear the stories of homeless families battling terrible odds and of compassionate staff and volunteers whose commitment knows no bounds, I am filled with gratitude and awe. Recently, Elijah Greene

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A Day For Children in Las Vegas

Family Promise and Learning Express Toys kicked off their new partnership with *Giving Day* in Las Vegas, Nevada on Saturday, June 30. Family Promise of Las Vegas (FPLV), along with Hope Link, another local agency fighting homelessness, were the recipients of more than 500 toys and games from Learning Express which they distributed to local children in need.

The celebration took place at the Family Promise Day Center, with families and children from both agencies gathering for the festivities. Representatives from FPLV, Hope Link and Learning Express all shared the stage with the children, expressing their appreciation for the opportunity to share the mutual promise of bringing hope and joy to homeless children. Former FPLV Board Chair Claudia Widhalm called *Giving Day*, "the best time I've ever had with Family Promise children. It was like



Christmas in July!"

"The toys are amazing quality and for all different ages," said an elated Terry Lindemann, FPLV Executive Director. "Family Promise of Las Vegas can now greet each incoming child with a brand new toy of their very own to cherish and keep. When we move children and families into our housing programs the children will now have beautiful toys to place in their new bedrooms." ■

Karen Olson Appointed to Homelessness Council

Family Promise President Karen Olson will serve on the New Jersey Interagency Council on Homelessness. Governor Chris Christie created the Council in April by Executive Order. The council is tasked with a 10-year plan to fight homelessness and evaluate the services currently available to the homeless. The 26-member Council was established within the New Jersey Department of Human Services and includes 15 members of the public.

The Council was created in response to the needs of low-income families who have fallen into homelessness due to extremely high housing costs, a high unemployment rate, and sluggish economic growth in New Jersey. The number of people in poverty in New Jersey topped 2 million for the first time in 2010, including 14.5% of all children.



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President's Message

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shared his story with me when I visited our Spartanburg, South Carolina Affiliate.

Elijah had just turned 20 when I met him. He spent much of his childhood moving with his family from one homeless shelter to another. In 2008, homeless once more, they were fortunate enough to find their way to Family Promise. It was unlike any shelter he had ever lived in. When I spoke with Elijah, he told me that Family Promise was the family he never had. The people there made all the difference in helping him turn his life around. These were people he could trust. With the support of the staff and volunteers and his own hard work, Elijah finished high school, enrolled in college and found a job. He now volunteers with his Affiliate.

Thanks to the work being done by 181 Affiliates across the country, Elijah, and nearly 50,000 others last year, have been given that most precious of gifts—hope. Family Promise provides families the tools they need to shape a brighter future for themselves. Family mentoring, financial literacy, job training, transitional housing—these, and hundreds of other programs and initiatives developed at the local level, serve as the bricks and mortar families use to build a strong foundation as they move forward.

The future is no longer something Elijah faces with dread, but rather, with open arms. I thank our 150,000 dedicated volunteers and our generous donors for continuing to make stories like Elijah's possible.

Gratefully,



Karen Olson

Afterschool Care in New Jersey



Dr. Joyce works with Jalil.

Dr. Pamela Joyce, a reading specialist at Montclair High School (NJ), was watching Oprah Winfrey do what Oprah does best—highlight ordinary people doing extraordinary things—when inspiration struck. She would use her gifts as a teacher to reach beyond her work at the school to help less fortunate children in her community. She contacted the Family Promise Affiliate in Essex County and asked if they would be interested in setting up a tutoring program for children of the families they served. They were thrilled with her offer, as they were looking for ways to expand their program to help reduce the effects of homelessness on children while providing parents relief from the cost of childcare.

The Afterschool Program designed by Dr. Joyce and Brenda Myrick, the Affiliate's Director of Social Services, includes academic tutoring, enrichment activities and healthy living education. Teachers and students

from Montclair High School visit the Affiliate's Day Center Mondays through Thursdays to help with homework and tutor children, grades 1-11, in math, language arts, reading, social studies, science and history. Fridays are reserved for volunteers to lead special workshops, arts and crafts classes, and outdoor activities.

"The Afterschool Program is an essential piece to family stability," said Myrick. "Parents have peace of mind knowing their children are safe and comfortable at our Family Resource Center. The afterschool program works because children can learn and grow with support from teachers that provide tutorial services, volunteers that assist with enrichment activities and the staff at IHN that meets them every day with snacks and smiles."

In the program's first year, eight teachers participated and tutored more than 30 kids—a group that included current guests as well as children from families who had graduated from the IHN program to transitional and permanent housing. As the program developed, a parenting group was added and monthly visits were initiated to teach parenting skills, child advocacy and health lessons. The sessions give parents the support and confidence they need to help their children become better students with brighter outcomes.

Spring Event Funds Three New Affiliates

More than 140 friends and supporters gathered for Family Promise's Ninth Annual Spring Event at Baltusrol Golf Club in Springfield, New Jersey on May 11. Guests at the fundraiser gave generously, donating nearly \$200,000 in support of Family Promise's work nationwide.

Board Chair Cary Hardy and President Karen Olson opened the event, sharing how Family Promise helps homeless families. A live auction of luxurious vacation homes from exotic locales followed, from Montego Bay, Jamaica to Deer Valley, Utah to Laguna Beach, California. Guests also had the opportunity to

From Railroad Shack to Boardroom

Andy Rio was running out of time. In three hours he was going to have to stand before a crowd and explain why the Little Horn State Bank, of which he was president and C.E.O.-elect, had been so generous to homeless families. The bank had been named "Outstanding Corporation" by the Association of Fundraising Professionals in Billings, MT.

He had been agonizing over what to say for two weeks. "How do I explain our commitment?" he wondered as he sat in his office. Then he answered his own question—by telling the truth about himself, no matter how painful.

He wrote a short speech and rehearsed it on the drive home. When he stood up at the awards dinner, Rio wasn't sure he was doing the right thing. He had never revealed anything about his past, not to the board of Family Promise's Billings Affiliate, on which he sat, and certainly not to the board of his own bank.

"When I stood up, I pointed out that when I'd been contacted to be on the board of the IHN, I ignored the request as long as I could, not because I don't feel for homeless people, but because it brought up memories of my own past," Rio recalled recently. "I talked about my father introducing me to homelessness at a young age. At one point, we lived in an abandoned Southern Pacific railroad shack next to the tracks in Coos Bay, OR. I was about 9."



Andy Rio

His childhood was marred by domestic violence and alcoholism. He shuttled between parents, often separated from two younger sisters. His father was in and out of trouble with police and couldn't keep a job longer than two months. There were stays in fleabag hotels, including one where he manned the elevator in search of tips. He faced piercing hunger, which caused him to shoplift shortening and potatoes. Rio also stayed at the North Idaho Children's Home, where the homeless 17-year old earned his keep by stoking the furnace and babysitting younger boys.

Rio's speech got a standing ovation. "I guess I made an impression," he said. In the year since, he has become only slightly more comfortable telling his story, which he mostly keeps to himself. "I still have trouble talking about it," he says. "A lot of hurt still comes up."

For years he repressed the

memories in order to move ahead with his life. He became a resilient and resourceful teenager. Learning came easy, which was fortunate, since he moved so often. He worked at all kinds of jobs, saving enough money to start college. When the money ran out,

he joined the Army, where he was trained as a photojournalist. After his discharge, Rio established a successful photography business in San Francisco. He married. When he tired of photography, he returned to college. He became a father. In mid-life he launched a second career as a federal bank examiner. He joined the Little State Horn Bank four years ago.

Despite his success, Rio never forgot his beginnings. He couldn't bear to watch movies in which children were neglected or abused. When he joined the board of IHN, he had one thought—helping keep homeless children safe, warm and well-cared-for. "When you're a homeless child, it's kind of a desperate situation. Adults can make their own decisions, but if you're a child you have to rely on the parent who's with you. You spend a lot of time feeling guilty about your situation and thinking about how to survive."

support Family Promise through a silent auction and by purchasing pieces of a puzzle crafted from art work drawn by a young homeless girl who had been served by Family Promise. As the evening's finale, guests pledged their support for the development of new Family Promise Affiliates across the country. Thanks to their generosity, Family Promise will be able to develop another three Affiliates in communities

demonstrating great need.

Event sponsors included Ernst & Young, Protection 1, Allstate Insurance, Bench International, Celgene, Lois Schneider Realtor, Bourne, Noll & Kenyon, Hilltop Community Bank, Lindabury, Estabrook & Cooper, P.C, The Bar Method of Summit, and the Other Fellow First Foundation.



Supporting Family Promise at Baltusrol.

Save the Date!

4th Annual Our Promise to Children Breakfast

Thursday, October 18, 2012

9 a.m. to 10 a.m. • Baltusrol Golf Club



Please consider joining us and please feel free to bring friends who might be interested in learning more about Family Promise. This inspirational event will provide information about our programs and our work to end family homelessness.

To RSVP or for more information, please contact Debra Miller at dmiller@familypromise.org or (908)273-1100 ext. 16.

Our Promise to Children

Karen Olson *(continued from page 1)*

Approximately 30% of New Jersey renter households pay more than half of their income for housing.

Olson said, "It is truly an honor to be appointed to the Council on Homelessness. Having worked on behalf of homeless and at-risk families and children, I can provide the Council with direct feedback from the more than 3,000 New Jerseyans we serve annually and from our 16 New Jersey Family Promise Affiliates, who see first-hand the obstacles faced by these families. I look forward to serving on the Council to continue this important work." ■

Welcoming our new Affiliates...

Indiana, PA
Clear Creek, TX
Orange County, CA
Jackson County, MS
Mid-Hudson Valley, NY
Missoula, MT
Hall County, GA
Flagler County, FL
Irving, TX

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 their independence through our five program areas: Interfaith Hospitality Networks, Family Mentoring, Just Neighbors, Community Initiatives and Voices Uniting.