



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



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

I spent most of my childhood in rural upstate New York. As you traveled up and down the hilly roads, you would see the occasional home between the cornfields and the forests. Some were stately farmhouses. A few were more modern, usually ranches or split levels. Many were manufactured units—also known as trailers.

They were all places where a family could live.

In our efforts to solve the issue of family homelessness, Family Promise has started to explore manufactured housing through the *Partners in Housing* program. We bring together community partners, use existing resources, and create housing at a fraction of the standard cost. In Michigan alone, where the program launched, nearly 100 families have not just moved from homelessness to housing, but to being *homeowners*, in less than a year.

We are excited to bring *Partners in Housing* to the states of Colorado, Minnesota, and Florida. You can learn more about this innovative effort in this edition of *Family Promise*.

Family Promise does not just help families find a place to live; we empower them to achieve an asset and a true pathway out of poverty. Family homelessness is

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Our Promise to Children Celebrates Transformation



Baby James takes a bow.

"We are here this morning not just to be INSPIRED but to be EMPOWERED. Inspired by the people you will meet today and empowered to make a difference."

With his opening remarks, Family Promise board member Martin Wise welcomed nearly 225 volunteers, supporters, and new friends to our annual *Our Promise to Children* breakfast at Canoe Brook Country Club in Summit, New Jersey. Besides presenting Family Promise as a national organization that served more than 67,000 people last year, the breakfast highlighted how we provide a holistic solution to the families we serve. Attendees learned about the 1,500 initiatives that have been created nationally that focus on both the prevention of homelessness and the stabilization of families when they regain housing, in addition to the core rotational program addressing the immediate need for families who are homeless.

And, perhaps most importantly, the event offered visitors the opportunity to learn how Family Promise transforms people's lives, from board members to volunteers to families experiencing the tragedy of losing their homes.

People like Amalia Tobias, a senior at Summit High School and founder of the Family Promise Club. The club began in 2013 as a small group of students playing with the children of guest families in the program and has grown into a fundraising and capacity-building organization with chapters in schools nationwide.

Attendees also heard from former guest and newest member of our national Guest Advisory Council, Hope Johnson, who generously shared her story, as she continues to give back to the organization she first encountered seven years ago in Hunterdon County, New Jersey:

"I lost my job and my home but was able to reestablish a stable life for my daughter and myself. I went from having absolutely no one, to having friends who I call family. I just had another baby, James. I am blessed. I owe it to all the people who volunteer with and support Family Promise. People who help Family Promise change lives, and for that I couldn't be more grateful."



Hope Johnson.

Stories like Hope's are far from unique—they take place every day at Family Promise's 206 Affiliates from Alaska to Florida.

Here in Summit, the *Our Promise to Children* breakfast raised nearly \$100,000 while continuing to build support for our mission. Family Promise gratefully thanks its breakfast sponsors and corporate partners: Worldwide ERC, PetSmart Charities, Lois Schneider Realtor, Other Fellow First Foundation, and TAPinto.net.

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a complicated issue—and it needs a comprehensive, holistic response which Family Promise provides.

In fact, the bulk of the work we do is on either end of this spectrum: prevention and stabilization. The ability to keep families from losing their homes, and ensuring stability after they regain them, is just as much what Family Promise is as the core program of hospitality.

This is only possible because of the support of people like you. Thank you for being a part of the solution to family homelessness.

Sincerely,



Claas Ehlers

Partners in Housing Moves Homeless to Homeowners

This spring, Family Promise launched *Partners in Housing*, an innovative solution designed to assist families experiencing homelessness transition quickly to owning homes of their own. With funding from the Tides Foundation, Family Promise is making three initial grants of \$10,000 to Affiliates in Colorado Springs (CO), Gainesville (FL), and Anoka County (MN) to create

pilot programs in which families graduating from their shelter programs are placed in refurbished manufactured housing units in local trailer parks. In a matter of months, the title to the unit will be transferred to the family and they will become homeowners.

This is a program aimed directly at the root cause of family homelessness—the lack of affordable housing. Estimates are that only one in four households in need of subsidized housing is actually getting it. This is the core issue behind family homelessness—more than employment, stability, health, or anything else.



New homeowners.



Volunteer at work.

Family Promise President Claas Ehlers describes the initiative's objectives, "Our goal at Family Promise is the empowerment of families to leave homelessness behind and achieve the level of security every family deserves. *Partners in Housing* will help many of the families we serve attain the American dream of owning an affordable home of their own."

Here's how it works: the Affiliate identifies low-cost manufactured housing options, often damaged or distressed, in local trailer parks. Working with Family Promise national partner Farmers Insurance, the nation's largest insurer of manufactured homes, the home is professionally assessed to ensure that it can be successfully rehabilitated. It is then purchased at a fraction of the cost of other

permanent housing options, refurbished by Family Promise volunteers and local business partners, and presented to qualified families who have graduated from the program.

The families receive extensive case management and ongoing support to assure they will be able to sustain their independence. After a transitional period of 6-12 months, in which the family pays lot rent and utilities, the title to the home is turned over to the family. All parties benefit: the family has gone from homeless to home owners, the Affiliate has successfully placed a family in permanent housing, and the park owners have a renovated property with a motivated homeowner.

Based on outcomes of the three initial programs, the goal is to expand *Partners in Housing* to 10-15 pilot sites representing a cross-section of the regions and demographics served by Family Promise Affiliates. In each one, homeless families will become homeowners—helping to secure their children's futures in the process.



View from Juneau's Day Center.

Welcoming our New Affiliates

**JUNEAU, AK
OGDEN, UT**

Home is Where You Find It

Zac and Lasandra Clayton were living in Douglasville, Georgia, with their six young children in a house that was literally falling apart. The landlord refused to make repairs and their home became essentially uninhabitable. It was no place for children. Additionally, the neighborhood was beset with problems and the Claytons feared raising their family in such a hazardous environment. They had no choice—they had to leave and make a new start.

For a number of reasons, including proximity of family, they ended up in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Unfortunately, they were not able to secure housing immediately and had to spend the weekend at a local homeless shelter. Lasandra feared for her family’s safety but did her best to hide it from them. “I had to put on a brave front for my children—if they saw I was scared, they’d be scared.”

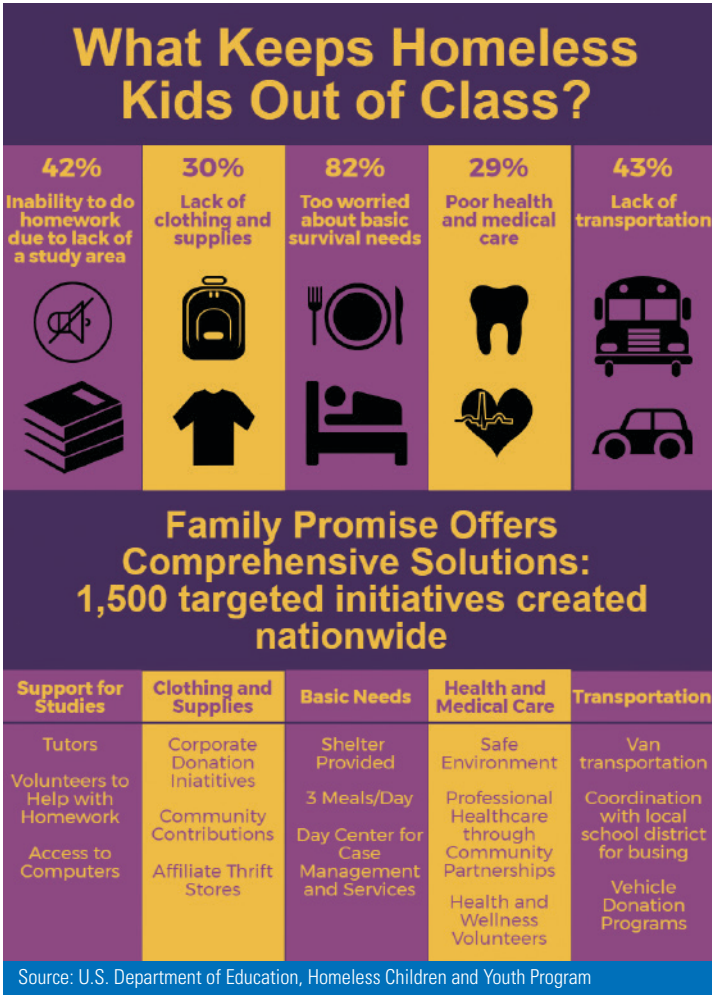


When they gave Family Promise of Cheyenne (FPC) a call, Lori Kempter-Mansel, the Affiliate’s director answered, listened to their story, and said, “Come on in—we have an opening for you.”

Monday morning they headed to the FPC Day Center and began building a new life. They went from a shelter to a program—and that made all the difference the family needed.

Both Lasandra and Zac enrolled in a tenant education course offered through the program and they immediately began participating in FPC’s parenting and relationship group, which they credit with strengthening their bonds as a couple and with their children. Lori also connected them with Strong Families, Strong Wyoming, a local organization that helps students and young families work towards self-sufficiency. Lasandra took a class to become a Certified Nursing Assistant and Zac did the same, earning his Commercial Driver’s License. FPC also helped them register with the Department of Family Services, giving them access to daycare, as well as financial assistance for food and living expenses.

They were able to quickly build a support system with many of the volunteers they met. They became members of one of the host congregations, Cheyenne Berean Church, having formed friendships with many of the members. Their new congregation welcomed them as family—even presenting them with a newer van and seven car seats, so their children would be safe.



Lasandra is continuing with her schooling, pursuing an Associate’s Degree in Human Services from the local community college, while Zac is exploring a career in mortuary science. Both are working—Lasandra as office manager for Grace UMC and Zac as a driver and maintenance man at a daycare facility.

The Claytons moved into their own apartment less than six weeks after arriving at FPC. Their kids love their new home in Cheyenne. They are all enrolled at the Poder Academy, a free public charter school the Claytons learned about from a volunteer family they met in the program.

Lori marvels at their resilience. “What strikes me is this family’s joy of life and ease of connecting with everyone in the program. I wondered, with six kids, ‘How will they

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“**What strikes me is this family’s joy of life and ease of connecting with everyone in the program.**

—Lori Kempter-Mansel,
Family Promise Director,
Cheyenne, Wyoming

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navigate?" They did so well—they all loved being around the volunteers. They're achievers."

Today, the whole family volunteers when their congregation hosts and Lasandra

speaks at Family Promise events whenever she's asked. Explaining how Family Promise transformed their lives, she shares, "We've gained so much knowledge. We've learned how to do better, how to succeed. We owe so much to everyone in the program who put in the time to help us.

"The caring they showed us—that's what helped us the most."



Family Promise®

EDITORS: Chris Kaul, Roberta Samuels

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Chris Kaul, Claas Ehlers and Stacy Pollard

LAYOUT: Trillion

PHONE: 908-273-1100

FAX: 908-273-0030

EMAIL: info@familypromise.org

WEB: www.familypromise.org

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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.