

Save the Date!

11th Family Promise National Conference



September 23-25, 2011
The Hilton Salt Lake City Center
Salt Lake City, Utah

Join us at this gathering of directors, board members and volunteers from our Affiliates nationwide. The National Conference is the premier opportunity for professional development for Family Promise Affiliate leaders. There will be inspiring keynote addresses, dynamic workshops, and plenary sessions on topics of critical relevance to Affiliates. There will also be the collective wisdom of Affiliates serving children and their families in their communities and, yes, moving mountains.

Diana Butler Bass is the keynote speaker; she is a best-selling author, acclaimed speaker and independent scholar specializing in American religion and culture. She is the author of seven books, including *A People's History of Christianity: the Other Side of the Story* (2009) which defines compassion, hospitality and social justice as the primary function of the church.

More details this spring! For Questions, call (908) 273-1100, ext. 20

MassMutual *(continued from page 1)*

Opportunities are clearly evident in the synergies shared by the two organizations as they each work to strengthen families today, and in the years to come.

As a generous vote of confidence in the partnership's potential, MassMutual has awarded Family Promise National a grant of \$50,000. We offered our sincere thanks when LifeBridge representatives joined us at our Fall Breakfast at Baltusrol Golf Club on November 10th. ■

Welcoming our new Affiliates...

East San Fernando Valley, CA

Anoka, MN

Lawton, OK

Harrisburg, PA

Bergen County, NJ

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.

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Family Promise®



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

A message from the President...

Dear Friends,

This past year has proved to be truly extraordinary for Family Promise. We opened 12 new Affiliates, from Burbank, CA, to Harrisburg, PA, bringing our total to 162 across 41 states nationwide. And we served our 350,000th guest, a milestone I never would have foreseen when we began more than 20 years ago.

Our work continues to be vitally important. The Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness, published in January by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, makes clear that the family homelessness crisis continues to grow. For the second straight year, the number of sheltered homeless families increased—more than 170,000 families were sheltered homeless in 2009, up 30% since 2007—and is expected to do so again in 2011. (For more on this report, see accompanying story.)

Most tragic of all is that more than 1.3 million children will be homeless this year. Our country has abundant resources, but, sadly, a child is born into poverty every 33 seconds.

Discouraging as these numbers can be, they alone don't tell the true story of family homelessness. As we know, the story is etched on the faces of moms and dads who are struggling each day to protect and provide for their children in the face of long odds and bad breaks.

Thankfully, the story continues in our Affiliates, where miracles

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9% Rise In Family Homelessness

The U.S. Conference of Mayors 2010 Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in American Cities details an increase in families experiencing homelessness of 9% across the survey cities. Released in December, 2010, the report covers the period of September, 2009 through August, 2010 and assesses the state of homelessness and hunger in 27 American cities. The report details the impact of rising unemployment and housing costs as well as low wages on America's most vulnerable sections of urban society.

When asked to identify the three main causes of homelessness for their family, 76% cited unemployment, 72% mentioned lack of affordable housing and 56% identified poverty. Increasing their mainstream assisted housing was the primary goal of survey cities to help reduce homelessness.



The outlook is not improving. Officials in 72% of the survey cities expect the number of homeless families to continue to increase in 2011. Last year, emergency shelters in 64% of the cities were forced to turn away families with children. And officials in nearly three-quarters of the cities expect resources to help provide emergency shelter to decrease over the next year. ■

Family Promise Teams with MassMutual

Family Promise and MassMutual Financial Group have entered into a partnership to benefit families and communities served by our Affiliates. The relationship provides the opportunity to extend LifeBridge, MassMutual's free life insurance program, to

qualified families served by Family Promise Affiliates.

LifeBridge provides up to \$50,000 for educational expenses to eligible children in the event their parents pass away during the term of the policy. MassMutual recognizes that, "children are the future of our country. And the more educated our future leaders are, the better prepared they will be to help meet the challenges of tomorrow."

Not only do we expect the partnership to benefit homeless and at-risk families served by Family Promise, but it will also provide opportunities for MassMutual and its agents to become even more involved in their home communities.

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Family Promise meets LifeBridge at Baltusrol Golf Club.

President's Message

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really do happen when families' lives are turned around by the help of our staff and volunteers:

- Parents who come to an Affiliate discouraged and jobless find jobs.
- The young mother who does not have a high school diploma is encouraged to obtain her GED.
- The family who has no home finds housing with a donation from a congregation or help in finding increasingly scarce federal housing vouchers.
- A mom who has no self-confidence because she cannot provide for her family begins to believe in herself and is able to hold her head up high because so many people believe in her.

Thanks to your support, these miracles happen every day in Family Promise Affiliates. They inspire us to continue striving to expand our network, community by community, to afford more families the opportunity to succeed in this time of growing need.

Most of our Affiliates are filled to capacity; many more have a waiting list of families in desperate need of services, while the demand for affordable housing continues to rise. Our work to help these families will continue in 2011 and beyond. In truth, it begins anew each time a family finds their way to our doors.

This year can be a year of miracles for so many families. Thank you for helping us make that happen.

Sincerely,


Karen Olson

"Houses for Change" Lets Kids Make a Difference

This past November, Family Promise launched "Houses for Change," a fun, innovative project to raise awareness of homelessness and provide funds to help homeless families. It offers congregations, schools and other organizations a "teachable moment" regarding the causes and effects of homelessness—and provides a hands-on opportunity for participants to make a difference

"Houses for Change" answers the question, "What can I do to help end homelessness?" Children decorate plain boxes to look like houses and take their boxes home and in the following weeks fill them with loose change. At a selected date, for example Thanksgiving, Easter, the end of the year or end of the school year, families bring their filled boxes back to the participating organization for a communal donation to fight family homelessness.

This is not only a fundraiser. "Houses for Change" is an opportunity to teach children about homelessness and the value of charitable giving. It



can be incorporated in fundraising events, holiday activities, educational programs and days of community service. It provides local news media with a human interest story—kids helping homeless kids.

Everything needed to organize this project is available on the Family Promise website. Just click on the "Houses for Change" promo box on the left side of the home page. Please join in this nationwide initiative that brings children and adults together on this issue so close to all of our hearts. ■

Las Vegas Families Dealt a Winning Hand



families are all graduates of Family Promise of Las Vegas. "These are just ten examples of the 150 families across the country who this year will receive the gift of reliable transportation to make better lives for themselves," said Recycled Rides Chairman Nick Notte.

Nadeeryah is back on her feet after only 44 days in the program and the Chrysler Pacifica she received will get her to her new job and her children to school.

Nadeeryah Edward and her children are just one of ten Las Vegas families that have received refurbished automobiles from the National Auto Body Council (NABC) within the past two months through its Recycled Rides program. State Farm, Esurance and Allstate donated vehicles in need of repair and NABC members refurbished them. The recipient

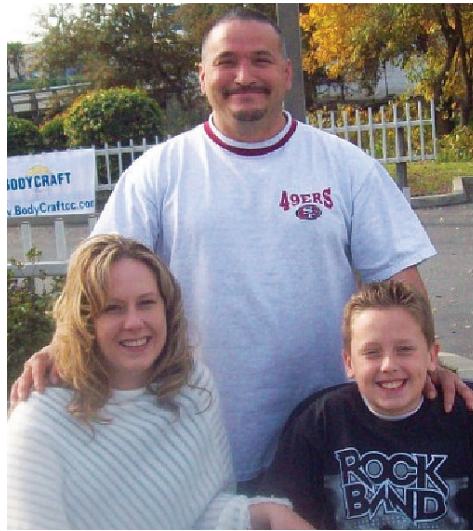
A Sacramento Success Story

Before the economy started slipping, Lisa Bisher and her children lived in a comfortable, three-bedroom duplex. But once the recession took hold, she lost her waitressing job and, in a very short time, her home. Seeking help from her family, Lisa then lost something even more valuable—her faith in human kindness. During these dark times, the one bright spot was meeting and falling in love with Charles Ortiz. After a few harrowing months of staying in sometimes dangerous places, they finally made their way to Family Promise of Sacramento (CA). Living with other homeless families, many of whom she still keeps in touch with, Lisa learned that anybody can become homeless, that she had nothing to feel ashamed about.

Lisa sang the praises of the many congregations that took them in week after week. She said, "It touches my heart to this day. Everybody was so welcoming. I had my doubts about humanity, but they genuinely did want to contribute." Perhaps the event that most touched Lisa's heart was when her mother died during

Lisa's stay with Family Promise. One of the host churches, St. Mark's Methodist Church, held a memorial service for her and lent emotional support to Lisa and her children through that difficult time.

But the support the family received in the program was also practical. Family Promise volunteers helped Lisa and Charles reinstate their



Life is looking up for Lisa, Charles and Justin.

drivers' licenses. When Body Craft, a car repair shop in Sacramento, contacted Family Promise to give away a car to a family in need, Lisa and her family were the lucky recipients. And one of the Board members, Chuck McIntyre, referred Charles to the landscaping company where he now works. Most importantly, the Family Promise team helped them set and achieve small, doable goals, which gave them the confidence to go after larger ones. Lisa summed it up perfectly: "They believed in us and helped us to believe in ourselves."

Lisa and her family recently moved from transitional to permanent housing. She has enrolled in business school, studying hotel and restaurant management. When she is finished with school and has begun working, Charles intends to enroll at the American River College to study the "green" industry. Lisa is cheerful and confident about their future. "For most people, being homeless is a nightmare, but Family Promise turned it into an opportunity to make dreams come true." ■

Family Promise and Chef Michael White Partner Against Homelessness

Family Promise joined with two of New Jersey's most highly acclaimed restaurants this holiday season, Chef Michael White's Due Mari in New Brunswick and Due Terre in Bernardsville, to co-sponsor "Fight Family Homelessness Month." Throughout November, the restaurants donated a portion of their proceeds to Family Promise in support of homeless and at-risk families.

Karen Olson, President and Founder of Family Promise, said, "We are so gratified that Due Mari and Due Terre are helping us address this critical issue. The fact that Michael White has committed his time, resources and reputation in support of Family Promise will make a huge difference to families in crisis."



The Altamarea Group is owned by partners Ahmass Fakahany and Chef Michael White and is comprised of five Manhattan restaurants, Alto (2005), Convivio (2008), Marea (2009), Osteria Morini (2010) and Ai Fiori (2010), and two New Jersey restaurants, Due Terre (2007) and Due Mari (2008). Upcoming projects include a consulting partnership with foodservice group OTG for Cotto in the new LaGuardia Terminal as well as their first international project, slated for Spring 2011 in Hong Kong.

"My family has always been my foundation for everything I've done in my life, and I'm incredibly lucky to be in a position to help other families in need," said Chef White. "The Altamarea Group is thrilled to align with an organization that is helping such an important cause in a community that means a lot to us." ■