



# Family Promise®

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## Welcoming our new Affiliates...

Jefferson County, WI  
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Lincoln County, OR  
Effingham County, GA  
Pickens County, SC

## Giving Stock as a Charitable Contribution

Donating appreciated stock can provide you with significant tax benefits. Rather than selling your securities and incurring capital gains taxes, you can donate the stock to Family Promise, a tax-exempt charitable organization. You are entitled to a charitable deduction for the full, fair-market value of stocks and securities held longer than one year. Your gift is an investment in Family Promise as well as the futures of the families we serve.

Should you have any questions, call Penny Grounard, Director of Annual Fund, at (908) 273-1100, ext. 21.

## 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.



News from

# Family Promise®

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

## A message from the President...

Dear Friends,

**M**ore than 325 Family Promise staff members, board members and volunteers gathered October 24-26 for Family Promise's 13th Annual Conference—*Transforming Lives*. Held outside of Chicago, this special weekend provided a time to connect, to reflect, and learn from others. More importantly, the conference was an opportunity for all those who are dedicated to the work of Family Promise to come together as a community—a community committed to helping low-income and homeless families.

And that commitment leads to the transformation of lives in the communities that we serve. Our Affiliates see the transformation every day in their work. They see it when a fearful mom enters our program and is able to relax, perhaps for the first time in a long time, because she feels safe and welcomed. Or when a child throws open the door to his new apartment, and a huge grin spreads over his face because he knows this place is home.

But it is so much more than that. Each night in congregations in more than 180 locations, volunteers sit down to a meal with homeless families and learn that the families' dreams are not very different than their own. The volunteers come away transformed and often realize they can help—by donating their time, their talent and their treasure, sometimes by advocating for change in their own

(continued on page 2)

## Celebrating Transformation at Our National Conference



**F**amily Promise directors, staff, board members and volunteers gathered outside of Chicago, October 24-26, for our 13th National Conference, *Transforming Lives*. More than 325 people convened at the Hyatt Regency Schaumburg to connect with friends—old and new—and share our collective wisdom in the fight against family homelessness.

The launch of Family Promise's new financial literacy curriculum kicked off the conference. *New Beginnings*, the program developed in partnership with Woodforest National Bank, is specially tailored to the unique needs of the

low-income and homeless families we work with every day.

At Friday night's Opening Dinner, U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky welcomed attendees to the Conference with her keynote speech addressing the economic challenges facing so many families in America today. Family Promise President and Founder Karen Olson followed Rep. Schakowsky and formally opened the Conference. She discussed how the conference theme—*Transforming Lives*—ties into the everyday work of Affiliates.

"Transforming lives is not something we think about in our day to day work. It's not what we promise families as they come to our doors. We don't set it as a strategic goal in our five-year plans," she said. "But this is what is happening in Affiliates every day. Lives are transformed, and we are also transformed. It is the power of the Family Promise community."

Saturday morning's highlight was our featured keynote speaker, Rev. Dr. Martin Marty, renowned religious scholar from the University of Chicago, editor of *The Christian*



Karen Olson

(continued on page 2)

## President's Message

(continued from page 1)

communities.

Of course, our staff members are also transformed by the work that they do. They see how desperately families need assistance and, though their hours are long and the work can be hard, are transformed by the many success stories they make possible.

For me, the conference was a reminder of how strong Family Promise is—186 Affiliates, 6,000 congregations, 160,000 volunteers, and more than 600,000 people served. Many people ask me if, when I began my search for shelter for families in Union County, New Jersey in 1986, I ever imagined what Family Promise would become. The truth is, I never imagined how big our family would grow and how our organization could transform the lives of so many. I never dreamed of our varied and rich programming designed to respond to needs in local communities or our advocacy efforts that I hope can one day ensure that each child in our nation has a safe place to sleep every night.

I want to thank you for the critical role that you have played in supporting the mission and work of Family Promise. Your investment in our organization has made our tremendous impact possible. Your financial support makes all of our transformations possible.

Every day, I am grateful for your commitment to Family Promise and the homeless and low-income families that depend upon us in their journey to financial stability and a better life.

Sincerely,



Karen Olson

## Celebrating Transformation

(continued from page 1)

Century and winner of the National Book Award. Dr. Marty's speech, *Transforming Strangers in Family Promise*, examined how our organization moves people from homelessness, helplessness and "outsider-hood" to confidence, security and family.

The Conference featured a full weekend of workshops covering a range of subjects from strategic planning to board development to permanent and transitional housing. There truly was something for everyone—directors, case managers, board members, developing Affiliate attendees, and Affiliate volunteers.

And, of course, it wasn't all work. Friday night featured a predictably hilarious Dancing and Lip Sync Contest. Saturday evening's event was an exclusive night of improv at Laugh Out Loud, featuring talented professional comic actors as



Rev. Dr. Martin Marty

well as audience participation from Family Promise attendees. And, continuing a much-beloved tradition, our Interfaith Worship Service, led by the Rev. Dr. Ann L. Rosewall, provided the perfect close to the end of a stimulating and fulfilling weekend.



T.G.I.F!

*"Encouraging, exceptional, challenging, connectional... all rolled into one weekend... that was the Family Promise Conference."*

Barbara Sabath, Core Team, Developing  
Atlantic County, NJ Affiliate

## New Beginnings: Family Promise Partners with Woodforest National Bank

**F**amily Promise and Woodforest National Bank announced the launch of *New Beginnings: A Program for Family Financial Fitness* at the Family Promise National Conference in Schaumburg, Illinois, on October 24, 2014. *New Beginnings* is a financial literacy curriculum for families currently in our program as well as for those who have graduated. *New Beginnings* is a unique

# Finding a Home for Her Sons

If Theresa Gates could use one word to describe herself, it would be "mom."

"Since my children were born, I have defined myself as a mother before and above any other roles," said Theresa, who has three teenage sons. "I dedicated myself to raising my children in the most caring, loving, and stable environment possible."

But two years after Theresa and her husband divorced and her ex-husband stopped paying child support, her family was living in a motel room, paying by the week. The social worker assigned to her case suggested that Theresa consider turning to Family Promise for assistance. At first, she refused. "Although our family wasn't making any forward progress and we were crammed two to a bed in a 10 foot by 14 foot room, we were living independently," she says. "'Shelter' has such a negative connotation."

As the social worker continued to provide Theresa with more details about Family Promise, she decided to apply for a spot, which she calls "one of the best decisions I've made in my adult life."

Laura Vincenti, Executive Director of Family Promise of Pittsburgh,



*Theresa with her sons.*

recognizes that Theresa's decision to enter the Family Promise program was, at heart, "a desire to protect her sons and provide well for them." Theresa quickly warmed to the Family Promise program, especially since it was the only sheltering option to keep her family intact, as most shelters separate mothers and older children. After completing the program, Theresa sees amazing differences in both herself and her children.

"I am a much stronger and more confident person. For that, I can thank Family Promise," says Theresa. She boasts of the growth she has seen in her sons: her oldest graduated from high school and is a private in the

Pennsylvania Army National Guard; her middle son has matured into a young man who is comfortable with himself; and her youngest, once painfully shy, is more outgoing.

Now a Family Promise graduate, Theresa is renting a small three-bedroom home from a landlord associated with the Affiliate. Before reaching that milestone, Family Promise's case management program provided Theresa with the budgeting skills she would need to determine an affordable rent. Laura notes that Theresa received security deposit assistance from a local agency; the Affiliate provided funds

toward utility deposits and the purchase of appliances. Family Promise's "Home Again" program furnished the space and Family Promise volunteers helped move the family and their belongings to their new home.

Like many former guests of Family Promise, Theresa is giving back so that others can receive the same assistance. She is a passionate advocate for the program, often sharing her story with supporters or others interested in learning more about Family Promise. As Laura says, "Theresa's words and thanks are so heartfelt; she makes me cry every time I hear her speak."

curriculum, tailored to low-income families—specifically, the working poor. It will provide families with a comprehensive approach to achieving financial sustainability, from basic banking concepts to budgeting and managing credit. It is designed to be clear and accessible both to families with no

previous experience managing finances as well as to facilitators who may be new to teaching financial concepts.



Woodforest's partnership goes well beyond helping create *New Beginnings*—they have made

Family Promise one of their featured community partners in their ongoing commitment to affordable housing. They have awarded numerous grants to Family Promise Affiliates and have engaged at the local level with their employees preparing meals, sharing their professional expertise, and serving on Affiliate committees and boards.