

Working for Equal Justice

In June, Geleen Donovan, executive director of Family Promise Union County (FPUC) in Elizabeth, NJ, Family Promise's flagship program overseen by the national office, was awarded the Legal Services of New Jersey's Equal Justice Medal. The annual award, first presented in 1983, recognizes individuals and organizations in New Jersey that have made significant pro bono contributions in advancing equal justice for disadvantaged people.

Central Jersey Legal Service's Deputy Director Debbie Morgan, Esq., nominated Donovan for her work with families in crisis during the height of the Covid pandemic.

Donovan and her team transitioned their group shelter model to apartments to protect families' health and administered CARES Act and other pandemic relief funding to keep 300 families from losing housing. Donovan spearheaded all this even after FPUC's offices and day center were destroyed by a hurricane last summer. FPUC established temporary offices and continued to serve its existing clients with prevention, shelter, and stabilization, and joined a county-led consortium to provide emergency assistance to 600 families who were displaced by the storm.

For 55 years, Legal Services of New Jersey has provided free representation in civil matters to eligible individuals and families who cannot afford an attorney. To date, the organization has handled approximately 2.5 million cases. The organization says that for more than 90 percent of the civil legal problems that lower-income New Jersey residents will face this year, no attorney will be available. FPUC and Legal

Services work together as social justice warriors in the community to address the disadvantages faced by low-income families to ensure parents and children have the tools and skills to lead stable and productive lives.

"I'm honored by this recognition and happy to join an impressive group of individuals who are doing such important work to ensure all people in New Jersey have equal and fair access to legal assistance and advocacy," says Donovan.

Donovan has more than two decades of experience in social services and nonprofit management, working primarily with families experiencing homelessness. She came to Family Promise in 2004 as executive director of Family Promise of Hunterdon County in Flemington, NJ, and has served as executive director of FPUC since 2014. Under her leadership, FPUC was the first organization to provide shelter diversion services in New Jersey.

Donovan believes that the unique obstacles we face today can be met with innovation and radical compassion. She says, "I try to maintain a teachable spirit and add the essential foundation of love when working with all who are oppressed by crushing circumstances."



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Highlighting our achievements in the fight against family homelessness



A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends,

At Family Promise, we see success come in many different forms. It's a family securing a home, a mom completing her CNA certification, a dad getting his GED, even a child hanging their artwork on the kitchen fridge. When people achieve the goals they set for themselves, they receive all the benefits that come with a sense of accomplishment.

This newsletter profiles one achievement after another. Together, they build to the amazing success Family Promise has had as an organization that served more than 187,000 people in 2021.

Every Family Promise Affiliate is unique, as are the individuals they serve, and success looks different for each one. That's a big part of our strength. Family Promise is a holistic solution to family homelessness that is not defined by a single metric, but rather by the myriad of ways we can ensure that children can have a better future.

That better future is defined by every child achieving success regardless of their housing status. When that happens, Family Promise will have accomplished its goals.

Thank you,

Claas Ehlers

Leadership Academy Builds Expertise

A new suite of in-house professional development programs called the Family Promise Leadership Academy launched its first course earlier this month and offers Family Promise staff across the country the opportunity to build skills and expertise through comprehensive self-paced online training modules. Funded in part through a partnership with Kiddie Academy, the series of education programs will facilitate onboarding of new staff as well as enhance the abilities of existing employees.

The first course to roll out, the Case Management Leadership Academy, offers training and education for case managers working with children and families battling homelessness. It consists of eight unique sessions totaling approximately 10 hours of work. In addition to offering staff professional development, the course is an opportunity for licensed social workers to earn continuing education credits.

"The Leadership Academy is a valuable way to help Affiliate staff build and hone skills," says Family Promise CEO Claas Ehlers. "Courses will enhance professional development resources and maximize training opportunities for Affiliates, regardless of staff size or level of experience."

Developed by Family Promise staff in collaboration with outside experts, the Leadership Academy programs are available to Affiliates free of charge. The Case Management Leadership Academy began on June 6, and additional modules are currently in development, including programs to address training and education for executive directors, board chairs, and development professionals.



Leadership Academy participants can work at their own pace to enhance skills and earn continuing education credits.

Says Ehlers, "We're grateful to Kiddie Academy for supporting Family Promise – and ultimately, the families we serve – through this opportunity. It's partnerships like this that demonstrate the community-driven solutions to family homelessness that we're known for, and which prove so successful."

The Family Promise 2021 Annual Impact Report is here!

In 2021, we served close to 188,000 children and parents battling homelessness. From prevention services to emergency shelter to post-program stabilization, more families than ever turned to Family Promise for support last year. Thanks to the dedication of our donors, volunteers, and partners, we were there for them.



Visit familypromise.org/air2022 or scan the QR code above to learn about our momentous progress in 2021.



News From Family Promise

"Family Promise made sure our family had what we needed to get back on our feet. They showed us what was possible and walked with us on our journey."

– Family Promise graduate



FAMILY PROMISE

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Claas Ehlers

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Family Promise is a national nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization addressing the crisis of family homelessness in the U.S. Through a comprehensive set of solutions involving prevention, shelter, and stabilization, Family Promise empowers families experiencing or at risk of homelessness to reclaim and maintain their independence.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST AFFILIATE!

Family Promise of
San Joaquin County
Stockton, CA

Family Promise Good Neighbor Award

Family Promise recently instituted the Good Neighbor Award, a distinction that recognizes members of the Family Promise network who are making a significant impact through their work addressing the crisis of family homelessness. Licensed master social worker and executive director of Family Promise of Juneau, AK, Katti Carlson, is the most recent recipient of this honor.

Katti was in college when she first encountered Family Promise, but it shaped the trajectory of her life. She helped coordinate a sleepout in support of Family Promise, which she says opened her eyes to the crisis of family homelessness in the U.S. It was an issue she was familiar with on a more personal level, as her own family experienced homelessness when she was a child, but she hadn't realized the extent of the situation. Katti's volunteerism turned into a career in 2015 when she became a Family Promise executive director, first at Family Promise of the Palouse in Moscow, ID, then in Juneau. In her years with the organization, her passion for serving families in crisis has only grown.

What is one of the biggest changes you've seen in your time at Family Promise?

We've had changes in our services, which have led to changes in our plans for guests. Now, when somebody walks through our door letting us know they'll be homeless in two weeks, we're not planning for them to come into our shelter, we're saying, "Let's talk to your landlord, or let's make some phone calls. What can we do to keep you housed?" Our prevention services have been transformative in our approach.

Also, the way the National office has changed has been amazing to watch. The differences between the services and support that are offered to Affiliates now compared to when I started is outstanding. Some of the burdens we have as an Affiliate, National has made their burdens. When I think about some of the issues we face –



health insurance for employees, prevention services funding, technology support, etc. – National has really listened to us and helped make these areas grow.

What do you feel is the most pressing need/greatest challenge for families who come to Family Promise today?

Lack of education and trauma-related mental health issues. Families experiencing poverty are also usually experiencing some form of trauma. Since education can be hard for those dealing with trauma, we just wrote a grant proposal to bring in volunteer life coaches, because people often don't have the capacity to learn while they're in shelter.

Is there a particular family story whose outcome typifies for you the meaning and mission of Family Promise?

We recently worked with a family who had moved from Hawaii to Alaska to be near family. They were expecting another child, and they realized they were in a very rural community with no access to medical care. They moved to a motel closer to a hospital, and after the baby was born, they stayed in our shelter. I watched this family interact with our volunteers and flourish. The family wasn't integrated into our community at all when they arrived, but now, because of Family Promise, they're connected with other families, the dad has a job, and they've moved into a new, fully furnished apartment. There are so many things our network was able to do for this family, and they're now thriving in the community. Watching the Family Promise model work the way it's supposed to is truly inspirational!

Why I Give VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: PAM JOVAAG

One of the things about Family Promise that made the biggest impression on Danielle and her family when they entered the shelter program at Family Promise of Hall County in Oakwood, GA, years ago was the ability to develop relationships with the volunteers they worked with during their time in the program.

Today, Danielle still works with Family Promise volunteers, but in a different capacity – as director of Little Steps, the Affiliate's daycare center, she oversees the facility's staff and volunteers. Over the past year, she has worked closely with volunteer Pam Jovaag, whose 25 years of experience in professional childcare and passion for helping those in need enabled Family Promise to adapt Little Steps' business operations and get the daycare center officially licensed.



The center, which is open to Family Promise children and children of low-income families in the community, had been free to all. Having a license would enable Family Promise to charge families a modest fee, which aligns with its mission to empower families by honing skills that promote self-sufficiency. But the licensing process wasn't easy or quick.

"There are many hoops you have to jump through," says Pam. "It was a year-long process to the day!"

Pam worked with Danielle throughout 2021, helping her understand what needed to be done and keeping her accountable for the application process, similar to how Family Promise and its volunteers help families stay accountable for their work to regain independence. As a mentor, Pam was there for Danielle and Family Promise, sharing her own experiences in the childcare industry to help navigate the path.

When Little Steps, which closed for a period during the pandemic, re-opened as a licensed center, Pam witnessed firsthand the importance of childcare in a family's journey to regain stability. She also noticed how the newly implemented tuition plan helped build parents' confidence.

"Childcare is absolutely critical to helping families [in crisis] become independent," explains Pam. "If you have no one to watch the kids or you can't afford daycare, how are you supposed to get a foot in the door for employment – you can't even get out the door!"

At Little Steps, families receive free daycare for two weeks, then they pay tuition on a sliding scale based on income. Little Steps works with families to ensure they can meet the payment requirements.

Pam adds, "Being a licensed daycare center and charging families actually goes hand-in-hand with Family Promise's mission. Paying for childcare gives parents a feeling of accomplishment, that they're making a difference in their child's life. It gives them a better sense of self-worth."

She shares stories of families she has seen use Little Steps as a steppingstone to independence. One mom came to Family Promise unemployed but was able to find and work a full-time job once she had affordable, reliable childcare. Another family lived in low-income housing. Dad worked days, and mom had an evening job but wanted to add some daytime work

to increase the family's income and get them into their own home. The problem was, they couldn't afford childcare. When they enrolled their children in Little Steps, mom was able to find a second job. The parents expressed appreciation for the way Family Promise challenged them to assume responsibility for their family, and the family is now saving income so they can afford to move into a home of their own.

"It has been rewarding to see these kinds of changes and rewarding to share my love and passion with Family Promise and the community," says Pam, who continues to advise Little Steps and plans to return to volunteering in the center's classrooms before long.

Help change the future for children and families facing homelessness!

You can make a difference! Visit familypromise.org/donate

or use the QR code below:



Opening Doors

People often say that when one door closes, another opens, but Texas mother of two Amanda spent weeks searching for an open door when her employer shuttered its own due to the Covid pandemic and she found herself suddenly out of work and without any sort of income.

"By taking odd jobs as a delivery driver, it helped, but that's not a full-time career," she says.

Amanda is passionate about computers and customer service and hoped for an opportunity to build on those interests. She got her chance at Family Promise of Clear Creek in League City, TX, through Family Promise's national partnership with Grow with Google, which enables participants to obtain professional certifications through self-paced online coursework. Amanda worked diligently to complete the data analytics program.

"I really felt I learned so much about self-driven success," she says, adding that she worked on the course at night after putting her young children to bed.

Her hard work paid off.

"Before I was able to start actually looking for work in this field, I received two invitations from businesses asking me to interview with them!" says Amanda.

She is now using her new skills in an entry-level position that she says has tremendous potential for future career growth and increased income.

Amanda appreciated the ability to further her education through the course and notes she regained her independence through her work with Family Promise.

"It was an opportunity to better my life," she says, as she watches doors continue to open for her.



Family Promise and its national partnership with Grow with Google are opening doors for Texas mom Amanda.

Hermes Creative Awards

For the second consecutive year, Family Promise was recognized for its outstanding communications and marketing work in the nonprofit sector. The annual Hermes Creative Awards, administered by the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals, is one of the oldest, largest, and most respected creative competitions in the world evaluating the creative industry's best publications, branding collateral, websites, and marketing and communications programs. The program particularly fosters the work of creative professionals who contribute their efforts to public service and charitable endeavors. Selected among more than 6,500 entries from the United States and 27 other countries, Family Promise received three Hermes awards. Our 2020 digital annual impact report received the Platinum Award, the program's top distinction, and

News From Family Promise (the newsletter you're reading now!) and our newly updated website both received Gold Awards. We are proud and honored to be recognized among an impressive group of winners from around the globe!



Giving Day

Thank you for making Family Promise's third annual Giving Day a huge success! Through the online National Giving Day fundraiser and Night of Giving celebration, more than \$745,000 was raised to support families battling homelessness! Your support helps change the future for families in crisis.

