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Promise

"Until I found Family

Promise, I couldn't find any

place that helped single

dads. I'd like to see more

organizations like Family

of all different families."

Promise that are accepting

- Family Promise graduate



VOLUME 16 ISSUE 1 SPRING 2023

Highlighting our work to end family homelessness

FROM OUR CEO

Let me begin my first newsletter column by saying how honored I am for the opportunity to work with such a talented and powerful network of people dedicated to ending family homelessness. Over the past 14 years as executive director at Family Promise of Grand Rapids, MI, I've been thrilled to be a part of Family Promise's extraordinary growth, which has enabled us to better serve more children and families every year. This expansion has been critical, as we see a higher demand for our services today than ever before. Amidst the uncertain economy, tight housing market, and increasing number of families facing homelessness, Family Promise is poised to address this crisis in the most innovative and efficient ways possible. From homelessness prevention to emergency shelter to post-program stabilization, our work provides families with a roadmap to lasting independence.

In the months ahead, I look forward to getting to know more of the people who comprise the Family Promise network. Your support is life changing, and I'm so grateful for that. Thank you for being there for families in need and for sharing our mission to ensure every child has a place to call



Cheryl Schuch



New CEO Cheryl Schuch admits she has been accused of being an eternal optimist. To

Introducing Family Promise's

some degree, it's a source of strength for her, as her outlook has emboldened her to take risks and tread paths she might otherwise have shunned. Schuch was raised in the Midwest by a

community-minded family, the daughter of two educators. Her father was a professor in the School of Social Work at Western Michigan University and helped establish child welfare systems across the country. Schuch grew up watching him serve others through his professional work and volunteerism, and early on, she developed a passion for social justice.

After college, Schuch moved to Chicago and entered the technology sector during what she describes as "the wild west" of the tech boom. With her keen business sense and natural leadership skills, she was quickly promoted to manage significant teams and territories, including Fortune 500 accounts and multi-million-dollar budgets.

At the same time, Schuch volunteered with nonprofit organizations like the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association, a national nonprofit that advocates for children and youth who have experienced abuse or neglect.

"Even though I was in the tech field, my roots were always with the community, especially children and families," she says.

In 2009, Schuch returned to Michigan where she began her second act as executive director at Family Promise of Grand Rapids. During her tenure, she oversaw tremendous growth at the Affiliate, which is now one of the largest in the network with an annual budget of \$7 million and \$3 million in assets. Schuch strategically leveraged community resources and diversified funding sources. The shelter program, which originally accommodated up to five families, can now serve 110 families. The Affiliate became a frontrunner in homelessness prevention, serving as a leader in the space well before the COVID pandemic underscored the value of prevention work.



Schuch is quick to point out the real significance of all that growth: "It enabled us to meet the explosive needs of children in our community."

They say you've found your true calling when you don't consider your job "work," and to hear Schuch talk about her time at Family

(Continued on page 3)

Spring 2023 / 1

FAMILY PROMISE

FOUNDED IN 1988

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Family Promise is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit addressing the crisis of family homelessness in the U.S.



Why I Give SMALL GESTURES MAKING A BIG IMPACT

Volunteers are at the heart of our work at Family Promise and make a difference for families in crisis in countless ways.

Sometimes, it's the little acts of kindness that have the biggest impact.

In Maryville, TN, students in a culinary arts class have prepared nutritious dinners for families at Family Promise of Blount

County. The Affiliate's community engagement manager familiarized students with some of the challenges families experiencing homelessness face. Then, the class cooked a series of gourmet dinners and desserts for families in the program.

This winter in Spokane, WA, seven-year-old Blaine created a hot cocoa stand to support families facing

homelessness. For a week, he sold hot chocolate and treats in his neighborhood, raising nearly \$1,000 for Family Promise of Spokane. Blaine's mom, Stephanie, says her son has always had compassion for people experiencing homelessness. "He wants to help people," she says. "He braved the cold selling hot chocolate because he



Seven-year-old Blaine raised nearly \$1,000 for Family Promise of Spokane, WA, this winter through his hot cocoa stand

didn't want to wait until summer to have a lemonade stand!"

A volunteer at Family Promise of Greater Wichita, KS, uses one of her favorite handicrafts to create a special community. Mary shares her love of crochet with moms in the program, teaching them the basic skills and helping them create blankets, hats,



Culinary arts students learned about the impact of homelessness on families, ther prepared a week's worth of gourmet meals for families at Family Promise of Blount County, TN.

and more. She loves how the craft brings a diverse group of women together. "With a project to focus on, it takes people's minds off their problems," says Mary. "We're just women sitting together, crocheting, talking about whatever comes to mind."

Crochet has been a way for a teen to make a difference at Family Promise Metrowest in Natick, MA, as well. Asha reached out to crocheters in her community to create stuffed critters that the Affiliate could give to children in the program or keep as toys for kids at the day center. The critters have been a huge hit, and Asha has already had to replenish her initial supply.

As the culinary students, Blaine, Mary, and Asha have shown, volunteers of all ages and abilities make a difference for families at Family Promise every day, sharing skills and passions and providing support and companionship. To learn more about how you can get involved at Family Promise, visit familypromise.org/get-involved/volunteer.

INTRODUCING FAMILY PROMISE'S NEW CEO

(Continued from page 1)

Promise, she is clearly in her zone. At the heart of it all is her passion to serve children and families. She shares an encounter from her early days at Family of Grand Rapids that drove home the transformative power of the organization:

"A mom came in with two teenage sons.
They'd been living in their car for two months.
It was a small red car, and these were two big boys, football and basketball players. None of their friends knew they were homeless. About a week after they arrived, I asked the boys what the biggest difference was for them being in shelter. They said, 'We get to sit at a table and have dinner together.' They were sharing family-style meals with volunteers and other families in the program, and that was the thing that changed the game for them.
It wasn't the tactical, functional things."

She continues, "That's why Family Promise is so successful. We provide strong programming as well as a sense of community and *family*." Married with two children, Schuch's own family has been involved with Family Promise over the years, serving meals, helping families move into housing, spending overnights at the shelter. She now enjoys seeing her young adult children – a son in Arizona and a daughter in Illinois – forge their own paths and engage in their respective communities.

Schuch's dedication to children and families continues to extend beyond her work week. She serves on several boards, including the West Michigan Partnership for Children and the steering committee for the Coalition to End Homelessness. She has been recognized twice as one of the Grand Rapids Business Journal's 50 Most Influential Women, among numerous other leadership awards and honors.

A Kalamazoo native, Schuch will continue to work from Grand Rapids. As she steps into her new role at Family Promise, she notes the organization's mission is more critical now than ever.

"The work we have in front of us is urgent. We see the number of families experiencing homelessness increasing as our housing market becomes more constrained and expensive," she says. "I'm looking forward to taking this work and our messaging to the next level to have a greater national impact."

Professionally, Schuch's eternal optimism has been a steady source of innovation and inspiration for those who have worked with her. As CEO of Family Promise, she is excited to be at the helm of a national network known for its groundbreaking work with families facing poverty and housing insecurity.

"There's tremendous value in the way Family Promise brings communities together," says Schuch. "As a national organization, as well as at the local level, we will continue to take the lead in addressing the crisis of family homelessness and meeting the needs of the families who come to us and the communities where we operate."



2 / Spring 2023 Spring 2023 / **3**