



Family Promise of Grand Rapids

Fall 2013

Ending homelessness...
one family at a time.

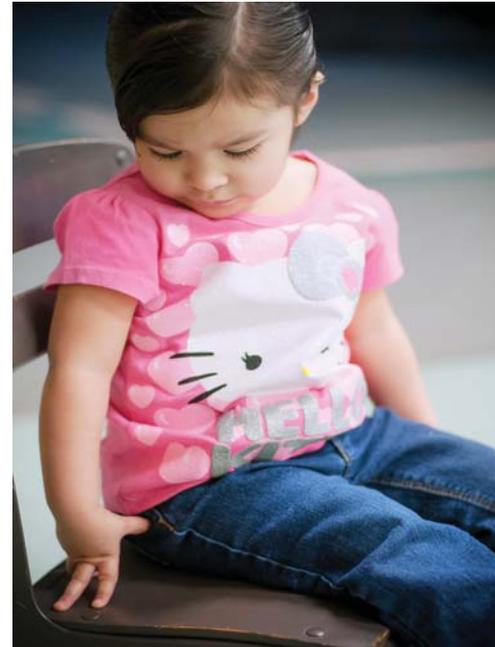
“A Load Was Lifted from My Shoulders”

Betty, Jeremiah & John

“My sons and I were living out of my little red car when we heard about Family Promise,” remembers Betty Dupree. Fortunately, Betty and her sons, Jeremiah, 17, and John, 16, were able to spend part of this past harsh and long winter with Family Promise. The family moved to Grand Rapids from the Bronx, New York, in the 90’s when they heard about job opportunities. Betty was fortunate to find a job at Amway and continues to work third shift as a skid loader in the pressure packaging department.

She was named the first recipient of the “Making Dreams Come True” Award, which was presented at the Family Promise banquet on April 18, 2013. “I was surprised to be named the first recipient of this award. I am thankful for everyone associated with Family Promise including the churches and staff. I learned that there are people out there in the world who really care. I thought people were too busy to be interested in my problems, but I was wrong. I didn’t know that kind of love existed. I have met people who love God and show that love in their everyday life.” she recalls.

Today, Betty and her two sons, who attend Grand Rapids Christian High School, have found a home through our Partners in Housing. They live in a refurbished manufactured home in a family park in Kentwood. “We love having a home of our own. I am able to rest and prepare myself to work third shift. It is a place that I can afford and still meet other expenses. A big burden has been lifted from my shoulders,” Betty says.



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Celebrate 25 Years of Keeping Our Promise!



Family Promise Week starts on Sunday, October 20th. It’s a wonderful celebration of the work that Affiliates do and an opportunity to make people aware of the issue of family homelessness as both a local, and national, problem.

We’ve heard from a lot of Affiliates about an array of exciting and innovative ways to celebrate the week. Here at the National Office, we have our 25th Anniversary Gala planned for October 26, which includes honoring those congregations which were there at the very start—the very first hosts.

This is all possible because of the incredible work all of you have done—staff, volunteers, board members, clergy and of course the families to whom we have made a promise—and who have tremendous promise themselves.



(616) 475-5220
www.familypromisegr.org

Defining Hospitality

How do we define hospitality? Priest and author Henri Nouwen writes, "Hospitality means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines. It is not to lead our neighbor into a corner where there are no alternatives left, but to open wide spectrum of options for choice and commitment. It is not an educated intimidation with good books, good stories and good works, but the liberation of fearful hearts so that words can find roots and bear ample fruit."

I think this is what Betty (page 1 story) means when she recalls that she and her sons didn't know that there were people out there who really cared. Pastors and volunteers cared enough to share meals with her and to introduce themselves to her sons and invite them to play basketball. They made space for her to become a friend. They made space for her to find permanent, secure housing that she could afford. Betty expresses it best when she says, "They are walking out the Word of God."

Nouwen concludes, "The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, not a fearful emptiness but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations. Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the life style of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own."

Thank you for sharing in our mission of ending homelessness . . . one family at a time. When I look back through the years and remember each family . . . one family at a time, I smile recalling their triumphs, their tears and their tender faces. They become over a thousand families who have been blessed through Family Promise. We, in turn, have been blessed by them!

Hospitality works both ways, doesn't it?

Warmly,



Cheryl Schuch
Executive Director



Housing/Wage Disconnect

A recent article written by Ted Roelofs in Bridge Magazine stated that Michigan ranks 30th in affordable housing among U.S. states, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition. According to a 2013 report, it would take a full-time hourly wage of \$14.77 for Michigan residents to afford a "fair market rent" apartment. But most wage earners fall well short of that hourly wage. Michigan's minimum wage is \$7.40 per hour, and an average hourly wage for a renter is \$11.62. Do you see the disconnect? Most families can't afford housing even if they work really hard.

This is why organizations like Family Promise of Grand Rapids are so important in our community. Our mission is to help families get over this disconnect. Through their hard work and our landlord connections, we are able to locate affordable, sustainable housing for them. And, through our Partners in Housing Program, they can own their own manufactured home in a family park in less than a year. When you support Family Promise you are part of the solution; you bridge the disconnect, allowing families (and children) to become secure in their homes.

Thank You...
Thank You...
Thank You!



Gifts of Time and Talent

Former clients love to give back to Family Promise. In May, we published a Facebook message seeking painters. A former client, Melissa Mobley, and her partner Jason gave up their Memorial Day weekend to paint and drywall for Family Promise. Thank you Melissa and Jason! They have a successful painting/drywall business. Melissa credits their success to "80% hard work and 20% Family Promise."

Thank you to all who participated, sponsored and volunteered for our recent Family Promise Golf Outing, "Changing the Course for Children," which was held on September 16, 2013. We had a great time and most importantly, funds were raised to help families find safety and the security of a new home!

1st Annual *Dreams* Dinner Featured National Founder And Inaugural Award for Family Achievement

On a cold and snowy night, you, our faithful friends, gathered at the University Club for our first Dreams Dinner celebration. We were pleased that our Family Promise National Founder, Karen Olson, joined us as we enjoyed meeting new and old friends and reflecting on the accomplishments of the families we have served since 1997. Betty Dupree (story on page 1) was named the first recipient of the "Dreams Come True" Achievement Award. She and her two teenage sons were so gracious in their acceptance of the award. By the end of the evening, there were not many dry eyes in the room. Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to the success of the First Annual Family Promise "Dreams" Dinner. Almost \$30,000 was raised to help families and children facing a housing crisis!

Mark your calendar today and plan to join us for our 2nd Annual "Dreams Come True" Dinner on March 13, 2014.



The Impact of Homelessness

- 50% or greater is the number of homeless households where only one parent is present (usually a single mom in her 20s).
- 40% of homeless children are under the age of 6.
- 6.5 million households spend over 50% of their income for housing expenses.
- 40 states reported an increase in the number of poor people living in doubled-up households.
- 54% of preschool students in homeless families have a major developmental delay (16% for housed families).
- 38% of the homeless remain unsheltered, living on the streets, in cars or abandoned buildings.
- 50% of homeless children repeat at least one grade.

Sources: National Alliance to End Homelessness, Child Trends: Early Childhood Highlights



Happy 5th Anniversary Partners in Housing

One of the most remarkable programs offered by Family Promise of Grand Rapids is Partners in Housing (PIH). We are pleased that this successful program, which offers full home ownership in as little time as six months, is celebrating five years of making dreams come true! Barbara Zylstra, PIH Program Manager, reports that within the past five years, 37 families (including 43 children) have found permanent housing through this program. "We hope to have that number up to 50 by the end of the year," Barb says. The success rate for families in PIH homes is an amazing 99%.

Recently, a PIH homeowner gifted his home back to Family Promise. He had lived in the home since 2009. His desire is for another family to benefit as he has from this opportunity.

"We are pleased that Cornerstone United Methodist Church is supporting the program through a commitment to underwrite the expense for five or more PIH homes. This will include funding the purchase, rehab and support services (such as a family mentor). For a very reasonable \$6,500 (average) we are able to buy a manufactured home, rehab the home, provide support services and offer it to a homeless family," recalls Barb. Within six months a family can obtain full ownership of a PIH home and never be homeless again!

If you or your family, church, civic or business/corporate group would like to sponsor a Partners in Housing home in 2014, please contact Barbara Zylstra at 475-5220 for further information.



Painted by Reyna - former guest

IHN Network Members

IHN Host Congregations

Calvin Christian Reformed Church
Cornerstone United Methodist Church
East Congregational Church
Fifth Reformed Church
First United Methodist Church
Genesis UMC
Grace Episcopal Church
Ivanrest Christian Reformed Church
Mayflower Congregational Church
Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church
Plymouth Congregational Church
Plymouth Heights Christian Reformed Church
Princeton Christian Reformed Church
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
Trinity Lutheran Church

IHN Support Congregations

Aldersgate United Methodist Church
Bread of Life Lutheran Church
Brookside Christian Reformed Church
Congregation Ahavas Israel
Eastminster Presbyterian Church
First Reformed Church - Grandville
Fountain Street Church
Hager Park Reformed Church
Hillard Chapel
Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish
Kentwood Community Church
Living Word Christian Center
Renaissance Church of God in Christ
St. Paul's United Methodist Church
St. Stephen Parish
Thornapple Evangelical Covenant Church

YOU Can Make a Difference

Does the issue of homelessness seem overwhelming to you? Please do not let it be. You can make a difference. We seek to end homelessness by helping one family at a time. When you volunteer to read a story, prepare a meal, or send a gift as you have been blessed, you are doing a great deal to help those who need a helping hand at the moment.

Among our remarkable families, 89% of them find permanent housing. In 2012 the average shelter stay was only 23 days, with most families still housed a year later! Every gift of every size is greatly appreciated! You can contribute through our website, www.familypromisegr.org. If you prefer to donate by mail (envelope enclosed) please make your check payable to Family Promise of Grand Rapids. Thank you for Helping to End Homelessness...One Family at aTime!!!! (All gifts are tax deductible)

Our Emergency Needs Fund will be used to supply the following items this fall and winter: bus passes, diapers, baby food, clothing for children, hats, mittens, boots, coats, over the counter medicines and gas for our van which transports families to and from Host Congregations. Our annual operating fund provides families with emergency shelter, permanent housing and support services, allowing them to get back on their feet so they can create a stable lifestyle for their children.

Wish List

- Strollers (New and/or used...any type)
- Socks for all ages (baby through adult)
- Short sleeved, white undershirts for all sizes (baby through XXL, including Men's)
- Bath Towels to give to families when they come into shelter and move into housing
- Wipes Diapers, Diaper Rash Cream
- Baby shampoo, baby lotion etc.
- Pacifiers, Bottles & Sippy Cups
- Laundry Soap
- Women's, Boy's, Girl's and Men's (boxers) underwear
- Dish Soap
- Men's & Women's hygiene products
- Tissue (Kleenex)
- Pillows (new)
- Buckets with basic cleaning supplies
- Silverware, pots, pans, dishes and glasses
- Twin bed sheets
- Bus tickets
- Gas cards
- Gift cards (Meijer, Family Dollar, Walmart...)