



Family Promise of Grand Rapids

Fall 2014

Ending homelessness . . .
one family at a time.

“My journey was amazing”

Juanita, LaDale, Sabrina & Alianna

Juanita, a mom in her 40s, graduated from Everest Institute in 2012 as a medical assistant. She found a good job; she and husband LaDale had high hopes for their family's future.

Then she became pregnant. A few months later, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Soon her condition made work impossible; she lost her job. LaDale, a prep cook, was laid off. Unable to pay rent, eviction followed.

“I never thought I'd be the one needing help. And it was horrible for my teenage daughter Sabrina, she didn't want friends to know she was homeless,” said Juanita.

When they reached out, Family Promise “caught us before we hit the ground,” she says. “They helped by supporting me while I was trying to keep myself and my family together.”

Juanita had always known how to “take care of business” for her family. But because of all the setbacks, she needed the emotional support and advice that Family Promise could provide. That allowed her and LaDale to use the agency's resources to regain their independence.

“It was a safe place for us to be so we could do the footwork,” said Juanita. They began using the Day Center's computers and fax, got help with resumes and job applications, and called Family Promise landlord contacts.

It worked. In a few weeks, they found housing (where they still live today) and jobs, leaving shelter behind in early 2013.

Juanita continued to connect with Family Promise, especially when her new daughter, Alianna, was born with Down syndrome. Yet increasingly, the calls for help have changed to calls about successes. Juanita feels that because of the support her family received after leaving shelter, they can avoid homelessness in the future.

Today Alianna is two years old, walking proudly. Sabrina's grades in school have rebounded and her smile is back. The family has maintained their home, jobs, schooling, and independence; they've also regained hope. In fact, LaDale and Juanita now volunteer at Family Promise to help others.

“My journey was amazing. If not for Family Promise I don't know where we would be,” added Juanita. “There needs to be more programs like it!”



Thoughts from our Friends

“I like the Dora movies. I like to drive cars. I liked the churches. I like the day center. I like the kids. I will miss all my friends. I am so excited about my new house. I love you all.”
- Starshawn, a girl in our IHN program

“If I weren't at IHN I don't know where my family would be. I hope to keep my family together because family is the most important thing. Thanks for everything!”
- Brian, member of IHN family

Dreams

SAVE THE DATE!
Dreams Dinner
Thursday, March 19, 2015
Invitations will be sent
in the New Year



Juanita, LaDale, Sabrina, and Alianna (center)



(616) 475-5220
www.familypromisegr.org



Poor Families Still Feel the Pain

By most accounts, the economy is improving. Home sales are up and jobs are slowly coming into view. However, one group, the poor and working poor families, continue to feel the pain. Families continue to represent the fastest growing segment of the homeless population (40%). Income has tumbled since the recession hit, and is still 8.3% below where it was in 2007. (National Alliance to End Homelessness: www.endhomelessness.org).

If that's not enough for concern, rent has skyrocketed, now topping out at an average of \$839 in Grand Rapids. Let's look at the math: if a family of four rents a two bedroom apartment at \$839 and the breadwinner works full time at minimum wage (\$7.40), in the course of a month the wage totals \$1,184 before withholding. This will leave less than \$300 for food, clothing, utilities, transportation, daycare and medical expenses.

These circumstances point to the pain families are feeling. They have basic needs that must be met. They need affordable, sustainable housing and services such as financial counseling to help them keep their homes. This is at the heart of our mission. We are committed to empowering families with children, so that like Liz, a new PIH homeowner, they will believe, "This homeownership sets a new path for our lives." They can plan, dream, and know their kids have a place to call home.

For a Partners in Housing family to obtain the deed to a home in nine months, the family must successfully pay the monthly lot rent, pay utilities and complete the PIH program. In less than a year, the home becomes a "forever home" for an average lot rent of \$375 a month, less than half of the average apartment rental in Grand Rapids. This is affordable housing that allows them to begin to cover their needs and save money for their family's future.

Every morning I walk through our Day Center and see little, smiling faces. Children remain a core building block for Family Promise. All of our plans are built around their lives and futures. Almost 70% of the children we serve are under the age of 7. We are committed to stopping the Toxic Stress of homelessness that negatively affects children. Researchers found that 54% of homeless preschoolers had major developmental delays and behavior concerns. The number for non-homeless children is 16%. (American Academy of Pediatrics, 01/2012)

Together, we provide emergency shelter, housing and basic needs as a springboard to success that is accomplished by strong, productive families and healthy children. Thank you for partnering with us. We have the best friends, supporters and congregations one could imagine! Together, we are ending homelessness...one family at a time!

Warmly,

Cheryl Schuch
Executive Director



Gifts of Time and Talent

Calvin College Streetfest - This year's Calvin College freshmen started their college careers with heart! They spent an August afternoon at our Day Center as part of orientation week. They baked cookies for our kids, put finishing touches on event projects, landscaped our parking lot and organized items in our donation room to make space for more! Thank you, Calvin students! Go Knights!

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

Zondervan - Volunteers from Zondervan (HarperCollins Christian Publishing) spent a day at one of our Partners in Housing homes giving it a fresh coat of paint before a family moved in! Thank you Zondervan volunteers for helping to make a house a home for this family!



Coit Elementary "Girls on the Run" team - Girls from Coit Elementary raised funds and purchased baby supplies to give to our families! They collected wipes, bottles, diapers, and food! Thank you to an amazing (and speedy) group of young girls!

Blue35GR - Thank you to Blue35 for donating meeting space for our Family Promise team to attend a valuable staff development session. The meeting space was top-of-the-line. Created by Haworth and Rockford Development, it's a wonderful new workspace and downtown resource for our community!

blue 35

Meet Southside Vineyard, our Newest Partner

Southside Vineyard, located on 26th Street in Wyoming, MI, is the most recent congregation to join us as a Host site. We are pleased to welcome Pastor John West, Pat Draper, coordinator, and the entire congregation to our IHN Network. Reaching out in helping others flows from the congregation's mission of Continuing the Jesus Revolution by Reaching Up (Loving God); Reaching Out (Sharing Jesus); and Reaching In (Loving Each Other).

When asked what led Southside to take part in Family Promise, Pastor West said, "In reaction to a sermon series last summer based on Isaiah 58, our families became aware of the dilemma facing homeless families. We had experienced conviction about how our building was unused most of the week, so we called Family Promise."

Southside Vineyard will experience its first host opportunity in March 2015. They will be supported by nearby Wesley Park United Methodist Church, in addition to Casa de Oracion, a Spanish-speaking congregation who shares the building with Southside. "Pat Draper will serve as the point person working along with me and volunteers. We are excited and looking forward to becoming involved with Family Promise in serving. There is great unity in our community about this opportunity," concludes Pastor West. Thank you, Southside Vineyard!!



Pat Draper, Pastor John West (Southside Vineyard) and Maryann Keyes (Wesley Park UMC)

Farmers Insurance to Create More "Forever Homes"



Thanks to our community of supporters, 48 families have benefited from our Partners in Housing Program that provides homeownership opportunities through manufactured homes. By the end of 2014, we hope to have completed 15 homes for eager families, and the homes can't come fast enough. For every one we complete, there are three families on a waiting list for this opportunity to own a "forever home."

That's why our new relationship with Farmers Insurance is so exciting. This year, we began working locally with Farmers, which has now funded several PIH homes in Grand Rapids. Due to the success of the initiative in Grand Rapids, the national Family Promise organization and Farmers Insurance are coming together to help Family Promise affiliates join with local Farmers offices in other communities to provide PIH homes across the country.

"Giving and volunteering is really a huge part of Farmers Insurance Group," explained Karen Ricketts, Zone Executive Director for the company. "It's in our DNA. I am personally proud of our involvement with Family Promise. Farmers Insurance Group is a major contributor to the Family Promise Partners in Housing initiative in Grand Rapids."

"We put our expertise as the leading insurer of manufactured homes to work and assist Family Promise in identifying available properties, estimating purchase and restoration costs, as well as my favorite part--volunteering our time to participate in the restoration of the mobile homes," she continued.

"We are excited to have our employees from other states help expand the Partners in Housing initiative into areas such as New Jersey, Kansas and Texas," said Ricketts.

We thank Farmers Insurance for partnering with Family Promise and for having the vision and courage to think big for family independence! Stay tuned!



Changing the Course for Children a Huge Success for Kids

Regardless of their golf scores at our 12th annual Family Promise Golf Outing, our golfers and sponsors won big! They succeeded in helping more than 150 homeless children and their families through their participation and generosity for Changing the Course for Children.

These exceptional partners helped raise \$75,000 at the September 17th event held at Thousand Oaks Golf Club. The funds will help Family Promise to provide immediate help--emergency shelter, basic needs, and getting families and children into new homes.

Thank you, sponsors and players, for helping to end homelessness...one family at a time. Our families are grateful, and so are we!



Thanks to our amazing sponsors!

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Lighthouse Insurance Group/Bob Heintz
The Bank of Holland

Founders Bank & Trust
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Varnum LLP





Painted by Reyna - former guest

Family Promise Congregational Partners

Host Congregations

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

Support Congregations

12th Avenue Christian Reformed Church
Aldersgate United Methodist Church
All Souls Community 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 Church
Hilliard Chapel AME Zion
Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
Kentwood Community Church
Living Word Christian Center
Our Lady of Consolation
Renaissance C.O.G.I.C.
St. Paul's United Methodist Church
St. Stephen Parish
Second Congregational United Church of Christ
Thornapple Covenant Church
Wesley Park United Methodist Church
Westminster Presbyterian Church

Your Gift this Fall

What is the most productive way to give to help others? The Grand Rapids Press and WZZM-13 have reported concerns about panhandling in our city. If you want to help homeless people, we encourage you to contribute to agencies that are helping them. As part of our participation in the Heartside Neighborhood Collaboration Project, we invite you to check out Real Change, Not Spare Change (www.realchange.org) to learn more about our efforts.

Every gift you make directly to Family Promise helps a homeless family. So far in 2014, we are on track to help over 800 people, over 200 families. The beauty of Family Promise is that we provide families a path to independence that includes financial literacy classes, employment and housing services, and accountability. The program WORKS! Over 90% of the families we serve through shelter find permanent housing in 30 days or less and more than 85% are still housed a year later.

You can contribute through our website, www.familypromise.org or by returning our enclosed envelope. All gifts are greatly appreciated and are tax deductible. THANK YOU!!!

Wish List

Clothing

- Socks for all ages (baby through adult)
- Short sleeved, white undershirts for all sizes (baby through XXL, including Men's)
- Women's and Girls' Underwear
- Umbrellas

Not sure what to give?

- Bus tickets
- Gas cards
- Gift cards (Meijer, Family Dollar, Walmart...)

You may drop your donations off any time at our Day Center (no appointment needed!).

Household Goods

- Coffee Pots
- Toasters
- Pots and Pans
- Twin Bed Sheets
- Brooms/Dustpan (sets or singles)
- Silverware and Cooking Utensils
- Tissue (Kleenex)
- Mops
- Laundry Soap
- Hair Conditioner
- Tall Garbage Bags

See our full wish list on the web at www.familypromisegr.org.

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