



Family Promise of Grand Rapids

Fall - 2011

Ending homelessness...
one family at a time.

“Success is All About a Positive Attitude”

~Johnnetta, IHN Guest



When Johnnetta, age 32, moved to Grand Rapids last February, she hoped to find educational opportunities for her children, Ariana, 8, and John David, 7, and employment for herself. She found an apartment, a job and life was moving along according to her plan when she lost her job. Seeking help, she contacted the Housing Assessment Program at Salvation Army Booth Family Services who referred her to Family Promise’s Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN).

She and her two children remained in the IHN program for six weeks. “We are excited to be moving into an apartment. As a great bonus, we will be provided with all the items we need for our apartment and volunteers will

even help us move. The landlady has worked with Family Promise in the past, so the staff connected our family with her,” explains Johnnetta. She feels like her life is back on track. “I began work in September as a sales advisor demonstrating product at the Meijer store at 28th Street and Kalamazoo, the children are attending a good school and I am engaged,” she adds.

“We were treated very well by everyone associated with Family Promise. Success is all about your attitude. The staff showed me avenues and resources to help me out of a homeless situation. They helped with transportation, food, job leads, and lists of apartments and private landlords. They are well connected to every organization that could be of help, and they walked with me every step, encouraging me yet providing a little push when I needed it,” concludes Johnnetta.

Golf Event a Great Success

Blythefield Country Club was the site of our Family Promise Golf Scramble on September 23, 2011. The event proved to be lots of fun for the over 70 participants who enjoyed a day of golf and helped raise money for a great cause - to support the children and families who are facing a housing crisis and are served by Family Promise. Thank you to all who participated, volunteered and sponsored the 2011 Family Promise Golf Scramble.



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In this issue...

- * A Message from Cheryl
- * Gifts of Time & Talent
- * Congregation Feature
- * Circles of Success
- * Golf Outing
- * Thank You
- * IHN Network
- * Your Gift this Fall

Thoughts from our friends...

“Thank you for everything you have done for me. Now my boys and I have our own home.” – Renata, Partners in Housing (PIH) Homeowner

“The volunteers played games with the kids and took them outside for fun activities. They went out of their way to make us comfortable.” – Tammy, Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) Guest

“Words cannot express how appreciative we are. I have learned so much and have a new found respect for myself and my family.” – Johnnetta, IHN Guest & Reaching Beyond Initiative

(616) 475-5220
www.familypromisegr.org



Cheryl Schuch
Executive Director

Changing the Course for Children!

Dear Friends,

At the beginning of September we received a very sobering report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's annual KIDS COUNT Data Book which showed a 64% increase in children living in poverty in Michigan over the last decade. Compared to the national increase of only 18%, it is a sure sign that the recession has hit our kids harder than many other states in our nation. Does that mean

that there isn't a bright future full of hope and possibility for kids growing up in Michigan? Not according to the over 1,600 volunteers and supporters who work 365 days of the year with Family Promise to make sure that our kids have a fighting chance!

On August 19th there were over 70 individuals who worked hard to raise money for the children we serve at our annual fundraiser "Changing the Course for Children." That very same day there were volunteers at St. Andrews' Episcopal Church cooking a wonderful meal and preparing to welcome five families without a place to call home, for a night filled with compassion, fellowship, comfort, and hope for shelter at their house of worship. Earlier in the week college students worked to paint the Day Center, where our kids and their families stay each day, to make sure it is beautiful and shows the respect and dignity that we know our families deserve.

Over 93% of the children and families we served last year were able to find independent housing and 91% of them were still housed a year later! This work is helping to ensure a sustainable change in our community and in the lives of the children we touch. By working with Family Promise to give of your time, talent and treasures each of us in a small way can ensure that ALL of our kids in Michigan, not just those who are privileged, face a future full of hope and possibility. This future starts with each child having a place to call home.



Kristie Baker
Director of Volunteer
Services

Gifts of Time and Talent

We are so blessed with volunteers this fall. We continue to have up to 100 volunteers each week from our Host and Support Congregations welcoming the guests with open arms for shelter each and every night. The compassion and hope that the families are showered with is making a difference in the lives of our smallest guests. A group of GVSU students recently came in and continued painting the Day Center, which a previous group had started. It now looks wonderful, cozy and welcoming! Also, we have GRCC students coming regularly throughout the fall semester to play with kids, assist with office tasks and help our families. Even with all of these college students, we can always use more help! Come read to kids, assist us in our office operations, clean our playroom, assemble New Home Kits...we can use whatever skills you have!

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

Steelcase Foundation for underwriting our new marketing plan, website and facebook page. Check it out at www.familypromisegr.org and on Facebook at Family Promise of Grand Rapids.

Our fabulous interns, Luci Ohlman and Luke Gerard from Thornapple Covenant Church and Katie VanderVeen and Kelly Weir, MSW students from GVSU, who provided helping hands in a variety of ways and hopefully were encouraged by the engagement they had with our families this summer.

Living Word Christian Center for joining our IHN Congregation Support Network and teaming with Neland Ave. CRC, a Host Congregation.

Habitat for Humanity Restore as we collaborate to bring furniture to our families as they move into their new homes!

Welcome: to our new Board Members, Lisa Valk, Lindsey Heyboer and Louis Bourass. Thank you for your willingness to serve our kids and community.

Family Promise Responds to an Explosion of Homeless Families

As budget cuts are squeezing relief agencies for the poor, more people continue to seek help. "It's a double hit," states Cheryl Schuch, Executive Director of Family Promise. "Even among the private sector, charitable funding fell 13 percent (from 2006 to 2009). That's the steepest decline in 40 years (according to Giving USA, a consulting firm for nonprofits). Meanwhile, we've seen a doubling in the number of people contacting us for help. Not only the poor but people who have never had to ask for help before are turning to our community seeking assistance."

Family Promise's program, the Reaching Beyond Initiative (RBI), addresses this problem. "We made a decision not to increase the capacity of our shelter in support of our community's vision to end homelessness. Yet, many of the basic tools and resources we offer are still needed by many. Resources, support and mentoring services provided our shelter families can be duplicated to reach families who are homeless and doubled up in an unstable situation, moving from couch to couch each night.

The RB I will provide all the services we provide to families in our IHN shelter program (without actually housing them): transportation, basic personal and household needs, counseling, mentoring, computer center for job and housing search, and possible short-term financial rent assistance. "This strategy prevents homelessness for families seeking shelter by helping them identify alternate housing arrangements quickly and, if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing." Most importantly, as we increase the number of children and families we serve, it will allow us to say YES to families who so desperately need a helping hand during these trying and difficult times," concludes Cheryl.



Congregation Feature: Thank You to Thornapple Covenant Church

When Thornapple Covenant Church, located on the corner of Cascade and Burton, came on board as a Support Congregation this year, they came with all cylinders burning. "In addition to financial support, the congregation has really embraced our families and has committed to making a difference for our kids!" says Cheryl Schuch, Executive Director of Family Promise. A small group from the congregation has stepped in to partner with Paul's United Methodist Church in the IHN Network rotation, providing meals and volunteers to share in the lives of our families. "One evening as a young boy shared his hope of becoming an architect, a Thornapple volunteer shared that he is an architect and was able to provide a wonderful visit to Calvin College for a vision of what possibilities are ahead for this young boy," recalls Cheryl.

The congregation's Men's Group volunteers on Saturdays to help families who are moving out the program into their new homes. Roger Faber, a dedicated volunteer, has stepped in to help with the shopping at Feeding America for our Day Center supplies each week. Two adult interns, Luci Ohlman and Luke Gerard served on site this summer through Thornapple's Glenn Van Noord Urban Missions program following in the footsteps of two previous Glenn Van Noord interns from last summer.

Service is not limited to the adults. Twice this summer middle school volunteers helped at the Day Center where they provided stories, crafts and lots of fun for the children in our shelter program. TECC has provided support, hope and compassion.

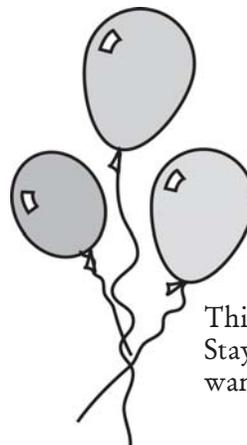
New Mentoring Program: Circles of Success

There is something about community. Community brings to us people who provide emotional and social connections, thus widening our support base.

The Family Mentoring program "Circles of Success" is focused on helping individuals to strengthen their families by helping them to build and connect to a community. Families who are working to move out of poverty are brought together along with others from the community to form a social network that shares meals, socializes, and learns together. "Circles of Success" is designed to reduce and end poverty by building community.

Program features include monthly socializing and meals, education sessions on various topics, building parenting/family strength, family budgeting, educational obtainment, stress management, effective communication and employment/job seeking.

Beyond a gathering of people from various walks of life sharing common struggles and challenges, those that gather share talents, thus building and strengthening the social networking of the group...building community.



Save the Date!!

COMING THIS WINTER

This winter Family Promise will host a Carnival!! Stay tuned for more information soon!! You won't want to miss this fun family event!!

IHN Network Members

IHN Host Congregations

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

IHN Support Congregations

Aldersgate United Methodist Church
Brookside Christian Reformed Church
Eastminster Presbyterian Church
Fountain Street Church
Grandville First Reformed Church
Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
Living Word Christian Center
Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church
Plymouth Heights Christian Reformed Church
Renaissance Church of God in Christ
St. Stephen Parish
Thornapple Covenant Church

Your Gift this Fall

Your gift this fall will allow us to expand RBI (Reaching Beyond Initiative) to include families who are homeless and moving from couch to couch each night in search of safe shelter. It will also allow us to continue our Emergency Needs Fund that provides' homeless families with life necessities such as diapers, baby food, school uniforms, youth winter coats and shoes, school supplies, over the counter medicines, and bus tickets, just to name a few.

You can contribute through our website, www.familypromisegr.org or, if you prefer to donate by mail (envelope enclosed), please make your check payable to Family Promise of Grand Rapids and mail it to 906 South Division, Suite 205, Grand Rapids, MI 49507. All gifts are tax deductible.

Thank you for your support!

Wish List

We are currently in need of children's socks. We are also low on Buckets of Love which are the cleaning buckets we provide to our families when they move out that are filled with cleaning supplies. Also, towels and sheets are in high demand as each family moves into housing. If you can help with these items, please let us know.

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