

An Attitude of Gratitude



Sometimes a plan comes together. In our case, I believe it is a miracle! From the first group of people who came together in 1997 to begin sheltering families through the Interfaith Hospitality Network to our most recent friends (individuals, families, businesses, foundations, corporations, congregations) who have come on board (and everyone in between), I say "Thank You" with lots of exclamation points!!!!

With humble gratitude, we want to thank everyone who came forward with overwhelming support from our community that has resulted in the successful completion of A Journey Home – our capital campaign that has provided our new home – our Day Center and offices, located at 516 Cherry Street, and much needed program expansion to serve more families in need. If you were unable to attend the Open House, please stop by for a visit. We love visitors! We are so happy to share with you what your unselfish dedication can do to improve the lives of families in our community.

I've shared with you stories through the years of the smiles (often through tears) of moms, dads and children when they experience the kindness and hospitality of strangers or in that beautiful moment when we are able to say, "We have a home for you."

How are we able to so effectively help families find homes? Because you care. You provide financial resources, you volunteer, you mentor, you provide shelter, food and other basic needs, you tell a friend or co-worker about our important work in our community, you pick up and deliver furniture to families as they move into their new homes, you cook delicious and nutritious meals and you open your congregation facilities to our families and provide hope. How do we repay your service, your kindness, your commitment?

The best way we know is to provide HOPE to families facing a housing homelessness. Every year we serve over 500 people (60% of them are children). Through our program expansion with Pathway Home, emergency family shelter space has been increased in our community by 300%. The best part is that 90% of those we serve will find permanent homes, and another 96% of those in our Aftercare program will still be in their housed two years later!

Family Promise of Grand Rapids changes the future for children! We could not do this important work without you! Blessings,

Cheryl Schuch
Executive Director



Thank You...

Thank You...

Thank You!

Gifts of Time and Talent



We had a wonderful time with the AmeriCorps group from Cherry Health Community Health Corps on Martin Luther King Day. They delivered several, much needed, housing items to families who had just moved into their new homes. They also spent time playing and loving-up on our children who are currently in shelter. Sharing in the decorating of cookies was a big hit! The group worked hard and stayed warm as they shoveled our sidewalks and salted our stairs on a cold winter day. Thank you, AmeriCorps for serving Family Promise on your day off!



Thank you to the Grand Rapids Griffins staff who volunteered at Family Promise just prior to Christmas. They helped organize holiday donations for families which made it easier for our families when picking up the gifts. They also distributed toys to some of the children we serve just in time for Christmas! Go Griffins!



We extend a big thank you to Ben Muller Realty Company and the company staff who volunteered their time at Family Promise as part of their holiday party. They installed shelving in our donation center so families can find the items they need. This group also coordinated gifts for families and helped us settle into our new kitchen. Thank you for making service an important part of your Christmas celebration while making our new space feel like home!

IHN Congregation Spotlight - Cornerstone Church

Congratulations to Cornerstone Church as the congregation celebrated its 25th Anniversary on December 6, 2015. The church has grown from one campus on 84th Street and Kalamazoo Ave. in Caledonia to three with the addition of a Heritage Hills campus (Lafayette Ave.) in 2013 and a Wyoming campus (56th St.) in 2015.

Cornerstone Church joined us as an Inaugural IHN Host Congregation when Family Promise was introduced in our community in 1997. The congregation partners with us in a broad range of activities. The men's group delivers furniture to families as they move into their homes, they serve as an IHN Host Congregation four times a year providing shelter to homeless families, and they coordinate and facilitate the Christmas Store every year allowing parents to purchase gifts at discounted prices for their children. Cornerstone Church has also funded and volunteered for the Partners in Housing program, providing homes for families. They have provided leadership as members have served on our Board of Directors and in staff positions.

"How can we adequately express our thanks to Cornerstone Church? They have been with us from the beginning and continue to amaze us with the outpouring of service, love and grace to our families," said Cheryl Schuch, Executive Director. Tracy Bowers, Cornerstone Church Director of Outreach, said "One thing we love about Family Promise as we host IHN and the Christmas Store is the relational aspect of the association. Two of our core values are being relational and global/local in outreach. Our partnership with Family Promise allows us to live those core values." Tracy oversees and a team of four volunteers dedicated to Family Promise. They include Lauri Tindle, Becky Bailey, Kelly Lloyd and Teresa Fitzgerald. We also thank Pastors Brad Kalajainen, Ken Nash, Alex Fernandez and Marcus Schmidt for their leadership.



Cornerstone Church hosting the 2015 Family Promise Christmas Store with the help of many volunteers.

Homeownership in Nine Months...Partners in Housing

Can you begin to imagine the security and joy of going from homeless to homeownership in less than nine months? "Not possible," many would say, but yes it is possible through our Partners in Housing Program. Refurbished manufactured homes in family parks offer families the option of home ownership with nine months of occupancy. When a family shows financial responsibility and completes the nine-month program successfully, the family is awarded the title to the home.



Partners in Housing is the brainchild of Jack Boeema, (pictured right), Kent County Commissioner and past Board Chairman. He was working on the issue of homelessness in our community while also helping his son find a home. When the two agreed on the manufactured home option, a light bulb went off and Jack wondered why this housing option wouldn't work toward ending homelessness. He contacted Family Promise and a beautiful, affordable opportunity was born.

"We offered our first home in 2009 and the occupant is still in the home," says Barb Zylstra, Assistant Director and Partners in Housing Program Manager. "Our records also reveal that 98% of the families housed through PIH are successful in getting the title to their home and are still housed years later! Sixty five families have found homes through the program to date, including 97 children. "We are planning to complete another 20 Partners in Housing homes in 2016," adds Barb.

The homes are located in 12 family parks in Kentwood, Wyoming, Grand Rapids, Grandville, Sparta and Comstock Park. This program would not be possible without donors and volunteers. "We currently are blessed with the financial support of individuals, families, congregations, businesses and foundations," says Barb. Equally important is the volunteer service provided each home through landscaping, painting and cleaning as individuals and groups welcome each new family to its "forever" home.

Don't Miss the Fun...Dreams Dinner is March 17



Please plan to join us for the 4th Annual Dreams Dinner. This year's gala is on St. Patrick's Day so it is sure to provide lots of fun and festivities along with tributes to the amazing men, women and children we serve.

Tickets, at \$50 per person, are still available as well as Sponsorship Opportunities. For further information, call Kristie Baker at 616-608-8903 or email her at kristie@familypromisegr.org.





516 Cherry St., S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49503



Family Promise Congregational Partners

Host Congregations

Calvin Christian Reformed Church
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
Trinity Lutheran Church
Wesley Park United Methodist 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
Hillard Chapel AME Zion
Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
Immaculate Heart of Mary
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
Tabernacle Community Church
Thornapple Covenant Church
Westminster Presbyterian Church

Your Gift this Spring

We give parents the hope and encouragement they need to create a better future for their kids and to end the cycle of homelessness. Through our emergency shelter, housing services, home ownership opportunities and aftercare services, we've helped over 1,500 families build a stronger future. Over two thirds of those we serve are children!

Your gift will allow us to continue to provide these important programs and services that lead to a better tomorrow and HOPE for so many families, impacting future generations. Please give generously by contributing 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 and mail it to 516 Cherry St., S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49503. All gifts are tax deductible and greatly appreciated. Thank you!

We are always in need of the following:

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| <p>Kitchen ware – pots and pans
silverware
dinnerware
glasses</p> <p>Small appliances – microwave, coffee pots, toaster</p> <p>Transportation – bus tickets, gas cards (Meijer)</p> <p>Gift cards – Meijer, Walmart, Family Dollar</p> <p>Adult – socks, underwear (all sizes, men & women)</p> <p>Children – socks, underwear, baby clothes</p> <p>Infants – diapers, wipes, bibs, blankets</p> <p>Stollers, pack and plays</p> <p>Women hygiene products</p> <p>Men hygiene products</p> <p>Buckets with cleaning supplies, mops, brooms</p> | <p>Air mattresses, air pumps</p> <p>Blankets, sheet sets (twin, full and queen)</p> <p>Pillows</p> <p>Bath towels, shower curtains, hooks</p> <p>Laundry and dish soap</p> |
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See our full wish list on the web at
www.familypromisegr.org.

Connect with Family Promise!
Sign up for our e-newsletter
Visit bit.ly/FPGR-news



Family Promise of Grand Rapids

Spring 2016

Ending homelessness...
one family at a time.

“Family Promise Was a Game Changer” Amber Perry

Amber Perry has packed a lot of living into 28 years. She's admittedly made some bad decisions in her late teens and early 20s, but she has learned many lessons and today dedicates her life to helping young mothers.

Amber works at Cherry Street Health Services as a Strong Beginnings Community Health Worker. She visits mothers in their homes from the time they are pregnant until their infants are two-years-old. “I help mothers secure resources and establish stability in the home. We help them get much needed baby items and ensure maternal mental health. I support them through interacting and listening. I love my job!” Amber shares.



She remembers a little over five years ago, in 2010, when she was homeless with a four-year-old son and pregnant. “I was making some bad decisions, involved in an abuse relationship and using marijuana. I was living with my Mom but lost that opportunity when she found out I was using drugs,” she recalls.

Amber and her son, Emmett, spent the first night of homelessness in her car and the second night in an abandoned house. She was relieved on the third day when she was referred to Family Promise. “We were in the IHN shelter for 45 days. I was working part time but also working hard on the computers at Family Promise to find a place for us to live. Working part-time at minimum wage, it was difficult to find a place that would lease to me. We finally found a landlord willing to give me a chance. I lived in the duplex for over a year and a half then moved into a house. In November, 2015, I moved into a larger home to better accommodate my children, Emmett, 9, Tristan, 5 and Peri-Rose, 3,” explains Amber.

“At a time in my life when I needed help, Family Promise was there for me. It was a safe and secure environment for us. I appreciated the prepared meals, showers and opportunity to wash and dry our clothes. I still remember the care churches took to be sure I had rice milk and lots of vegetables since I am a vegetarian,” said Amber.

“Family Promise was truly a game changer for me. They helped me feel successful, like ‘I can do this’. I've come a long way and Family Promise was a part of that,” Amber shared. In 2014, Amber served on the Family Promise Committee for Program Evaluation. In January of this year, she began serving on the Board of Family Promise of Grand Rapids, volunteering her time to help other families experiencing homelessness.

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**We've
Moved!!**

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