



# THE Journey

THE NEWSLETTER OF  Family Promise  
of Cowlitz County

Creating Hope, Nurturing Strength, Transforming Lives

December 2021 Vol 2, Issue 8

## Giving Thanks

by Vonda McFadden, Board President

As we once again move toward the Holiday Season, which includes Thanksgiving, Christmas, and then New Year's Day, I want to take just a moment to encourage you to pause and consider just how good God has been to you over this past year. I know many of us have been struggling but we are here and as I always say, "every day we wake up is another day to get it right."

While there have been many challenges for us, as well as the entire world over the past many months, God is still good! Once again, we are reminded of the fragility of life and that we should do our best to value our loved ones.

While many will experience stress and anxiety during this season, if we keep our focus on the real reason for the season, we can be less stressed and less anxious. It is also without a doubt that you are in no small part the reason our guests will be able to experience the holidays with less stress and anxiety.

November brings us the simple reminder that thankfulness is truly the kind of spirit we are to have, and this thankfulness will be more meaningful when we are both thankful to those around us, as well as our God above us.

Here's a beautiful verse of scripture on thankfulness out of the Message version of the Bible: 1 Chronicles 29:13 (MSG) "And here we are, O God, our God, giving thanks to you, praising your

splendid Name."

On behalf of the Board of Directors and our families, I want to thank each and every one of you for all the support you have given to Family Promise this past year. It is because of your generous spirits, parents and children are given a chance through our program. Words cannot truly express how much we appreciate you. We know there are many worthy organizations that need support. We are thankful you choose to join us in this mission for everyone to have a home.

Thanksgiving has passed, Christmas is just around the corner and a New Year will soon unfold before us. We hope and pray however you will

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celebrate, your holiday season will be filled with the joy and love of family, friends, and most importantly the Holy One.

I also want to say a sad so long, never goodbye to our former Board President

and most avid cheerleader, Rev. Dave Martin. Dave is a huge part of the reason we have a Family Promise affiliate in Cowlitz County. Dave is passionate about helping children and families and worked years to get us to this point. I will be forever grateful for all of his hard work, his dogged pursuit of implementing Family Promise, and his graceful spirit as we worked to make this dream a reality. As he transitions to new adventures in South Dakota we wish him and Peggy all of God's blessings and joy with his new congregation. You will be missed Dave and never forgotten.



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THANKFUL FOR YOU! Around this time each year we take a little extra time to think about all we're grateful for, and especially to express our gratitude to those who are important in our lives.

We at Family Promise are grateful for YOU! Your support has made it possible for us to continue our mission to serve families suffering homelessness throughout an extremely challenging time.

This year's Festival of Thanks, our annual volunteer appreciation event, is scheduled to "air" on Friday, December 10 at 6 p.m. We will hold the event virtually again this year (with the hope that next year we can hold it in person!).

Just as last year, the Festival of Thanks will feature volunteers and guests talking about their experiences with Family Promise. The event will be streamed on Facebook—but you won't have to have a Facebook account to watch it.

Once again, we'll have our "OTYs"—the special recognition of a local business sponsor, a volunteer, and a congregational volunteer coordinator of the year who have gone above and beyond in making our work possible. This year's recipients have been selected and will be revealed during the Festival of Thanks.

Christmas music will also be a big feature of the event. The Castle Rock Men's Ensemble and Joyful Noyz (a choir of Longview First Christian Church) will be among the holiday performers to

## Save the Date Festival of Thanks

Our Annual Volunteer Appreciation Event



help you get into the spirit of the season.

We are also grateful for the donation of beautiful trophies for our OTYs by Sign Masters Awards n' More, owned by Family Promise supporters Charles and Myrna Rak. We hope you will be able to tune in to watch this heartwarming hour of Family Promise stories, music, and gratitude for all you've made possible.

### Andre Stepankowsky



### Presents a Piano Recital

Andre Stepankowsky, formerly of *The Daily News*, returns to the classical music stage — virtually — when he presents a holiday season piano recital to benefit Family Promise of Cowlitz County. The performance will be Andre's first since 2012.

For pandemic safety, the recital will appear on YouTube only. It will debut at 2 p.m. Sunday, December 5 and will be available on YouTube indefinitely after that.

The already-recorded recital features an informal format meant to be enjoyed from the comfort of home. Andre and his piano teacher, Martin Kauble, will discuss the background and nature of each of the six pieces during the program.

Family responsibilities had kept Andre away from the keyboard for several years, but he always knew he would return to the instrument he has loved since starting piano at age 11.

"These recitals are my own little way of sharing my

passion for classical music and keeping the flame of the world's greatest music burning," Andre notes.

All recital proceeds will go toward remodeling the family center to restore our capacity to four guest families. The remodel was not in our budget for this year, so we are deeply grateful to Andre for donating this recital's proceeds to this project and very excited to get back to four-guest-family capacity.

Andre is not just using his hands to play piano and raise money for the project; he also plans to frame in the new walls. He's committed to donating some of the materials as well. We're so impressed with his commitment to empowering us to help more families.

To tune into the recital, go to the Martin Kauble Piano Studio on YouTube, then select the Stepankowsky recital from the menu.

Donations to Family Promise can be made on our website — [www.FPCowlitz.org](http://www.FPCowlitz.org) — by clicking on the yellow Donate button at the top right of the screen. If "Capacity Expansion" is not the selected (visible) choice on the form, you can select it by clicking the down arrow on the right end of the line.

The recital features six pieces. In order of performance, they are the *Nocturne in C Minor* by Frederic Chopin, *Traumeri* (Reverie) from *Scenes from Childhood* by Robert Schumann, the *Impromptu in E flat Major* by Franz Schubert, the *Consolation No. 3* by Franz Liszt, *La Plus Que Lente* ("A bit more of slow") by Claude Debussy and *The Wedding Day at Troldhaugen* by Edvard Greig.

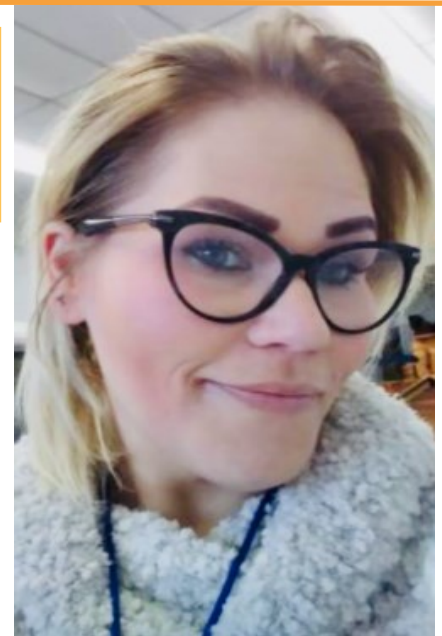
Each of these pieces is charming in different ways, and as a whole the recital requires nearly the whole range of pianistic techniques. Stepankowsky is especially fond of the Chopin Nocturne, calling it the "tale of a thunderstorm" that interrupts a tranquil night.

We hope you will enjoy the music and support our return to four-family capacity.

# ... But Is That Really Homelessness?

by Sara Wallace

A continuing series on "How it Happens"



Did you know that there are two different US Government definitions of homelessness? The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) considers people homeless if they are living in a shelter, their car, outdoors, or in any place not intended for normal habitation. This is the definition (and the number) the media usually uses, and what many of us imagine when we think of homelessness.

On the other hand, the US Department of Education also counts people homeless if they are living in a motel, couch-surfing, or living doubled up (or more) with another family. "But," we think, "if they're living with a friend or relative, they're housed. Why is that considered homelessness?"

The current housing market for low- and moderate-income renters is one of the toughest we have ever seen. Aside from the housing shortage, one huge hurdle is that most landlords require applicants' income to be three times the rent. That's harder than ever with rents going through the roof.

Adding to these challenges are factors that destabilize employment/income, such as frequent school or daycare closures, a shortage of daycare openings, and Covid quarantines not being covered by employers. As a result, housing-cost-burdened families can easily lose their income and often can't find an affordable place to rent.

That's why many families move in with relatives or friends. They condense their lives, double up with another family, save on housing, and help one another. . . what could go wrong?

Here is one of the many stories we've heard.

Suzy, David, and their daughter moved in with Aunt Eleanor. Aunt Eleanor needed some help around the house, and Suzy and David's rising rent made it impossible to save for

the new home they wanted. Their relationship with Aunt Eleanor had always been good, and they had no concerns moving forward. They gave notice at their rental, moved into Aunt Eleanor's rental house, and everything was great.

For about three weeks.

But Eleanor had an existing roommate. Bill had lived with Eleanor for five years and was on the lease. A couple of weeks after Suzy and David moved in, Bill and David had a disagreement. The property management became aware of their presence and forced Suzy and David off the property. They had no legal recourse because there was no contract recognizing them as tenants.

Suzy and David had to leave the property that very day. No notice,

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*"Families doubled up are not counted as homeless by HUD, but the school districts know how unstable these situations are, and how destructive they can be to children."*

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no time to prepare or look for anywhere else to go, just instantly homeless. As a young couple, they had worried that asking for a contract might offend Aunt Eleanor. But with a contract, even if they'd been evicted, the legal process would have given them time to try to find housing again.

Families doubled up are not counted as homeless by HUD, but the school districts know how unstable these situations are, and how destructive they can be to children. Children in these situations are liv-

ing in usually overcrowded homes where safe, quiet space for homework and sleep are hard to find—among a host of other problems. And worst of all, they can lose that housing in an instant.

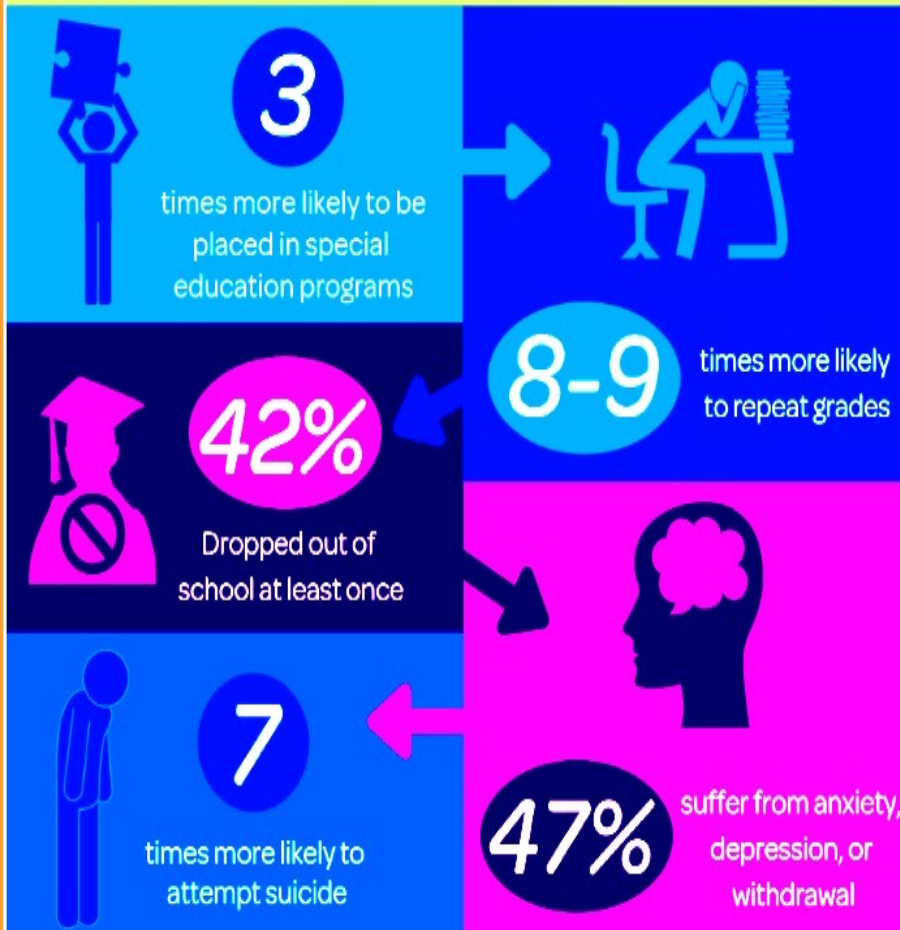
The outcomes for these families can be devastating, and children suffer the most. More depression and anxiety, poorer ability to learn, lower grades, and other chronic stress often lead to terrible health consequences—mental and physical—for the rest of their lives. It even shortens their lives: children with two or more traumas have four times the risk of all causes of death by age 50 compared to their stably housed peers.

We know that many families don't have a choice. With steady employment threatened by ongoing economic instability and housing prices skyrocketing, moving in with another family may be the best option. But we advise getting a written, legally binding agreement that protects the stability of the housing situation, whether it's renting a single room, sharing a whole house or apartment, or even parking an RV in someone's driveway.

We also advocate for HUD to recognize people in these situations as homeless. Until we recognize the full scope and all the variations of the problem, we won't apply the needed resources to ending it.



# Impact of Homelessness on Children☆



## A Tasty Way To Help Family Promise

Need a break from cooking and dishes this busy holiday season? We've got you!

Panera Bread is holding a one-day fundraiser for Family Promise of Cowlitz County on Thursday, December 2! Order between 4 and 8 p.m., and Panera Bread will donate 20% of your order value to Family Promise.

Get your delicious dinner, forget the dishes, and get on with your holiday preparation—with a warm glow in your heart because you helped us at the same time as you helped yourself!

You can order out or dine in. Just present the flyer (in paper form or a photo on your phone) or use the code on the flyer when ordering by phone.

Please feel free to share this with everyone you know!

And as always, all funds stay local.



Renelle Treat and her husband Larry, were both born and raised in Longview. They have been married for 34 years. Larry's time in the military took them to other places, but at the end of his service, they returned to Longview and have been here for the last 21 years.

Renelle and Larry are members of the Longview Church of the Nazarene, where Renee has served the last two years as a Family Promise congregational volunteer coordinator and Larry is the custodian.



The church leaders were looking for a new ministry at about the same time Family Promise of Cowlitz County was getting off the ground and it was a good fit as they were also interested in having a positive impact on homelessness. Longview Church of the Nazarene is a host church and has housed FPCC guests on three occasions prior to the COVID pandemic changes in housing.

Renelle works with two additional co-coordinators and a team of about a dozen volunteers to provide housing and meals when it is their week to serve Family Promise. Renelle says her favorite part of volunteering with Family Promise is "interacting with the families, visiting with and taking time to get to know them and to help them with their needs". She really likes to go above and beyond in reaching out and helping Family Promise guests.

Thank you, Renelle, for your dedication, time and service to Family Promise of Cowlitz County.



## Promise of Home Reaches Milestone

We're preparing for launch! In a few weeks, we will be ready to begin our homelessness prevention/shelter diversion program, Promise of Home, to keep families from becoming homeless.

Last spring, we were approved for a Homeless No More two-year challenge grant to kick-start a prevention/diversion program. The granting organization is Help Us Move In (HUMI), a Washington-based nonprofit focused on ending child homelessness.

The challenge is simple: Raise \$10K from donors, get \$10K from HUMI; then challenge the community at large to match the resulting \$20,000. Once we have the initial \$20,000, we are free to begin using it to help families at risk of losing their housing and those needing assistance with move-in deposits.

In October and November, we received three gifts that reached the Year One \$10,000 threshold. HUMI then sent us a check for the Year One grant of \$10,000.



Homelessness prevention is helping a family *stay* housed when the only barrier to remaining in their home is being able to pay the rent. More than 40% of US households are at risk of losing housing if they suddenly have an unexpected expense of \$400.

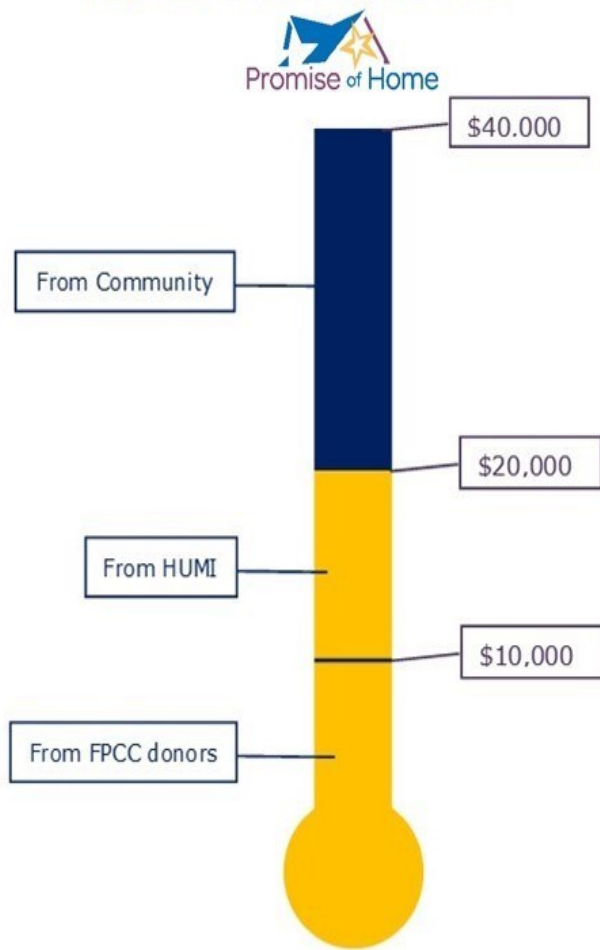
Shelter diversion is when losing housing is inevitable (for example, an eviction notice) and the goal becomes to find new housing very quickly. Acting fast is essential because after a few weeks, the eviction shows up on a credit check for rental applications, and that is a major barrier to approval. If we can get a family straight into new housing, we can avoid that barrier. More importantly, we help children avoid the traumas of losing housing and going into shelter.

Once a family is diverted from shelter into new housing, stabilization becomes critical. In Washington, eviction stays on your record for the rest of your life. A family has little chance of being accepted for rental once that eviction is on their record.

Once we're past the immediate crisis, Promise of Home can offer clients the same kinds of stabilization assistance we offer to our shelter graduates: family financial management, good renting skills, career enhancement, parenting, counseling and other resources to make families stronger.

Now that we have achieved ignition, we have a little more work until liftoff. We are finalizing the Promise of Home forms and procedures. We have had a "soft launch" and we'll continue to learn and adjust as we serve—just as we have in our

### Funding Progress: Year One



shelter and stabilization programs.

Prevention, Shelter, and Stabilization are the three basic programs each Family Promise Affiliate strives for. With Promise of Home's launch, we will have put in place the third leg of the Family Promise stool.

We are now asking our partners and the whole Cowlitz County community to help us match our Year One \$20,000 startup fund. With a \$40,000 start, Promise of Home will have a strong and stable foundation; then we will be ready to begin the cycle again next fall for Year 2 of the HUMI Homeless No More challenge grant.

We know many in our community are great at coming up with FUNdraising ideas. Your church's youth group, your civic group, your business and co-workers, your congregation, your family, friends and neighbors are all invited and encouraged to consider how you can support our mission of keeping families from experiencing homelessness.

Our website's donation form also has been updated to include Promise of Home as a giving option. With your help, we can keep children from going through the traumas of homelessness.



## **Gifts and Gratitude**

*Your gifts and prayers are our oxygen and blood. We operate almost entirely on your donations.*

**A very special thanks to our very special supporters. Your support makes a life-saving difference to our guests and clients.**

### **In Kind Donors**

Amy Hamilton Lauren Henricksen

### **Financial Donors**

Karla Bean	Louise McAuliffe
Daryl Berg	Rev. Vonda McFadden
Phyllis Cavens	Toni Miner
East Hills Alliance Church	Ron Naff
Emmanuel Lutheran Church	Network for Good
Bob Erickson	New Song Worship
First Baptist Church of Longview	Northlake Church
Dan Frei	Irene Olason
PayPal Giving Fund	Renewal City Church
Amy Hamilton	Claudia Sobczuk
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Longview Presbyterian Church	Janine White
Donna MacKenzie	Mary Wingate
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Pacific Doors and Window  
PEO Sisterhood Chapter IL  
Performance Sheet Metal, Inc.  
Sign Masters Awards  
Solid Rock Cruisers  
Wilcox and Flegel Fuel Oil Co.

## **Our Awesome Partner Congregations**

East Hills Alliance Church  
Emmanuel Lutheran Church  
Evangel Christian Fellowship  
Exodus Christian Fellowship  
First Baptist Church of Longview  
First Christian Church of Longview  
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church  
Grace Bible Fellowship  
Immaculate Heart Catholic Church  
Kalama Ward of the Church of  
Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints  
Kelso First Baptist Church  
Kelso United Methodist Presbyterian  
Church  
Kelso Ward of the Church of  
Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints  
Longview Church of the Nazarene  
Longview Presbyterian Church  
Longview United Methodist  
Church  
New Song Worship Center  
Northlake Church  
Renewal City Church  
Rose Valley Friends Church  
St. Rose Roman Catholic  
Church  
Trinity Lutheran Church



### **Financial Update**

2021 Annual Budget:

**\$167,976.00**

2021 Contributions:

**\$137,997.74**

2021 Monthly Contributions:

**\$11,936.88**

2021 Volunteer hours:

**759 hours**

**Thank you for your support of our work for families enduring homelessness. Their path home is paved by your kindness.**

**DONATE TODAY**





## Take Us To Your Leaders

Church Council, Council of Elders, Church Board, Board of Trustees, Meeting, Parish Council, Session . . . whatever your denomination calls them, they're your highly valued leaders!

And you know that one person you're going to miss a lot now that they're not on your Church Parish Council Board Meeting Session of Elder Trustees? We want them!

If you know (or are) one of these leaders, we are inviting applicants for the Family Promise of Cowlitz County Board of Directors.

### **So, what's involved in sitting on our Board?**

Previous Board experience is helpful, but not required. Board terms are a three-year commitment. People of color, women, young people, and those who have personally experienced housing insecurity or homelessness are especially encouraged to apply. For more details, please contact us at the Family Center: 360-703-3131. Or you can give us their contact information and we'll take it from there.



## *Extra Extra!*



Want to hear about something specific in this newsletter? Drop us a line—or a whole draft!  
([Editor@FamilyPromiseOfCowlitzCo.org](mailto:Editor@FamilyPromiseOfCowlitzCo.org))

# At Your Service

## Board of Directors

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<a href="#">Leticia Casarez</a>	At-Large
<a href="#">Hollie Hillman-Kero</a>	At-Large
<a href="#">Randy Hall</a>	At-Large

## Family Center Staff

<a href="#">Lisa Staudinger</a>	Executive Director
<a href="#">Sara Wallace</a>	Case Manager
<a href="#">Jamie Craig</a>	Administrative Assistant

**Email Newsletter Editor:** [Steve Sheridan](#)  
**Print Newsletter Editor:** [Richard Shuren](#)

## Family Center Address

215 Academy Street, 2nd Floor  
Kelso, WA 98626  
360-703-3131

## Family Center Hours

9 a.m. — 6 p.m. Monday through Friday

## Visit our website:

[www.fpcowlitz.org](http://www.fpcowlitz.org)  
(Cowlitz County Affiliate)

[www.familypromise.org](http://www.familypromise.org)  
(Family Promise National)

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