Creating Hope, Nurturing Strength, Transforming Lives

April 2022 Vol 3, Issue 2



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Changing Conditions, Unchanging Vision

by Vonda McFadden, President, Board of Directors

It's been just over two years since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Covid a pandemic. A lot has changed during that time. It isn't just changes in one thing but in a lot of things. Words like masks and boosters fill our conversations. Zoom is not kids playing with toy cars. Physical distancing is a serious consideration.

Changes are a fact of life in the best of times but during a pandemic they come fast and furious much of the time. Just as you have made changes in your own lives, we have made changes in the last two years on how we do business. We didn't do it because we wanted to, but because we needed to change with our ever-changing world.

But what hasn't changed is our mission and vision. "Our mission is to help families with children experiencing homelessness or housing instability to achieve sustainable independence through a community-based response."

"While many of you work behind the scenes and do the hard work, your commitment doesn't go unnoticed by the Board . . ."

"Our vision is a Cowlitz County in which every family has a home and the chance to build a better future.

Unhoused children and families are the reason we are here. They are the reason you support us and encourage us. We are thankful that you believe in our mission and vision each and every day. While many of you work behind the scenes and do the hard work, your commitment doesn't go unnoticed by the Board of Directors.

"Our primary task is to unleash the creative forces in man. Let us accept the challenge and try to elevate the whole population." — Jack Murdock

This quote really speaks to what we are trying to do at Family Promise. Our vision to see everyone have a home helps not just those in our program but the rest of our community. As Board President I ask that you continue to join us in that vision and together we can make it a reality.

Family Promise of Cowlitz
County Was Among 10 Affiliates
Selected to Receive Donations
from Two Progressive Insurance
Employee Resource Groups

PROGRESSIVE

Family Promise National staff reached out to us in April 2021 to let us know about an exciting new collaboration—and that Family Promise of Cowlitz County was selected for an amazing donation!

Last summer, Family Promise and two Progressive Insurance Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) – Parent Connection and Network for Empowering Women (NEW) – collaborated on multiple nationwide philanthropic initiatives to support families experiencing homelessness. Debunking Homelessness was the first initiative to launch and it was developed by Parent Connection with support from NEW. Parent Connection and NEW ERG members participated in Night Without A Bed on June 26, 2021 and they also donated essential items to families at 10 Affiliates across the country.

Our Regional Director, Stacy Pollard, nominated Family Promise of Cowlitz County to be one of the ten. Executive Director Lisa Staudinger shared with the ERGs a spreadsheet of items that we typically use at the Day Center and other items needed for our graduates and the ERGs supplied us generously.

We are very grateful to Family Promise National for nominating us and to Progressive's Parent Connection and NEW ERGs for their in-kind donations, their support of Family Promise, and their participation in Night Without A Bed!



The following was written by Ron Naff, cocoordinator for Longview Presbyterian Church and a member of the Family Promise of Cowlitz County Board of Directors:

WHY I BELIEVE IN FAMILY PROMISE

It's about family
It's about promise
It's about unifying the separated
traveling toward wholeness
completing the journey together

It's simple, yet complicated

{for guests}

It's about finding a home
without the financial resources to inhabit one
It's about filling stomachs
after the struggle of finding food to fill them
It's about depending upon the humility
of persons both known and unknown
to "regard others as better than themselves" *

{for hosts}

It's about holding others accountable for their actions

while looking side-by-side in the same mirror

It's about social interaction emotional support and spiritual guidance It's about seeing the world through the eyes of

It's about celebrating the love received as a child

helping others to realize a childhood that yet can be

{for all}

a child

It's about warmth, cooperation, community It's about Family Promise It's about the promise of family

. . . and it's about time!

* Philippians 2:3

In Their Own Words

by Ali, FPCC Guest

What is a day like when you are out there? And what difference can Family Promise make? This story was written by a former guest at our Family Center describing what happened to her and her family at Christmas. Spoiler alert: a member of a Family Promise partner congregation makes a surprise appearance in this story! Ali, Charlie and Cole are now in their own apartment.

People never really give you a chance when you're homeless; most people just pass you up. Some cross to the other side of the street so they don't have to share the sidewalk with you. It makes you feel like you've fallen beneath the cracks of society when people won't even look you in the eye.

We were only out there four months, but all it takes is a week to start looking the part.

"We were only out there

Sometimes we couldn't even park at Walmart for the night without being hassled, like what happened on Christmas this year. We were unloading our belongings so we could sleep in the back of our truck

could sleep in the back of our truck for the night—the three of us: my husband, my 3-year-old son, and I.

I'm sure it seemed like we were making a mess as we unpacked the truck bed to set up our sleeping space. We had a little pile of our belongings and a paper tree I'd made for our son. We were going to repack it, but before we were set up, someone called the Sheriff and shooed us away. We drove all night trying to find a place to sleep and ended up running out of gas. Then we couldn't even use the truck to stay warm. That made us feel like failures, a waste of space and a waste of air.

On the other hand, there were also the most kindhearted people, who didn't write us off or make us feel less-than just because we were going without. Like what happened when our was truck impounded.

My husband and I had gotten separated. I was driving to meet him when our truck's alternator kicked the bucket on Rose Valley Road. The truck was impounded and I was left on the side of the road. A kind man gave me a ride into Kelso. I couldn't find my husband and wound up spending the night alone under the bridge. It was the first time I'd ever slept alone outside. I was so frozen the next day I couldn't walk for half an hour. Finally, I was able to put weight on my feet. I headed to the impound

lot because in my franticness, I had left my cell phone on the front seat when the truck broke down. Waiting at a bus stop in Longview after taking the wrong bus, I felt like I should just walk in front of traffic but I knew my son needed me and I needed him and my husband.

The lonesomeness of being without my best friends was the most distraught I've ever felt. Feeling so alone and not even having a way to get ahold of anyone ripped me to shreds.

I must have had that look all over my face because a big black Escalade pulled up and asked if I needed a ride. She seemed like the nicest lady I had ever met in my life, to see me on my darkest day and want to help me. (Thank you, Karen Branscom from Exodus Church!) She looked past my appearance and saw someone who needed help, and honestly her just looking at me and seeing me meant the world to me.

She said God had told her to turn around in rush hour traffic and help me. She said I looked forlorn (which I looked up. For-LORN: (adj.) Pitifully sad, abandoned, or

lonely. Hopeless.). I'd say she hit the nail on the head.

Karen not only gave me a ride to the police impound but paid to get my truck out. When she let me out of her truck, she gave me a \$100 bill and

said it was her "mad" money and that she didn't want me to sleep in my truck alone that night.

After charging my phone, I found my husband and we met at a hotel we could afford, but they wouldn't book us a room because only my husband had an ID. Three other hotels also turned us away.

The moral of the story is that it's never easy being homeless, even when good things happen and good people show up to give us hope on our darkest days.

Every day out there was another day we worried about how to stay dry, how to stay warm, where to find a place we could wash our face and go to the bathroom. The little things in life that people take for granted because they are easy to obtain when you're housed are the things homeless people struggle for every day just to live.

These words can't express how grateful we are to Family Promise for not having to worry 24/7. The fact that we have a place to stay, food and showers, let alone a restroom to use—these things change lives. Family Promise gave us the tools to chip away at our problems and move beyond the life we had to settle for because we fell between the cracks.

Thank you for all you have done. We hope you will be proud of us because we will do everything in our power to get back on our feet.

four months, but all it

takes is a week to start

looking the part."

Updating Our Family Center



JH Kelly employees Bob Ennis and Russell Young place the new, fire-code compliant window in Guest Room 4.

Our new guest room is almost ready! We've updated the window in our new guest room and obtained a bunk bed. Still needed: some updates to the gate at the end of the window well for fire egress and one more bunk bed.

Sometimes you have to "go slow to go fast." As we've been working to remodel the family center to restore our capacity to four families at a time, we have been learning. We've learned that guests living in rooms di-

rectly adjacent to staff offices can be difficult for all. We've learned that with a little rethinking, we can be more efficient and offer better hospitality and privacy.

One lesson, learned the hard way over the last three summers and especially during last June's heat dome, was that we can no longer do without air conditioning. The family center became so hot during last summer's heat dome that the staff had to work from home, and our guests were miserable.

Not being able to cool down enough can cause serious health effects, so we're getting bids on ductless heat pumps. These will not only provide much-needed air conditioning in the summer, but the heat they provide in winter will be more energy -efficient and less expensive as well.

Our lessons have also told us we need the staff offices up front and the guest quarters on the north hallway, past the double doors in the foyer. Some creativity will be needed to make that possible, but with the amazing planning team of Dan Frei, Andre Stepankowsky, and Daryl Berg, and the expert volunteer crew from JH Kelly and others helping us, we will be able to make the family center truly hospitable and efficient for everyone—those who work there and those who live there.

Stay tuned for more updates! And if you wish to donate to the remodel fund, please go to www.fpcowlitz/donate and click the down arrow to select the Capacity Expansion fund.

Financial Update

2022 Annual budget:

\$207,994.00

2022 Contributions (to date):

\$ 10,232.27

2022 Average monthly contributions:

\$ 5,116.13

2022 Volunteer hours reported (to date):

298.5 hours

Thank you for your support of our work with families emerging from homelessness. Their path home is paved by your kindness.

Extra Extra!



Want to hear about something specific in this newsletter? Drop us a line—or a whole draft!

(Editor@FamilyPromiseOfCowlitzCo.org)



Linda Davis grew up in Riverside, California and came to southwest Washington with her husband and two young daughters in 1991. They live in the Carrolls area. Her husband, Scott, grew up in the Pacific Northwest and was pleased to return. She and her husband currently attend a Seventh Day Adventist church in Battle Ground, which coincidentally is a host congregation for the Family Promise of Clark County Affiliate. Together, she and her husband (also an accountant), own and operate Davis & Associates, CPAs, PS, in Longview.

Linda was introduced to Family Promise through Karl Salzsieder, a current FPCC board member, nearly 3.5 years ago, before FPCC even opened its doors. Her expertise in accounting and bookkeeping proved very valuable as she took on the role of treasurer, balancing the books and producing financial reports. Although she still serves as both a board member and treasurer, Linda delegated the day-to-day bookkeeping and production of financial reports to a nationwide non-profit accounting firm at the beginning of 2022 due to time constraints.

Lisa Staudinger, FPCC director, says "Being Treasurer is a big, specialized job. Linda's taking this role on has been very generous and really essential to our operations. We're so grateful for this impactful gift!"

Linda appreciates Family Promise for its goals and the mission to aid families experiencing homelessness or housing instability to achieve sustainable independence. One of her favorite parts of volunteering with FPCC is getting to know other board members, many of whom she had not previously met.

Sincere thanks and appreciation, Linda, for all you have done and are doing to support Family Promise of Cowlitz County. We wouldn't be where we are today without you.

Our Awesome Partner Congregations

Bethany Lutheran Church 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 Lake Sacajawea Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Longview church of Christ 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. Paul Lutheran Church St. Rose Roman Catholic Church Trinity Lutheran Church 6000



Homelessness Prevention and Shelter Diversion

Impact

Since December 2021, Promise of home has kept 23 families with 24 children in their homes at an average cost of \$324 per child. Preventing homelessness is much more cost-effective than rehousing families after they lose housing and averts a great deal of trauma.

How It Works

Family Promise National partner Help Us Move In (HUMI) has provided a two-year challenge-match grant to help us start Promise of Home. We're now asking the community to match the initial \$20,000 for the first year. Promise of Home needs a solid foundation to keep families--and our community--strong into the future.



How You Can Help

We're closing in on our Year 1 goal! If you would like to donate to Promise of Home to help us keep Cowlitz County children in their homes, please visit our website and click the yellow Donate button, and in the form, scroll down to Promise of Home.

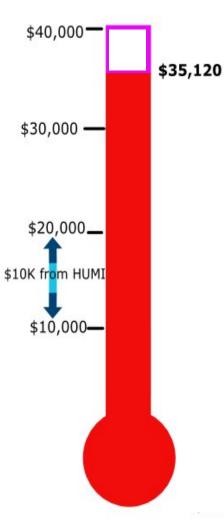
Got a youth group or a mission group? Or a bunch of friends who want to do something good for the community? Please consider a fundraiser for Promise of Home! Ideas include bake sales, craft sales, rent-a-youth, spaghetti feeds, selling seasonal plants, dunk-the-pastor . . . the sky's the limit!

DONATE



2021 - 2023 Progress

(updated March 21, 2022)





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 off your Church Parish Council Board 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 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 email us directly at Director@FamilyPromiseOfCowlitzCo.org, PastorVonda@gmail.com, or call 360-703-3131.



Gifts & Gratitude

Your prayers and donations are like oxygen and blood to us.

We operate almost entirely on your donations. A very special thanks to our very special supporters. Your support makes everything possible for our guests and clients!

Business and Organization Donors

Over the past year, the businesses and organizations below have supported us through their donations. Please support them and thank them for their support.

Bicoastal Media
Cole's Appliance Repair
Community Foundation for
SW WA
Davis & Associates, CPAs, PS
Gibbs and Olson Engineering
High Cascades Agency
Kaiser Foundation Health Plan
of the NW Community
Giving Campaign

Keys Plus Kroger

Lam Research Corporation

Longview Century Club

Luggage of Love

Mike Burchett, Media

Consultation

Minuteman Press

Network for Good

Pacific Doors and Window

PEO Sisterhood Chapter IL

Performance Sheet

Metal, Inc.

Redwood Toxicology, Inc

Sign Masters Awards n' More

Solid Rock Cruisers

Wilcox and Flegel Fuel Oil Co.

Financial Donors

These donors' gifts in January and February offer families facing homelessness the promise of home.

Karla Bean

Daryl Berg

Mary Brennan

Gregory Cantwell

Don Corkrum

Barbara Davis

East Hills Alliance Church

Emmanuel Lutheran

Church

The Estate of Anne

Gyllenberg

Bob Erickson

First Baptist Church of

Longview

Grace Bible Fellowship

Trudi Gross

Judy Groth

Brian Hamilton

Dorothy Hanson

Chuck Henderson

Bill Hundley

Myrna Hustoft

Allison Hutchinson

Susan Jackson

Kelso United Methodist Pres-

byterian Church

Ronald Kimmel

Ruth Kimmel

Thomas Kirwan

Kurtis Kucera

Richard Loewen

Longview church of

Christ

Donna MacKenzie

Pr. Dave & Peggy Martin

Louise McAuliffe

Rev. Vonda McFadden

Thomas Mckerirnan

Frank McShane

Gavin Jeanne Mills

Ron & Kay Naff

New Song Worship

Northlake Church

Irene Olason

Dennis Perry

Eugene Pistorese

Renewal City Church

Karl Salzsieder

Deborah Sanders

Steve Sheridan

Steve Sheriaan

Claudia Sobczuk

St. Rose Catholic

Church

Darrel Tietze

Annie Tietze

Danielle Trimble

United Way

Melissa Wilke Living

Trust

Mary Wingate

At Your Service

Board of Directors

Pr. Vonda McFadden President Karl Salzsieder Vice President Dan Frei Secretary Linda Davis Treasurer Ken Botero At-Large Leticia Casarez At-Large Bob Erickson At-Large Randy Hall At-Large Hollie Kero At-Large Ron Naff At-Large

Family Center Staff

<u>Lisa Staudinger</u> Exec <u>Sarah Wallace</u> Case Jamie Craig Adm

Executive Director
Case Manager
Administrative Assistant

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Visit our website at:

www.fpcowlitz.org (Cowlitz County)
www.familypromise.org (National Organization)

Find us on Facebook at: www.Facebook.com/FamilyPromiseCowlitzCounty

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