



The Real Christmas

by Lisa Staudinger, Executive Director

I heard someone say recently that "Christmas might not happen this year." I was perplexed. Then I heard the news story they were referring to: the supply chain is missing a few links and things are chaotic and backed up. It might be hard to receive stuff you order or find stuff in stores for this Christmas.

now go do the deed. And what Jesus taught us most of all while he was walking with us was to care for one another. "Love one another as I have loved you."

And you do! It's Christmas every day around here. Which brings me back to the Festival of Thanks, our annual volunteer appreciation event.

I thought back to the "Christmas might not happen" statement and thought, Someone doesn't know what Christmas is. And they definitely never read *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* (which mean they missed last year's Festival of Thanks!). "It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags."

*This is the real Christmas,
and
Amazon can't
deliver it.*

This is the season when we reflect on the past year. As we look back at all we've survived, all the guests we sheltered and families we've assisted in 2021, we know we owe it all to you. You, who were sent into the world to love. By gifting your time, talent, and treasure you give children a chance at a stable life. You reach a helping hand out to parents in desperate situations 365 days a year, passing the ball from congregation to congregation so no one is overburdened.

At this point the Grinch puzzles 'til his puzzler is sore. But he soon figures out that Christmas means "more".

Now, I'm getting way too familiar with that sore-puzzler feeling, but about Christmas I am not confused. Because you all demonstrate it to us every day of the year.

This is what we will celebrate at the Festival of Thanks in December. This is the real Christmas, and Amazon can't deliver it. I hope you'll join us to celebrate our progress and the very special contributions of our Volunteer of the Year, Coordinator of the Year, and Business Partner of the Year.

Christmas means "the Mass of Christ." Let's break it down a little more.

The word Mass (Latin *missa*) means "sending." As in sending into the world to do service after worship. You've gotten the Word,

(I'm not telling. You'll just have to watch.)

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Remodel to Restore Capacity to Get a Boost from Skilled Volunteers

"Many hands will make light work of a big job"

When the pandemic hit, we stopped sheltering guest families in our partner churches for everyone's safety. But sheltering at the Family Center cost us half of our guest capacity.

The effects of this were minimized for a while by the eviction moratoria keeping many families in their homes, but now the moratoria have expired, and our waiting list is growing. To restore our shelter capacity to four families, we plan some changes to the Family Center.

Since guests have beds at the Family Center, the nursery is no longer needed and will become a guest room. The living room will have new walls built to accommodate two guest families. An adjoining door between the rooms will make it possible for one large family to occupy the space as well.

Bart and friends have the equipment and the contracting expertise, and are fans of Family

Adding these to the guest room next to the Director's office will bring us back to four rooms and full guest capacity again. Sounds pretty simple, right?

But the 1937 building says otherwise. We puzzled over code questions and how to cut the gnarly concrete wall to make the nursery window comply with fire code for overnight occupation. We were stuck until Board Secretary Dan Frei called on some former coworkers.

Bart Chrest of JH Kelly came and assessed the situation and feels confident that a crew of his coworkers would help and could handle all the needed changes. They have the equipment and contracting expertise and are fans of Family Promise.

Daryl Berg (2020 Volunteer of the Year) has deep knowledge of our building's electrical systems and can guide work on needed changes to fixtures in the living room and elsewhere. Others who have volunteered to help with the remodel include Andre Stepankowsky, who also plans a benefit piano recital to help with funding.

Family Promise partner congregations St. Rose and Immaculate Heart of Mary have donated \$3000 to the remodel. The money had been earmarked to upgrade the Family Promise guests rooms at Immaculate Heart. When the decision to stay in static shelter indefinitely was announced last August, the parish decided to use the funds to support remodeling guest rooms at the Family Center instead.

We hope to complete the remodel early in the new year. If you would like to help with any part of the work (flooring, general carpentry, painting, fixtures, etc.), please contact the Family Center at 360-703-3131.

If you'd like to help financially, you can donate via our website (www.FPCowlitz.org) or send a check to P.O. Box 1152, Kelso, WA 98626. As always, all donations stay local.

Save the Date

Festival of Thanks

Our Annual Volunteer Appreciation Event

2021

December

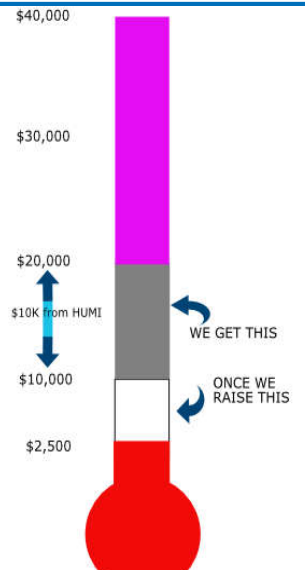
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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5	6	7	8	9	10	11

Prevention Program Launch Inches Closer

An ounce of prevention is worth thousands of dollars' worth of cure and a few years of recovery! Keeping families stably housed is a major priority for Family Promise. Preventing the loss of housing costs a small fraction of the cost of sheltering people who have lost their homes. And then there's the loss of possessions, the grief, the fear, the chaos, the damage to credit reports, the risk to health and safety, the health and education effects...you get the idea.

We have raised a quarter of the \$10,000 needed to receive Help Us Move In's "Homeless No More" challenge grant, thanks to a generous gift from Kelso United Methodist Presbyterian Church.

A small team is working on Promise of Home's terms, eligibility, and logistics. They're also cooking up some FUNdraising ideas. If you would like to join the Promise of Home team, please contact Lisa at director@familypromiseofcowlitzco.org.



Andre Stepankowsky

Presents

A piano recital

On YouTube December 5

*to benefit the Family Promise of Cowlitz County
Family Center capacity expansion*

More details soon!



proudly partners with



United Way of Cowlitz & Wahkiakum Counties

Business and Organization Donors

Please help us thank these businesses and organizations that have helped us over the past year by supporting them!

Community Foundation for SW WA
Davis & Associates, CPAs, PS
High Cascades Agency
Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the NW Community Giving Campaign
Kroger
Longview Century Club
Luggage of Love

Mike Burchett, Media Consultation
Network of Good
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PEO Sisterhood Chapter IL
Performance Sheet Metal, Inc.
Sign Masters Awards
Solid Rock Cruisers
Wilcox and Flegel Fuel Oil Co.

In-Kind Donors

Erin Byrom
Longview United Methodist Church
Exodus Christian Fellowship



Steve and Diane Pond have been in the Cowlitz County area since 1973, when Steve relocated his law practice here from Seattle. They attend the Lake Sacajawea Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. They recently passed their 55th wedding anniversary.

They both served on the Family Promise development committee for the Cowlitz County affiliate and have helped with hosting families, recruiting helpers to provide meals and being overnight hosts.

Diane appreciates that Family Promise is not government supported and that the affiliate carefully screens potential guests, leading to high success rates in helping families experiencing homelessness return to stable housing. She very much likes meeting the guest families and working with people from other churches.



Steve appreciates the interaction with guest families, as well. He is also enthusiastic about the recent HUMI grant which is designed to help families remain in their homes. Steve likes that Family Promise of Cowlitz County operates locally but still has the support of the national Family Promise organization that "has a terrific track record" and great credibility.

Both Steve and Diane said they have no hesitation in approaching and recruiting other people to help with Family Promise.

Thank you, Steve and Diane, for supporting families experiencing homelessness through your hard work with Family Promise of Cowlitz County.

Family Promise Receives Highest Rating From Charity Navigator for 9th Consecutive Year With Perfect Score



From Family Promise National website (www.FamilyPromise.org)

SUMMIT, N.J. – September 24, 2021

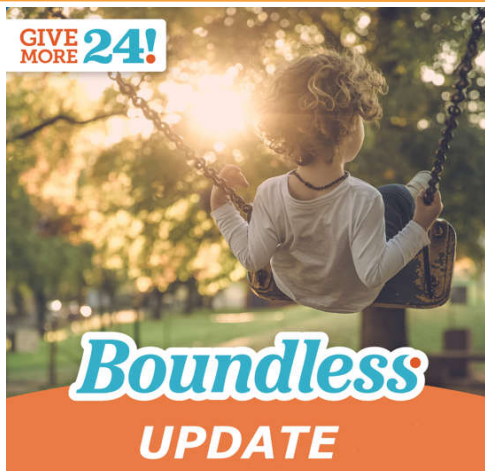
One in 16 American children experience homelessness before they enter the first grade. That's equivalent to one child in every kindergarten classroom. Even with the extreme challenges presented by an unprecedented global pandemic, national non-profit Family Promise adapted to the new landscape, continued to engage volunteers, and served more families and children in 2020 than ever before.

"The pandemic rendered our core communal shelter program nearly impossible, and we increased prevention, diversion, and stabilization services to keep families housed and avoid shelter," said Claas Ehlers, Family Promise CEO.

Recently, Family Promise's strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency earned it a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator. This is the ninth consecutive year Family Promise has earned this top distinction, including a perfect score of 100 out of 100 points.

Over the last year, Family Promise Affiliates have increased their work in prevention and shelter diversion. New, innovative programming like A Future Begins at Home, an initiative that helps families in crisis avoid the trauma of homelessness through comprehensive support, and Innovation Grants that supported the expansion of prevention services helped Affiliates deliver critical services to families during the pandemic, keeping them housed and safe.

The Annual Impact Report showcases Family Promise's achievements and the community's engagement. Overall, in 2020, Family Promise Affiliates served 177,474 family members in all programs. By increasing prevention, diversion, and stabilization services, half of Family Promise's 200 Affiliates doubled the number of individuals served, and 28,398 episodes of homelessness were shortened or avoided altogether.



Thanks to you, we had a very successful Give More 24! campaign. Donations by checks, cash, on-line (card) and PayPal donations helped us reach our goal of \$30,000.00.

The impact of your generosity is that we have closed the gap for this year to date.

Thank you so much for sharing and emailing to help us continue our life-saving services to children and their families who are experiencing homelessness.

The brotherly love of community comes from the sense of responsibility we have for each other, and out of love comes action.
Our sincerest gratitude to all those who supported Give More 24!

Sid & Sheryl Ackler
 Judith Ainslie
 Nancy Althof
 Rick & Theresa Ames
 Gina/Kevin Axsom
 Mike & Cindy Barbee
 Karla Bean
 Marilyn Becchetti
 Daryl Berg
 Art & Mary Birkmeyer
 Rick & Cathie Brien
 Shelly Bullet
 Boyd & Deborah Burns
 R Ernie & Oriana Cadman
 Kristal Champagne
 Kevin & Peggy Connors
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 Donald Corkrum
 The Corwin Family Fund
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 Dan Frei
 Tom Garstki
 Dennis Gaul

Nancy Gill
 Gloria Dei Lutheran Church
 Joanne Gotshall
 Rich & Annette Gushman
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 Randy & Kerry Hall
 Richard Hallett
 Arlene & Les Hambly
 Byron & Irene Hanson
 Richard Hardecker
 Chuck & Cree Ann Henderson
 Lorraine Hendren
 Lauren Henricksen
 Brian Hewitt
 Margaret Hickey
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 Sue & Gary Jackson
 Jill Johanson
 Sally J. Jones
 Teri & Mike Karnofski
 Jackie Keller
 Kenneth P Kendall
 Ruth Kendall
 Kristine Keough Forte
 Nancy Kuehlwein
 Mida LeSollen
 Dana Libby
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 Diane Manasco
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 Pr. Dave Martin
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 Donna McLain
 Howard Meharg
 Mary Jane Melink
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 Antoinette Miner
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 Steve & Diane Pond
 Kay Purcell & Bill Hundley
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 Brenda Rozwod
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 Karl Salzsieder
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 Steve & Patty Sheridan
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 Stephen Shope
 Richard & Debbie Shuren
 John & Shirley Simpson
 Lisa Staudinger
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 Lisa Sudar
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 Ian Thompson
 Jan Thompson
 Pamela Torgersin
 Dani Trimble
 Sharon & Julian Tuck
 Barbara Vining
 Maria Wallace
 MaryAlice Wallis
 Phyllis Westervelt
 Geri & John Willems
 Bill Wood
 Leonard Workman

Rent Well Gives Guests a Leg Up in a Tough Market



Family Promise gives families suffering homelessness a hand up. And now a

leg up too! *Rent Well* is a 15-hour course on how to apply effectively for rentals, how to communicate with landlords, rights and obligations of both tenants and landlords, and much more.

The curriculum was designed by Transition Projects, which teaches renters how to overcome barriers that make them less attractive to landlords. This is especially important with our 0.5% vacancy rate.

Sara and Lisa took the class themselves last

month and will take the instructor certification course as soon as it's available. "We're already using what we learned in *Rent Well* to help our graduates find housing," said Sara. "We're one of the few agencies in this area getting clients into housing."

Once Sara and Lisa are certified, both guests and Promise of Home clients will be offered the class.

Sometimes the cause of housing insecurity is a tenant and landlord not communicating well or knowing what their legal obligations are. *Rent Well* can help keep people in their home *and* improve their relationship with their landlord for greater long-term stability. And that's the ultimate goal.

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 (thru 9/30):	\$107,430.16
2021 Volunteer hours:	688 hours

Thank you for your support of our work for families enduring homelessness.

Gifts & Gratitude



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

We operate almost entirely on your donations; we are not a “fee-for-service” organization and don’t have government funding for our operations.

A very special thanks to our very special supporters. Your support makes everything possible for our guests and clients!

Financial Donors

These donors’ gifts in September offer families facing homelessness the promise of hope.

Ron Bakke
Karla Bean
Lucia Becchetti
Mariya Belden
Daryl Berg
Josh Droke
Ruth Earnest
East Hills Alliance Church
Emmanuel Lutheran Church
Bob Erickson
Greg Filer
Dan Frei
Judith Fromdahl
PayPal Giving Fund
Marie Grant
Amy Hamilton
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David Hoffman

Myrna Hustoft
Allison Hutchinson
Gary Jorgensen
Kelso United Methodist Presbyterian Church
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John Melink
Dennis Midwood
Ron Naff
Northlake Church
Doug Radke
Chris Rugg
Karl Salzsieder
Debra Shuren
Claudia Sobczuk
Danielle Trimble
Weyerhaeuser Longview

Wanted:

Former members of your congregation’s Leadership!

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.



At Your Service

Board of Directors

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Linda Davis	Treasurer
Dan Frei	Interim Secretary
Pr. Dave Martin	At-Large
Ron Naff	At-Large
Leticia Casarez	At-Large

Family Center Staff

Lisa Staudinger	Executive Director
Sarah Wallace	Case Manager
Jamie Craig	Administrative Assistant

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

Family Center Address

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Kelso, WA 98626
360-703-3131

Family Center Hours

9 a.m. — 6 p.m. Monday through Friday

Visit our website:

www.fpcowlitz.org
(Cowlitz County Affiliate)

www.familypromise.org
(Family Promise National)

Look for us on Facebook!

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