


THE Journey

THE NEWSLETTER OF  Family Promise
of Cowlitz County



Creating Hope, Nurturing Strength, Transforming Lives

July 2021 Vol 5, Issue 2

Changing Times, Changing Plans

by Lisa Staudinger, Executive Director



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You've probably heard me say plenty of times that the power and magic of the Family Promise shelter program is the interactions between the volunteers and the guests at the host sites. Boy, did we learn that good during the pandemic. We did still manage to serve families, but it wasn't the same.

Connecting with the community is the anti-homelessness.

For people working to emerge from homelessness, these connections have the power to heal trauma and promote stability. We know so much more about the effects of trauma on people's brains and general health now than we've ever known before. Trauma can cause homelessness and homelessness is traumatic and isolating. Traumatized people often isolate further, creating a negative cycle.

Family Promise helps break that cycle.

But we have to find a new way to do this—one that all volunteers can joyfully participate in. We recognize that many volunteers are still not ready to serve in person; and the over-

night shift—which was always the biggest challenge—has become nearly impossible to fill.

Our Board decided earlier this week that we will continue hosting our guests at the Day Center indefinitely. We hope to expand our capacity with construction that will enable at least one more room to pass fire code. We're also working to make it possible for volunteers to eat dinner with guests again, and even have an after-dinner homework help and hangout shift.

We can't wait to be together again—but we must. We must wait until we can do it in a way that brings joy and safety to all participants and honors you, our volunteers.

All these changes will take time and we will keep you posted as events develop. In the meanwhile, we will continue hosting as we have been for the past year and a half.

The Board and staff extend our deepest gratitude to you for enabling us to continue to serve families in crisis throughout this extremely challenging period.

Blessings and thanks,

*"We can't wait to
be together again—
but we must. We
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2021 Wrap Up

Last month, our Affiliate joined the Second Annual Night Without A Bed event, inviting Cowlitz County residents to sleep one night without their bed by choice in recognition of the many who do so without choice. The event is primarily to raise awareness of the growing crisis of family homelessness; many Affiliates also fund-raise at the event.

Of those who did raise funds, we were number 5 in the county, with 73 donors total. Our 8 fundraising participants had 58 donors; 15 chose to donate directly to the Affiliate. Donations totaled \$5,095.54, matched by \$5,000 from our Board of Directors, to bring in \$10,095.54 in operating funds. All donations remain local.

Several of the gifts were made in memory of Katie Frei, Alissa Brech, and Sue Sari; others honored current Affiliate supporters Joyce Purcell, Kay Purcell, Annette Despain, and our newest staff member, Sara Wallace. Some donors wrote messages of encouragement:

"I am proud to donate to Family Promise of Cowlitz County because they are doing what has to be done and they are doing it in the right way."

– Pati Tracy

"I am proud to give this donation to Night Without a Bed. This is just the first but important step toward ending homelessness in our community."

– Board member Ron Naff

Prize winners have been announced on our [Facebook page](#).

Our deepest gratitude goes to those who braved the heat dome and slept without a bed that night so others don't have to! And thanks so much to everyone who gave so generously to enable us to help those families and children who do.

We have big plans for next year's Night Without A Bed! We're inviting youth groups to get involved, and God willing, we will be able to gather to spend a night outside our own beds in a central location as well as in our own spots. Start planning where you'll spend your Night Without A Bed next June!

OUR AWESOME PARTNER CONGREGATIONS

Abundant Life Church of the Nazarene

Bethany Lutheran Church

East Hills/The Grove Alliance Church

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Evangel Christian Fellowship

Exodus Christian Fellowship

First Christian Church of Longview

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

Grace Bible Fellowship

Immaculate Heart Roman 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 the Nazarene

Longview Presbyterian Church

Longview United Methodist Church

Mint Valley Ward of the Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

New Song Worship Center

Northlake Church

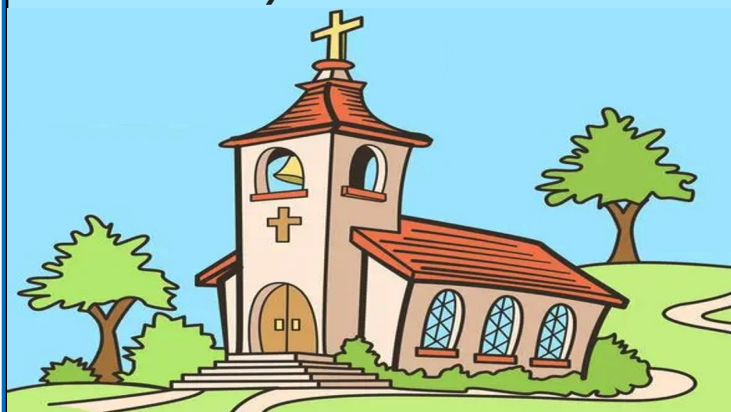
Renewal City Church

Rose Valley Friends Church

St. Paul Lutheran Church

St. Rose Roman Catholic Church

Trinity Lutheran Church



We've all heard that millions of Americans may be just one missed paycheck or one emergency away from being on the streets. There is no chosen group or exception. Homelessness can affect anyone. In fact, over 50 percent of American households are unable to cover a \$400 emergency expense. These individuals and their housing situations are vulnerable to job loss, illness, or other unanticipated events.

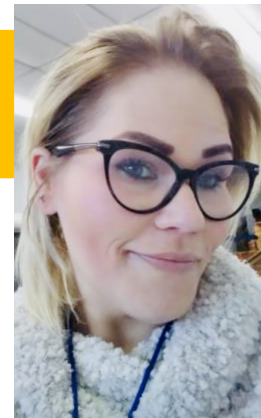
A family's overall health is directly tied to the stability and quality of their housing, among other factors. Overcrowded, defective, or dilapidated housing, for example, can create a host of hardships for the average American family. Losing your home entirely worsens these issues. Being homeless, having health issues, then suddenly your car breaks down—it seems the whole world is coming down around you and your mental health begins to fail. You seem to have trouble making rational decisions because you're in survival mode and out of choices. Homelessness can be so overwhelming people develop PTSD and other psychological trauma from these events.

A financially stable American family who has never been displaced or homeless often has the misconception that homelessness is always caused by choice or by the illness of addiction. But we see such a variety of tragedies that lead to homelessness. Here in the PNW, along with many other regions of the US, the cost of rental units has skyrocketed in the past two or three years, making it very difficult for a family earning minimum wage or headed by a single parent to afford a place of their own (see *Out of Reach* for an interactive map). That's made it hard, but many families will pay as much as 50% or more of their monthly income to try to stay housed. But sometimes things completely outside their control occur, and that's when it happens.

That's why we're introducing this series of articles on how homelessness actually has happened to many of the families we encounter. We'll cover more stories of *How It Happens* in future editions of *The Journey*.

How It Happens

by Sara Wallace, Case Manager



I. Mold and Other Homewreckers

One thing we can forget (until our home floods) is that environmental factors can affect our housing security. Each region of the country has its own environmental risks that can lead to homelessness. One example comes from two of our own graduate families.

The PNW climate brings massive amounts of moisture, and we are all familiar with the fallout: mold. This is an all too familiar issue amongst apartment renters. Every apartment dweller is warned not to put furniture directly against exterior walls. But in these families' cases, the apartments both had deferred maintenance and the mold was so bad it penetrated their furniture, every bed, every couch, each wood surface.

They did not have the income to save the thousands needed to move into a new place. Both families consistently asked property management for help with the mold issue, to no avail. In both cases, shortly after the health issue was discovered, the family was notified that the building had been condemned. The landlords had been given the choice to remediate the problem or the building would be condemned, and the landlords chose condemnation. These families had to leave the property with very little notice.

They searched for low-income housing and as-

nothing was available before their eviction. One family approached a shelter, which wanted to separate them because there were too many in the family for one room. It seemed hopeless. They ended up sleeping in their car for weeks (can you imagine sleeping in your car with no end in sight?), washing up where they could, using laundromats, and getting the kids to school, and then trying to hold down a job. They reached out to the church they attended and connected with Family Promise. We and YOU provided the safe place they needed, case management and support, time to begin searching, saving and a securing a stable home—and most of all, the camaraderie of the volunteers at their weekly host sites. Neither of these families had been homeless before, had a history of addiction, or any criminal record. They weren't lazy; in fact one family was so clean and organized, we were amazed at how they adapted and persevered through the trauma they'd experienced.

Each of these families worked hard and persevered, and finally found rentals they could afford. Five children finally safe and secure at home, because of your generosity with time, talent, and treasure and your faithful support of Family Promise. We were blessed to be part of their triumph over incredibly hard circumstances.

Families lose their housing in a surprising variety of ways. Some are what we imagine and others we may never have thought of. We'll cover more stories of *How It Happens* in future editions of *The Journey*.

"In both cases, shortly after the health issue was discovered, the family was notified that the building had been condemned."



We Are The Champions!

Family Promise of Cowlitz County was awarded a **Champion for our Community recognition** by Pathways 2020, an organization whose mission was to build bridges between human service agencies in Cowlitz County. Sadly, when its found, Paul Youmans, died earlier this year, the Board of Pathways 2020 decided to disband the organization. This recognition was awarded as their final one.

The citation reads, *"Because they have persevered through COVID to transition homeless families with children into stable housing and being productive members of the community."*

We owe this recognition in no small part to the work that our amazing Coordinators have done to help us through the pandemic. Your faithfulness and outreach effort with your congregation made it possible for us to continue our Affiliate's work to assist children and their families in housing crisis. We are so grateful for your flexibility and the community has noticed your perseverance.

We will hang the certificate proudly in our Day Center.

Extra Extra!



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



Bob and Kathy Erickson moved to Longview three and a half years ago from Tulsa, Oklahoma in order to be closer to their three grown daughters and two grandchildren. Their home in Longview locates them between family members in Lacey, WA and Portland, OR. They attend Immaculate Heart of Mary, in Kelso.

Having been involved with their parish in Tulsa, the Erickson's were attracted to Family Promise and the mission of assisting homeless families with children. They have been volunteers with Family Promise of Cowlitz County since the very beginning, and were part of the team at Immaculate Heart of Mary when the very first guests were brought in as Family Promise launched in 2018.

Bob has served as van driver for guests and box truck driver moving beds and equipment between churches, while

Kathy has served as the kitchen/food contact for St. Rose and Immaculate Heart. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, she also helps at the Day Center with clean up and house-keeping, especially after a family graduates and moves out.



"The Erickson's are terrific volunteers and indispensable helpers."

— Toni Miner, St. Mary's

Toni Miner, Family Promise coordinator for St. Mary's, says Bob and Kathy are "terrific volunteers" and are "indispensable helpers; Kathy always goes above and beyond the basics" in reaching out to families. *Thank you, Bob and Kathy Erickson!*



Sara Wallace Officially Joins FPCC Staff

Sara Wallace came to us as an AmeriCorps member in August, 2020 to help then-Case Manager Tracey Pruitt render services to our guests. Sara's intelligence, energy, and ability became apparent quickly. Though she began her journey with us in the middle of a pandemic with abnormal operations, complications, and constant change, she learned quickly and did a terrific job.

Sadly, Cowlitz AmeriCorps has decided to shut down operations. We'd anticipated two more terms with Sara, and when the closure was announced, we were concerned that we wouldn't have her back. But it was clear to both staff and Board that we didn't

want to lose her, so on July 19, Sara joined our staff as an employee officially, with the title Case Manager.

"Sara's been an excellent teammate and an effective case worker under difficult conditions, all while learning the organization and its workings. As sorry as we are about the end of AmeriCorps, we are just thrilled to have her coming onboard as an employee! And we're so grateful to Jenny Bergman, AmeriCorps Executive Director, for connecting us with Sara. This is just one example of all the valuable connections AmeriCorps has facilitated over the years between its members and so many agencies and schools in Cowlitz County." - Lisa Staudinger

Please join us in welcoming Sara as a staff member!



Family Promise of Cowlitz County Wins Help Us Move In "Homeless No More" Challenge Grant

Family Promise of Cowlitz County is excited to announce our Help Us Move In "Homeless No More" Challenge Grant, enabling us to begin a homelessness prevention and shelter diversion program to prevent children from becoming homeless in the first place.

Help Us Move In (HUMI), a Washington nonprofit dedicated to preventing homelessness, grants Family Promise Affiliates and other organizations matching funds to keep families from becoming homeless.

HUMI selected Family Promise of Cowlitz County as one of 13 Affiliates in the

US to receive the grant. Homeless No More is a two-year grant challenging communities to raise funds to match the \$10,000 per year award to ultimately raise \$40,000 per year to keep families housed.

The Affiliate plans to begin raising matching money at their Grand Reopening in a few weeks (watch for details!), which will celebrate our second anniversary.

We'll keep you informed of developments around this opportunity as we move forward.

Financial Update

2021 Annual Budget: **\$167,976**

2021 Contributions: **\$52,978.17**

2021 Avg contributions: **\$8,829.70**

2021 Volunteer hours: **556 hours**

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

DONATE TODAY!

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!



Family Promise Annual Report Wins APEX Award of Excellence

Family Promise of Cowlitz County’s 2020 Annual Report won an Award of Excellence in the 2021 APEX Awards for Publication Excellence in the category of Annual Reports – 1-2 Person-Produced. This report was produced by Lisa Staudinger, Executive Director of Family Promise of Cowlitz County, and Tony Faso, Graphic Designer at Minuteman Press in Kelso.

The APEX Awards is an annual awards program recognizing excellence in publishing by professional communicators. APEX Awards are based on excellence in graphic design, editorial content and the ability to achieve overall communications excellence. APEX Awards of Excellence recognize exceptional entries in each of the individual categories.

Competition in the 33rd Annual APEX Awards (2021) was exceptionally intense, with almost 1,200 entries. The Annual Reports category had 25 entries this year.

For further information on the APEX Awards, see “What is APEX and who sponsors it?” at <https://apexawards.secure-platform.com/a/page/FAQ>

Gifts & Gratitude

Business Donors

In the last year, these businesses and organizations have supported us and the community through their donations. Please support them and thank them for their support.

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

Minuteman Press

Network for Good

PEO Sisterhood Chapter IL

Performance Sheet Metal, Inc.

Redwood Toxicology, Inc

Sign Masters Awards

Solid Rock Cruisers

Wilcox and Flegel Fuel Oil Co.

In-Kind Donors

By donating everyday items to Family Promise, these donors in June made a difference in the lives of families experiencing homelessness who are working hard to regain sustainable independence.

East Hills Alliance Church

Allison Hutchinson

Ken Kendall

Toni Miner



Financial Donors

These donors' gifts in June offer families facing homelessness the promise of home.

Nancy Althof
Anonymous
Alan Barkman
Karla Bean
Mariya Belden
Daryl Berg
First Baptist Church of
Longview
East Hills Alliance Church
Emmanuel Lutheran Church
Northlake Church
Renewal City Church
Frances Crosby
Barbara Davis
Ruth Earnest

Bob Erickson
Ilene Faling
Greg Filer
Dan Frei
Trudi Gross
Amy Hamilton
Howard Hammond
Sarah Hines
David Hoffman
Jackie Keller
Ronald Kimmel
Thomas Kirwan
Dave Knoyle
Louis Locke
Donna MacKenzie

Jim MacLeod
PayPal Giving Fund
Pr. Dave Martin
Louise McAuliffe
Rev. Vonda McFadden
Stella Lutheran Chapel
Toni Miner
Ron Naff
Eugene Pistoese
Doug Radke
Veronica Sethre
Claudia Sobczuk
Danielle Trimble
Mary Wingate
Ann Wright
Jamie Zabkar



**Thank you,
Emmanuel
Lutheran
Church**

Emmanuel Lutheran Church raised funds for Family Promise of Cowlitz County at Go Fourth! by opening their parking lot during the Cardboard Regatta. They charged \$5 to park and donated the resulting \$577 to us. The Cardboard Regatta is the point of highest parking demand during the festival, and Emmanuel has done this fundraiser for Family Promise since 2018 (missing 2020, of course, as we all did!).

Thank you to Pr. Dave Martin, former Board President and current Board member, and to the whole staff of Emmanuel for their help with this fundraiser. Special thanks to Carrie Grimm for reminding Pr. Dave about doing this after the Year That Shall Not Be Named.



MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work." – Paul, 1 Cor 12:4-6

Family Promise is a complex operation, and our community is full of many types of talent. We need YOUR God-given gift to help us carry out our mission.

- Do you like to write? We would love for people to help us write articles for the newsletter!
- Are you a good proofreader or editor? Everyone likes a second pair of eyes on what they write before it gets published!
- Do you like to tinker and incite others to tinker too? We need a small group to help us maintain our facilities (minor repairs, arranging for major ones, helping us when we need to move stuff around, etc.). If you're interested, please contact the Day Center.

At Your Service

Board of Directors

Pr. Vonda McFadden	President
Karl Salzsieder	Vice President
Linda Davis	Treasurer
Dan Frei	Interim Secretary
Pr. Dave Martin	At-Large
Ron Naff	At-Large
Leticia Casarez	At-Large
Pam Torgerson	At-Large

Day Center Staff

Lisa Staudinger	Executive Director
Sarah Wallace	Guest Support Assistant
Jamie Craig	Administrative Assistant

Email Newsletter Editor: [Steve Sheridan](#)

Print Newsletter Editor: [Richard Shuren](#)

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Visit our website at:

www.fpcowlitz.org (Cowlitz County)

www.familypromise.org (National Organization)

Or on Facebook at:

www.Facebook.com/FamilyPromiseCowlitzCounty

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United Way of Cowlitz
& Wahkiakum Counties