

September 9, 2015

Dear Friends of Family Promise of Greater Chattanooga,

When we think of homeless individuals, we often think of single men and women, many of which are suffering from mental or substance abuse issues.

But have you ever considered the plight of the homeless family? In Chattanooga there are hundreds – solid, loving family units trapped living on the streets. They are good people caught in dire straits, and most are there due to no fault of their own – often crushing medical bills or total loss of employment, or a combination of both.

They were a family of six. Dad, mom, two adolescents, an infant child, and another son in college. Mom was disabled with mental illness. Dad worked as a cook at a local restaurant. They were homeless.

We are Family Promise of Greater Chattanooga, an organization dedicated to keeping families together and off the streets. We serve all family configurations, including two underserved groups: two parent families with children and adolescents and single fathers with children and adolescents. And we need your help.

Their rental home had been condemned. They lived in their van, until it got too cold. They doubled up with cousins on their sofa and floor. There was no extra money or savings to rent another home and pay move-in costs, utility fees, or security deposits.

We believe stable families increase the likelihood of a more stable society. We are dedicated to helping families in need by offering food, transportation, day and overnight shelter, training and education, supportive services and one year of follow-up services to ensure stability and a return to self-sufficiency. That is our Family Promise.

Luckily, they found the Centralized Intake Program at Family Promise of Greater Chattanooga (FPGC). Soon they had a temporary home in a motel used as an emergency family shelter. At night, they slept in the motel and during the day, they stayed at the FPGC day center, accessing laundry facilities, internet and computers to find employment and housing, and life skill classes. A professional social worker at FPGC provided them guidance, accountability, and access to supportive services.

The Family Promise model is unique among agencies providing shelter for families in need because it does not subscribe to institutionalized shelters as a solution.

An opening became available at the FPGC Overnight Shelter Program and the family moved into their temporary housing in area congregations. For twelve weeks, the family received meals and hospitality from volunteers at Chattanooga's houses of faith.

But we need your support, and so do they.

The family met weekly with the social worker, working on the goals and objectives of their self-sufficiency plan, moving them closer to stability and a return to self-sufficiency. While with FPGC, the family's accomplishments were many. Dad continued working at the restaurant, mom attended GED classes, and counseling. Two of the adolescent boys attended summer school and GED classes while the daughter began working two part-time summer jobs.

We are proud to say we get results at Family Promise. Eighty percent (80%) of the families we serve transition to permanent housing, and our programs are cost effective. With over 5,000 volunteers annually providing \$637,000 in donated labor, we are able to leverage three times our current annual budget. That's right – **we are able to spend every dollar you generously give like it's three.** One hundred volunteers assist us every week, making the cost per individual served one-third the cost at similar public programs.

Mom and dad attended SMART Classes for money management and learned how to be good tenants. FPGC assisted the family secure a Housing Choice Voucher through the Chattanooga Housing Authority and locate housing in the Glenwood area. The family remains stable, employed, housed, and connected to supportive follow-up services at FPGC.

In fact, it's been suggested your donations are worth ten times their nominal value through the 'multiplier effect' in their contributions to our local economy, tax bases, and communities.

Today, dad continues to work at the restaurant, and is now being trained as a server. All the kids are back in school, and the daughter is still working part-time. Mom is continuing her GED tutoring and counseling. The journey back to home successfully accomplished with a return to self-sufficiency.

Your support makes it possible for families in need to return to stability and self-sufficiency as contributing members of our Chattanooga community.

Above all, **Family Promise enables families to escape the circle of poverty while staying together.** We believe in our families, and we believe in you, Chattanooga. Please give generously.

Sincerely,
Mary Lynn Morse
Board President