



FAMILY PROMISE
BRYAN-COLLEGE STATION

Hospitality

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

SEPTEMBER, 2008

THE LOCAL SITUATION

- In 2007-2008, there were **142 homeless students identified in Col-lege Station School District**
- In 2007-2008, there were **304 homeless students identified in Bryan School District**

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Strength in Numbers

There is truth in the saying, "There is strength in numbers," as those involved with Family Promise Bryan-College Station have discovered.

Local congregations, businesses, students, and general public have all gotten involved to get Family Promise BCS up and running to help the desperate needs of homeless families in the area.

"One of the strengths of the Family Promise program is the sense of community that develops among the volunteers who work with the program. We have already seen that happen as we have planned fundraisers, recruited churches, and solicited donations and work crews for the Day Facility. Vol-

unteers and community supporters get a real sense that they are

year—a TREMENDOUS commitment. Host churches provide

three meals per day for the families in the program, saving the community approximately \$250 per week. Host churches have gathered donations such as clean linens, baby blankets and toys, from their church members to ensure guests feel welcome and comfortable. During host week,



Day Center Renovation Volunteers

helping families and children in a concrete way," said Ann Park, Board President. Nine area congregations have committed to being host churches for 1 week, approximately 4 times per

Houses of worship become temporary homes in which families are treated as guests and individuals are accepted as they are. The kindness of hosts helps to diminish the hurt of homelessness. Without these volunteers, there would be no Family Promise of Bryan-College Station Network.

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Family Promise BCS Welcomes New Director

Family Promise Bryan-College Station has hired a new director. Aimee Myers, a native Texan, began working for the network on July 7th when she moved her family from Pennsylvania to Col-lege Station. Aimee is trained in structural family therapy and multi-systemic therapy. "I have spent

almost my entire career working with low-income and underserved populations. That is my passion—advocating for and helping those who need it the most", says Aimee.

"In recent years, I have also longed to be part of a program that has a large impact on the

community. I'm so blessed to have become a part of this—I can help families directly but I can also be part of helping volunteers to become touched by their experiences and helping the local community make changes to better the lives of low-income families".



Aimée Myers,
Network Director

“Dear God, I just wanted to say thanks for letting me stay at your house for a while. I’ve got to go now, but I’ll come back to visit. I promise.”

Quote from Tisha as she leaves the IHN in children’s story, [Some Place Like Home](#), available at www.familypromise.org

From Aimée’s Desk...

What a BUSY few months for Family Promise! This summer, we have completed our training, formed board committees, finalized host church schedules, and secured a property for our day center. And yet, there is still so much to do!

Not only have we secured a property but we’ve also been faced with organizing and funding renovations for our day center, the hub of our operations. We’ve been setting up our technology and furnishings that will make our day center operational.

Those are the major start-up projects—the ongoing projects our board committees have begun are fundraising events planning, marketing and public relations tasks such as this newsletter.

As the Director, I have the pleasure of participating in all the board committee tasks while maintaining my focus on the case management and collaboration part of my position. I’ve been enjoying becoming involved in local organizations and sharing our program with our referral sources. Through

my interactions with community agencies, I am reminded on a daily basis that Bryan-College Station is ready for us. There is particularly a lack of shelters for homeless families in this area.

The word is spreading—I have already received phone calls from three families in need of our program and we have not even announced our opening date, yet.

My hope is that as you read this newsletter you will be inspired to find ways to help our families that are personally meaningful to you, just as I have.

How Homelessness hurts kids

Children who experience homelessness are obviously stressed by the event itself—losing their homes and their belongings and watching their caregivers struggle emotionally are just a few of the stressors they endure. But all too often, by the time they are homeless, they have endured a history of circumstances such as extreme poverty, fractured social supports and witnessing or experiencing violence that put them at risk for a variety of personal challenges.

The statistics related to the impact of homelessness on children are alarming and heartbreaking:

- Homeless children are sick at twice the rate of other children.
- Homeless children go hungry twice as often as non-homeless children.
- They are twice as likely to repeat a grade as compared to nonhomeless children and have twice the rate of learn-

ing disabilities.

- Half of school-age homeless children experience anxiety, depression, or withdrawal as compared to 18 percent of nonhomeless children.
- By the time homeless children are eight years old, one in three has a major mental disorder

For more information, see www.homeless.samhsa.gov

The truths behind homelessness

Advocates for the homeless and politicians often debate the true causes of homelessness—some argue that deinstitutionalization (removal of mental state hospitals) put more mental health patients on the streets. Others argue that the increase in drug use in our country is a primary cause. Still others argue that downtown revitalizations have pushed out opportunities for low-income housing.

There seems to be truth in all of these theories. A 1999 Survey by the Texas Homeless Network surveyed 1720 people in shelters, cars and the streets. This population would not have captured families doubled up or living in deplorable housing conditions.

- 59% were single men/18% were single women and 23% were families

- 10% reported substance use as the cause/5% reported mental health was the cause
- 19% reported unemployment as the cause
- 16% reported they couldn’t afford their housing

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Eric Barton, Volunteer

There's even more that volunteers are doing to support this network. Community volunteers have also banded together to donate flooring, appliances, and sweat labor to ensure the day center is renovated on time and ready for the October 6th opening date. "Local businesses

have been overwhelmingly generous as we have asked for help in remodeling and furnishing our Day Facility. Each time they hear how many school children have been identified as homeless in Bryan-College Station, they are visibly moved and ready to help", continued Park.

Some volunteer as a way of modeling their faith. Others volunteer as part of the mission of their organization, and others have a personal passion for helping families in need.

Amanda Childress, Volunteer Coordinator for Christ United Methodist said she had been looking for a way to serve the community after she read a powerful book, Same Kind of Different as Me, but she



Painting the day center

didn't know how until she found Family Promise. "Sometimes when we feel called, we're not sure if it's God, or our own voice, and for me, there were just too many signs telling me this is what God

wanted me to do—God was winking at me!"

Thank YOU!!!!

CLUB 274 Donors

Bruce Miles
 Jim Locke
 Rodney & Debbie McGlothlin
 Gene & Wand Wood
 Freda Wood
 Susan Bowen
 Friends
 Congregational Church (UCC)
 Chuck Mahaffey
 J.C. & Margaret Wessels

BUSINESSES

Atmos Energy
 Surplus Warehouse
 Stephens Furniture and Appliances
 Morrison Supply
 Buddy's Appliances

How Family Promise Works

Family Promise of Bryan-College Station is an Interfaith Hospitality Network, supported by Family Promise, a national non-profit organization. Interfaith Hospitality Networks (IHNs) all have the same basic ingredients—a shelter component, meals, transportation, and case management.

Our network can host 5 families at a time, no more than 14 people. Families stay with the network for free, from 2 weeks to

about 90 days.

During their stay, they spend their evening and night at host churches for one week at a time and then rotate to the next church on Sundays. Families eat their evening and breakfast meals at the churches, and leave in the mornings with their bag lunch. A network van picks them up in the morning and transports them to the day center where families spend their day looking for work,

housing, doing laundry, showering. Children are transported by school buses to and from school.

The Director spends time with each family developing goals and plans that will ultimately lead to permanent housing. Families are required to save a minimum of 50% of their earnings while in the program. This helps them to pay for deposits, previous debts and helps them to get ahead when they leave the program.

The Day Center - Home away from Home

The Day center at 1806 Wilde Oak in Bryan, is home away from home for our families. Families can use the day center as their permanent address, use the phones, receive messages from employers, do laundry, shower, and store their personal items. At the front entrance is our reception area.

The Director's office is where families meet privately with the director to develop goals and get emotional support. Through a hallway begins the family spaces—a room dedicated to children's play, a kitchen for dining, a laundry room, a bathroom, and a living room. The living room is

where families relax, play games and use the computers for job and housing searches. This space is designed to encourage families to spend time together and reconnect.



Family Promise Day Center



Family Promise Bryan-College Station

1806 Wilde Oak Circle
Bryan, Tx
P.O. Box 11232
College Station, Tx 77842-1232

Phone: 979-268-4309
E-mail: familypromisebcs@gmail.com

A community response for Homeless Families

Family Promise of Bryan-College Station is an area-wide, volunteer-based nonprofit organization that supports families by providing shelter, meals, and support services to homeless families. The program is affiliated with the nation-wide Family Promise in Summit, New Jersey. www.familypromise.org

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The truths continued...

- 10% reported the cause was domestic violence
- 18% reported the cause was divorce/argument with partner

The results mirrored other surveys and basically confirmed all the theories. Here's the truth: Homelessness can be caused by any number of the following factors: domestic violence, unemployment, lack of affordable housing, substance use, divorce or break-up with partner, and mental illness. A myth that this survey and other surveys have broken down is that homeless people don't want to work (in fact, the majority of the people interviewed in the survey expressed the desire to work or were working already!). The reality is that homeless families all too often are trying hard to contribute and be independent, but they face so many barriers it is impossible for them to suc-

ceed. Take a single mother of 2 preschool children who is a nurse's aide and works 40 hours per week, making \$8 per hour (\$12,960 per year, \$1,080 monthly). The average rent in Bryan-College Station for a 2-3 bedroom apartment is \$400-\$500. The average full-time child care for 1 preschool child is \$480 per month (\$120 per week). For 2 children, this single mother would pay \$800-900 per month, even if she was discounted for having 2 children. Her day care costs alone would use the bulk of her salary. The rest would go towards utilities, hygiene products, food, transportation costs... There is no way for this single mother to work full-time and pay for housing, day care and basic needs. It is often a slippery slope—even if she finds cheap day care, one event could turn their lives upside down (the car breaking down, a few days without pay due to a sick child, for example).

Family Promise fills a void for a population of homeless that does not easily access aid and that suffers tremendously from the effects of homelessness—families with children. We help families maneuver the systems of aid, save money for emergencies, and find solutions to their situations. We help them find hope. And they need *that* most of all.

Family Promise Bryan-College Station Network Congregations

A&M Church of Christ
A&M United Methodist Church
Christ United Methodist Church
First Baptist Church College Station
First United Methodist Bryan
First United Methodist College Station
Friends Congregational (UCC)
Our Saviours' Lutheran Church
Peace Lutheran Church