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Family Promise[®]
of Greater Modesto

Homeward *bound*

NEWSLETTER OF FAMILY PROMISE OF GREATER MODESTO
Empowering families to overcome homelessness and regain their independence.

Homelessness is a situation, not a character trait



Every week at Family Promise of Greater Modesto, we see families struggling to make ends meet. At least once a week, a mother breaks down in tears, or a father walks away to gather himself, as each tells their stories about being homeless. A single mother loses her job, a father loses his job, a family loses their home because they can't pay the rent, still another loses a family member or is recently divorced, losing a primary source of income. Affordable housing for most of these families is very difficult to find. While people lose jobs or their monthly state assistance is reduced, the cost of rental housing remains the same or increases. For these reasons, families are making up 40 % of the homeless population nationwide. This year's Stanislaus County's Housing Authority's bi-annual homeless count, showed an increase in the number of

homeless families from 2007. Compared to 81 unsheltered families in 2007, we saw 165 in 2009. Last week, our Case Manager received a call from Stockton's St. Mary's Interfaith Community Services shelter, asking us if we had any empty beds available. We were at capacity.

In response to this crisis, Family Promise of Greater Modesto collaborates with 11 congregations in our community to provide a safe and supportive environment to help homeless families get back on their feet. We offer an opportunity for people of faith to participate in helping reduce homelessness in their community.

And we do this with others doing the same across the states. In 2008, 10,386 individuals or 3,226 families were served

by Family Promise nationwide. 6,160 of these were children. In Modesto we served 32 families with 56 children. As the needs continue to rise, Family Promise reaches out and makes a difference, family by family, volunteer by volunteer.

Host Congregations

- Almond Valley Church*
- First United Methodist Church*
- Modesto Christian Reformed*
- St. Joseph's Catholic Church*

- Davis Park Church of Christ*
- Geneva Presbyterian Church*
- Modesto Church of the Brethren*

Support Congregation

- Unitarian Universalist Church*

- Emmanuel Lutheran Church*
- Immanuel Christian Reformed*
- Modesto Covenant Church*
- Wellspring Angelican Church*

VISION: A nation in which every family has a home, a livelihood, and the chance to build a better future together.

Celebrating Family

Thanks to staff and volunteers, our families are able to celebrate holidays and special occasions like birthdays. This spring, Sonia and her family members, along with Sandra and her son, went with Gina, Teresa and Leonel and their families to Chavez Park to celebrate spring and Easter with the community. The children participated in sack races, an Easter Egg hunt, hula hoop contests, and played in a bounce house and had their faces painted. It was a good day for family fun. In addition, Almond Valley Christian Reformed Church colored eggs and had an Easter Egg hunt with the families and had Easter baskets ready for each child Easter morning. All the children were thrilled about all the celebration and eager to share their joy with us.

On July 4th, the Immanuel Christian Reformed church hosted the families for the day. Thanks to Tim & Cathy Hollander, everyone had a great day of swimming and bar-b-que, helping the families feel like they were participating in a true July 4th celebration. Later in the week, Adrianna celebrated her 10th birthday with cake, party hats and gifts.

Thanks to all our volunteers for helping our families feel welcomed and celebrated!

Denise's Story

People come and people go. Sometimes they stay with you. They become part of you. Their story is one of the reasons for



why you do what you do day after day.

So it is with Denise. She came to Family Promise in August 2008 and stayed until February 2009. At first, Denise was unsure of herself; she didn't look directly at people or talk to them very often. She was in a hard place in her life, not comfortable in her own skin. As she grew to know the staff at Family Promise and the volunteers in the churches, she slowly began to open up. As time went on, she became more sure of herself, more comfortable with her surroundings and the routine. Denise and her children didn't have any other family nearby so, as she moved through the church rotation and she came to know the volunteers, she became quite talkative about all that was going on with her and her daughter, Desaray. Family Promise staff and our volunteers became her surrogate family. She shared about her son Daniel, whom she was trying to gain custody of.

Denise took the program seriously. She was working with the Courts and with a case worker from another organization to get her life in order

so that she could get custody of Daniel. During her stay with Family Promise, she completed twelve weeks in the First Steps program in Ceres. She worked hard at fulfilling all the requirements of the court regarding custody of Daniel. She worked with a case worker who recommended her for one of their organization's Section 8 housing vouchers. It is a testament to her dedication that she did win one of the vouchers and then found a house to move into and even helped in getting it ready. One of the last things that she needed to accomplish before she could gain custody of her son was to be able to provide him a home. Once she was able to do this, she regained custody of Daniel and in August, she will go before the court to have her case closed regarding his custody.

Denise has been in her house since February and is very determined to maintain her home and to succeed in the goals she has set for herself. Denise is much more at ease with herself than when she first came to Family Promise almost a year ago. She has said her time with us helped her to want to make better decisions in her life and provided her a home when she had none. She considers us her second family and has stayed in contact since she left. In fact, on Mother's Day she called to wish Sandra a Happy Mother's Day because she couldn't miss calling her family on this special day.

Denise and her family are Family Promise at its very best.

From the Executive Director

Welcome to the first newsletter of Family Promise of Greater Modesto! I am thrilled we have volunteers like Lynn Evans and Barbara Barker of First United Methodist Church to support us getting this off the ground. It is my hope this newsletter will draw all of its readers closer to the many positive things that happen there at Family Promise. As we look around in our community today, there could be many reasons for us to feel hopeless; however, there are places that provide hope amidst the apparent despair. We are one of those places, as our guests frequently attest to. Recently, Janie said, "This program is the best one I have been a part of." What a testament to all of you for caring for all those who are in our program. We may not always realize the impact our time and energy has on the families we host, but I trust as the lives of our volunteers, staff and guests cross paths, many good things happen well beyond our knowing.

Thank you for all you give to our families!



Sandra Franklin
Executive Director

Volunteers Are Appreciated

On May 17, 2009, over 100 volunteers were welcomed by staff and board members at the 1st annual Volunteer Appreciation Event held at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, also 'home' to Family Promise of Greater Modesto's office and Day Center. Sonia Ramirez (Coordinator of Volunteers), Leah Knipe (board member), Brenda Morris (board member) and members of Sandra Franklin's family worked together in the kitchen to prepare finger foods and set up for the event. Board members contributed gift items for the appreciation gift giveaway.

Sandra welcomed everyone to the event and introduced board members and staff who were present. Brenda gave a brief history of the program and expressed appreciation for all that the volunteers do. Sandra then gave an update regarding the current status of the program then each congregation's volunteers were recognized and given a certificate of appreciation. A gift give away was then held – raffle style-

lead by Dirk Hoek (board President). At the close of the event, all participants who had not seen the office and Day Center previously, were invited to tour the facilities. Overall, the event was a



wonderful success! Special thanks to all the volunteers who came and participated. It was wonderful to share this time together!

In Ripon at the Immanuel Christian Reformed church, a special Volunteer Appreciation luncheon was held by the church. Approximately 75 people shared a great meal together. Special thanks were given to Carol Postma for all she does as the Immanuel Coordinator.

We were delighted to be able to share this time with the many volunteers who attended these events. Without all of our volunteers, we would not be able to fulfill our mission to build communities and strengthen lives of homeless families in our community. Keep up this good work of service!

About Our Website

If you are reading this newsletter, you already know about our website! However, we just wanted to make note of some of the features we hope to keep updating here. I, Sandra, anticipate writing a blog and hope to update it weekly on the news and events of Family Promise. We also will have a calendar of events and the congregational hosting schedule. In addition, donations can be made to Family Promise through our website. So, keep your eyes on the website for news and more information!

www.modestofamilypromise.com



Board of Directors

Dirk Hoek, *President*

Dawn Cunningham, *Vice President*

Debra Buckles, *Secretary*

Linda Goodman, *Treasurer*

Glenn Hutsell
Jennie Johnson
Leah Knipe
Brenda Morris
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More Ways to Help!

Online Shopping

Imagine if every time you logged onto your computer to do a search or your shopping online, you earned money to support homeless families in your community. You can do that through GoodSearch.com and GoodShop.com. To search, go to: www.goodsearch.com; to shop, go to www.goodshop.com. Under 'who do you support?' type *Family Promise of Greater Modesto*. For every search, a donation will be made to *Family Promise*. For every purchase you make, the store will donate a percentage of your purchase price to *Family Promise*.

So put a **Good Search** and **Goodshop** sticky note on your computer to remind you next time you search or shop online!



www.goodsearch.com

www.goodshop.com

S.H.A.R.E.S Program

Sharing with the families we serve is easy with the S.H.A.R.E.S. card. By simply shopping at SaveMart or FoodMaxx and using the S.H.A.R.E.S. card when you check out, 3% of your total purchase will go directly to *Family Promise of Greater Modesto*. Imagine, if 50 families spend \$200 a month, they will be providing \$300 a month worth of support towards families who are homeless in our community. Get your S.H.A.R.E.S. card by calling Sonia Ramirez at 261-0857.



2301 Woodland Avenue, Suite 8
Modesto, CA 95358
(209) 549-9454