

Building community, strengthening lives

BUILDING HOPE

NEWSLETTER OF FAMILY PROMISE OF HAWAI'I

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Family Promise changed our lives

By Charles

My family and I were renting an apartment in Waipahu but the landlord didn't want to extend the lease. We were staying at a hotel until we ran out of money and were forced to live on the streets. It was very difficult for us especially because my girlfriend is pregnant and my children are under the age of five. We feared being on the streets and getting into situations that would harm my family. It was difficult and exhausting keeping my children comfortable since we were constantly moving to areas of the island that seemed safe. It was hard to find an emergency shelter that could accommodate us. We needed help right away.

I had done some research on housing assistance and found out about Catholic Charities Hawaii. They quickly referred us to Family Promise where we received the support my family needed. Family Promise provided my family and me with our basic needs including shelter, meals, diapers, baby wipes and transportation. Because of this, it was a lot easier for my family and me to save our money. During our stay we also had a case manager who helped out with our budgeting and savings, setting program goals, and professional and personal goals like eating healthier and reducing my cigarette intake. Family Promise helped us find early

intervention services through the Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii and the Department of Education since our oldest will be attending school next year.

We participated in a financial literacy program and learned the importance of putting our needs before our wants. I also learned that I needed to be more responsible with my expenses. I learned how to budget my money, which has helped me save money for rent and other things crucial to my family's well-being.

While staying at the congregations, it was nice to get advice from other adults and listen to what they had gone through themselves. The volunteers made our weekly stays delightful. My children also enjoyed playing with the other children since it was a bit difficult to make friends because of our situation.

Family Promise has changed our lives for the better. During our stay I was able to get a full-time job as a warehouse worker. They helped us get into a housing program and we are moving in this week! Family Promise has empowered me and my family to succeed so we do not experience homelessness ever again. We are very excited and grateful. I can't wait to have a place of my own to share with my family.

FAMILY PROMISE CONGREGATIONS

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Central Seventh Day Adventist Church
Central Union Church
Christ Church Uniting Disciples and Presbyterians
Christ United Methodist Church
Church of the Crossroads
Community Church of Honolulu
First Baptist Church of Honolulu
First Christian Church of Honolulu
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Japanese Seventh Day Adventist Church
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Kailua Christian Church
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St. John Lutheran Church
St. John by the Sea Episcopal Church
St. John Vianney Catholic Church
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St. Luke's Episcopal
The Church of the Epiphany
Windward Christian Church
Windward Unity Church



THOUGHTS

MARY SAUNDERS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It became clear something was amiss

On August 22, Family Promise held its third annual 5K Fun Run/Walk in Kailua. Nearly 400 participants came out to show their support to help house more of Oahu's homeless families. The Pali Lions Club also presented a \$10,000 Weinberg check to Family Promise. Mahalo to our sponsors, volunteers and participants for a great day!

Family Promise of Hawaii continues its commitment to end family homelessness. In the first six months of this year, we assisted 130 parents and children; 100 percent of our families have at least one parent employed full-time; 15,240 meals were served; 5,080 shelter bed nights provided; and 19 families have found new homes.

Recently a family in our program reminded us that unexpected events can drastically change the course of someone's life. While in our program it was revealed that a mother was being repeatedly abused by her husband. He thought he was clever by not harming her while at our day center or at a host site, however, through intense case management it became abundantly clear that

something was amiss in their relationship. Jamie admitted that David had started abusing her when she became pregnant with their first child.

We released David from the program, but Jamie and her two young children stayed. Jamie attained a temporary restraining order against David. In the meantime, her sister on the Mainland purchased one-way tickets for Jamie and her two children to come and live with her until they could get back on their feet. Jamie told us that she would never have had the strength or resources to leave David without our help.

Jamie's account reminds us that all of our families have different stories and have come to need our services in different ways. Our goal is to increase our number of host sites. The recruitment of new volunteers continues with a capacity building grant through Hawaii Community Foundation's HousingASAP program.

We truly believe that with increased collaboration we can end family homelessness in Hawaii.



Pali Lions Club presenting the \$10,000 Weinberg check.



STORIES

CHRISTY MACPHERSON, PROGRAM MANAGER

Housing search frustrating, rewarding

Finding a place to live is the biggest challenge the families in Family Promise face. It takes a lot of energy and determination to constantly look in the paper and on the Internet, call landlords and make appointments. When they work so hard saving their money and finally have enough to start looking for a place, they are so eager and excited! But some experience rejection so many times it really takes a toll on their spirits.

I have become irritated and upset when calling rental management companies on behalf of our families and am told, "They need to make three times the rent." I say to myself, "Who makes three times the rent in Hawaii these days?!" It is almost too frustrating for me to handle. I have increasingly shied away from referring families to rentals managed by companies like this since it seems to be a dead end. Not to mention the families pay \$25-\$40 per adult just to apply and it is clearly a waste of their hard-earned money.

When families become frustrated searching for housing, we give them as much encouragement as we can, reminding them that *many* of our families have to visit 10 to 20 rentals before they get a place. We have to be cheerleaders to keep them motivated. And so they keep plugging along, knowing we are behind them 100 percent.

Because most of our families have poor

or no credit, a lack of rental history, and are low-income, it is hard to convince landlords to give them a chance. However, being in Family Promise and having a social worker who can provide a strong recommendation really helps.

I recently talked to a property owner who met our family and really liked them, but had some reservations. She asked me about their ability to pay rent on time, whether or not they were "party-ers," and about any domestic violence. These are very typical and valid concerns. I was able to tell her wholeheartedly that we have thoroughly enjoyed having this family in our program, that I strongly believe they will be able to pay their rent because both parents are working, and that the father can even do landscaping around their house because that's what he does for a living.

After our conversation, I had a really positive feeling that she would end up renting to our family. I didn't want to inform the family because I didn't want to get their hopes up only to be disappointed since they REALLY wanted this place. When I walked in to work the next day, they excitedly told me they got the place. It was music to my ears!

Family Promise not only gives families that boost of confidence they need to go out and look for housing, it also provides references they would not otherwise have.



Some of our many participants during the Family Promise of Hawaii 2015 Fun Run.

FAMILY PROMISE OF HAWAII

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KAILUA CENTER

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Kailua, HI 96734
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WEBSITE

www.familypromisehawaii.org

MISSION

"To mobilize existing community resources to aid families with children experiencing homelessness and help them transition to sustainable independence."

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Family Promise of Hawaii is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Send tax-deductible donations to the addresses above.



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Over the past 8 years, Emmanuel has raised nearly \$47,000 for Family Promise of Hawai'i through this event. Let's continue the support!