



Family Promise Week Off and Running!

Family Promise Week kicked off on October 16 in Summit, New Jersey, with Pursue the Promise, an innovative event to raise awareness and funds for the national leader addressing family homelessness. Organized by the Family Promise Club at Summit High School and students from Governor Livingston, Oratory Prep, and Westfield High School, the event brought together more than 60 students and offered local teens a glimpse into family homelessness and ways to get involved.

Students recruited teams and organized their own challenges for an Amazing Race-style event that

included educational components about family homelessness. The challenges were run at host sites around Summit where guest families are provided emergency shelter through the Family Promise program.

Pursue the Promise also served as the launch event for Share the Promise, a semester-long student giving campaign aimed to raise \$25,000 for Family Promise's work. Student musicians from Summit High School will perform at the organization's upcoming fundraiser, Fall Fling on November 4. Students will take part in a social media campaign for Giving Tuesday on

November 29 and organize an item drive, "Wall of Wishes" for families leading into the holidays.

The fourth annual Family Promise Week is an opportunity for more than 200 Affiliates nationwide to celebrate their successes, recognize the work of their volunteers and, perhaps most important, raise awareness of the crisis of family homelessness in their communities. Affiliates hold fundraising events, open their facilities to the public, recognize the contributions of their congregations, and reach out to local officials and media to promote their work.



Let the games begin...

Inside this issue:

Taste of Hope Gala	2
The Gift of Giving	2
National News	2
Recycled Rides Program	3
Upcoming Events	4
The U-Turn Teen Program	4
One More Note...	4

Special points of interest:

- National Family Promise Week
- Taste of Hope Gala
- Recycled Rides Program
- Upcoming Events
- The U-Turn Teen Program

Taste of Hope Gala a Big SUCCESS!

TASTE OF HOPE is an annual fundraiser that provides critical operating funds for our program, especially for replacing our worn out 15 passenger van! This years gala was held at The Crowne Plaza of Reading on September 21, 2016. We celebrated the many



years of success in lifting Berks County families out of the unimaginable circumstance of homelessness, and teaching them how not to be homeless again.

In previous years we had “Restaurant Wars” themes and “Chef Cook-Offs.” However, this year FP of Berks wanted to celebrate with an event which included a formal sit down dinner. There were live testimonies from former guests of our program and live and silent auction items. We were also honored to have Xaiver “Xman” Gerald to sing “Break Every Chain.”

THANK YOU to those who attended and generously supported our mission. Over \$10,000 was raised toward a newer van, as well as funds for oper-

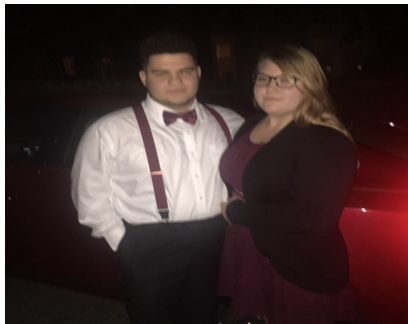


ating expenses. We are now looking for that newer 15-passenger van, so if you know of one, please let us know!

Thank you all so much for what you do for our families and for the program. We are looking forward to another year of promise and hope!

The Gift of Giving

One of our families currently in the Network program is Lynn Diaz and her son Christopher Torres and Samuel Manon. A special story developed from our Taste of Hope Gala. A few



weeks before the dinner, Christopher came to Mr. Lee with a situation that he was very concerned about—his homecoming dance was October 8th and he wanted to attend with his girlfriend. It was a formal dance and he needed the proper

attire. Armed only with the faith that *God will provide*, Mr. Lee promised that they would find a way.

While at the TOH Gala, an owner of a local men’s clothier offered to provide Chris with everything he needed to be the best dressed man at the homecoming dance!

National News

The sad fact is that for every three low-income renters, there is only one affordable unit available, pitting one family against each other in a vicious game of musical chairs. The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NHLIC) tells us in its annual GAP report that there is a shortage of 7.6 million affordable housing units in America today.

In fact, there is no state in America where a minimum wage worker can afford a fair-market two-bedroom



It would take an unrealistic 90 hours of minimum wage work to come up with enough money to rent a modest apartment.

There is no getting around it – affordable housing is critical to solving homelessness. While there may be many precipitating causes to a family’s homelessness, few would actually result in homelessness if housing were made affordable for low wage earners.

Continued on page 3

National News (continued...)

Ending homelessness is within our power. Affordable and successful housing models abound. Yet what we lack are the financial resources to invest in what works. To meet this critical need, Congress created The National Housing Trust in 2008 to provide a permanent, ongoing, dedicated source of income to build and rehabilitate housing for the lowest income households. However, it was to be funded by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and the Recession of 2008 stalled the program for nearly a decade.



Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac recovered, and this year, the first funds of

The National Housing Trust, \$174 million, are to be divided among 50 states and released. While this is a start, it falls woefully short of the estimated \$1 billion the trust was to receive annually before the Recession intervened.

A long-time friend in the fight to create affordable housing has been Representative Maxine Waters (D-43, CA), who in 2016 proposed the Ending Homelessness Act, which aims to appropriate \$13 billion over five years. Five billion dollars of that funding is slated to go to the National Housing Trust Fund. Yet, as of today, the bill is still working its way through Congress. In the meantime, a decent and affordable place to call “home” remains elusive for too many.

Yes, home. It is something we can so easily take for granted. But it is where everything begins. It is where we nurture and care for our children, find respite after a long day, share laughter and create memories. It is where we gather with family and friends, enjoy a home-cooked meal and feel safe as the night closes in. Alison and Jordan now have this; however, The struggle goes on for millions of others in search of this dream.

We know how to end homelessness. Yet the question of whether we have the political will to ensure that every family can have access to a safe, affordable home remains unanswered.

Recycled Rides Program

Most of us take transportation for granted. But for many people, routine activities such as going to work, taking kids to school, grocery shopping, and medical visits are a challenge. A catastrophic illness or unforeseen circumstances can suddenly change lives and without transportation, make it difficult to get back on the road to stability.

Recycled Rides is a unique program in which insurers, collision repairers, paint suppliers, parts vendors and others collaborate to repair and donate vehicles to deserving individuals and service organizations in local communities



throughout the country.

Over 1,000 vehicles have been donated through the National Auto Body Council’s Recycled Rides program since its inception in 2007.



Thanks to the efforts of many NABC members, the program’s ripple effect has made a positive difference in the lives of thousands of individuals who have received vehicles or benefited through the services provided by nonprofit organizations who have been recipients of Recycled Rides.

FP of Berks has participated in this program for several years. This year’s recipient is Laticia Evans. On Friday September 2nd, Laticia was presented the keys to a newly refurbished 2010 Nissan Altima from Faulkner Collision of Lancaster, and GEICO as part of the National Auto Body Council’s Recycled Rides™ program. In addition, several sponsors gave gas cards, a new car seat for King and a gift card for school clothes to Unique.



We want to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in making this program a major success!

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 28, 2016

Cardboard Village Sleep Out—99 Waverly Street, Shillington PA 19607

For youth in Grades 7-12 and their adult advisors Hosted by Immanuel United Church of Christ – 99 S Waverly St. Shillington Friday, October 28 @ 7:30pm through Saturday, October 29 @ 8am. Purpose: To gain a greater



awareness of what homelessness looks like and how we can respond as individuals and community. To fundraise for programs that serve teenagers who find themselves without a reliable place to call “home”. Activities: (including but not limited to...) Create cardboard shelters in which we will sleep on at the IUCC campus. Simulation games that highlight the varying



causes and situations of homelessness Prepare items to be shared with the community on Oct 29 at the Walk To The Bridge event @ Queen City.

February 25, 2017

Berks County Parrot Head Club CABIN FEVER

Berks County Parrot Head Club will be celebrating Family Promise of Berks County at their winter 2017 Cabin Fever event!

U-Turn Teen Program

Why We're Here

Family crisis is the most prevalent reason youth and young adults identify for becoming homeless. By federal definition, a youth is considered homeless if they are still in high school (or eligible to attend HS) and is under the age of 22, and not living with their parent or legal guardian. That covers a lot more people than you would think! Each school year we receive at least 100 calls from homeless student liaisons in Berks County school districts for service and serve approximately 45 teens with ongoing services. In 2013, all students working with the program gradu-

ated high school and 5 continued on to college. (Others went into the military, job corps, trade schooling or secured full time employment).



What We Provide

- Mediation with the family to seek reunification
- Intensive case management with the youth

- Practical items such as extra food, bus passes and laundry facilities
- An address to receive mail
- Advocacy services to assure the youth will receive the care needed, such as staying in their school district of origin.

The director of this program at FP is Summer Gaskin. She goes to the schools of Berks County to offer service to the school districts as well as the teens who are facing the danger of homelessness.

One More Note...

Homeless for the Holidays: Many families out in the Cold

Some kids don't want iPads, Xboxes or Frozen dolls for Christmas. They just want a place to call home. As we enter the season of



Thanksgiving and Christmas we are reminded that there is a troubling rise in homelessness among America's poor families; which means more kids will be figuratively—and sometimes literally—left out in the cold this holiday season.

All around there are constant reminders of the events of the season—the Thanksgiving meal, having a tree to decorate, and of course the Christmas gifts.

For kids, safety comes from predictability. They need routine in their lives. They're in that constant state of trauma and this takes its toll on kids' physical and mental health. Let us remember to pray for those families in need.

