



...a publication highlighting our work to help low-income families achieve independence.

**A message from the President...**

**Dear Friends,**

I've traveled hundreds of thousands of miles for Family Promise over the years, and whether I'm visiting Affiliates near the Florida shores or the Ohio farmlands or the Washington peaks, there are distinct differences from place to place. But there's always one constant no matter where I go. It's called kindness.

I've seen it over and over again – volunteers, congregations, whole communities providing kindness to neighbors in need. Kindness is contagious. It can change a bad day to a good one. It can even change lives.

Simple kindness might just be the most underestimated gesture of all. You don't need to donate a thousand dollars or a thousand hours of service. One hour of volunteering can bring about amazing change. Twenty dollars can feed a family.

Volunteers often undervalue the power of what they do – individually and collectively. As one guest told attendees at a recent Family Promise celebration, "You might be with us for one shift but there's a good chance we'll remember your kindness for a lifetime."

Kindness is not just serving a home-cooked meal to a hungry family. As one mother explained, "Volunteers put love in the food, and that's what makes a world of difference." Kindness is not just reading to a sad or frightened child. It's the essential act of compassion that will lift that child's spirits. Kindness is not just a house filled with donated furniture. It's the

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**Renewing the Promise, 20 Years Later**

**N**ew Jersey Governor Jon Corzine delivered opening remarks at this year's Family Promise National Conference in Morristown, New Jersey, an event marked by a milestone 20 years of service. He articulated his experience with the organization as a "remarkable example of faith-based initiatives," representing "the very best concept of hospitality."

The Governor also proclaimed that homelessness continues to "atomize individuals and cause a cycle of social breakdown that needs to be defeated once and for all."

The duality of his remarks aptly echoed the event's official theme – "Celebrating Achievements, Renewing Our Promise." There was time to be joyful. There was time to be mindful. But by all accounts, efforts to renew the "promise" were in full view throughout the dynamic three-day forum.



*Family Promise President Karen Olson with New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine.*

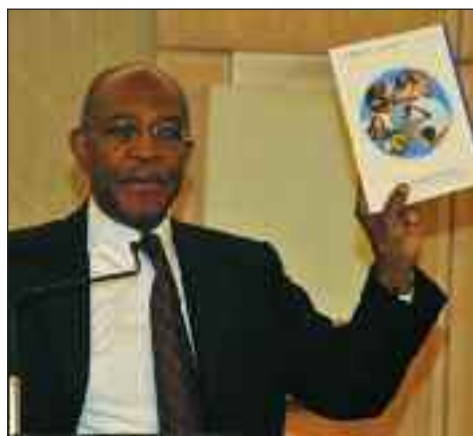
Over 300 Family Promise Affiliate directors, staff members, board members, congregational leaders and former guest families modestly acknowledged the fact that their concerted efforts have transformed one quarter of a million lives since inception.

Attendees were also keenly mindful of the myriad trials that lie before them. Education and networking sessions addressed challenges and choices ranging from potential strategic partnerships to policy initiatives on affordable housing, healthcare and jobs.

The renowned Reverend Dr. James Forbes of New York City's famed Riverside Church delivered a rousing discourse on how the right balance of community and spirituality can move us through history toward a brighter future. He peered into a rapt audience and declared, "A new America is coming – I can see it in your eyes."

Best-selling author and lifelong education advocate Jonathan Kozol lamented how social and educational

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*Keynote Speaker Rev. Dr. James Forbes. In reading Family Promise's 2007 Annual Report, he observed that "something is happening on earth that is reflective of what heaven is all about."*

## President's Message,

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daily reminder of caring and comfort that transforms a house into a home.

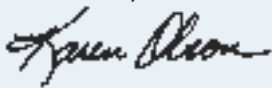
Family Promise works because of the collective effect of volunteers, administrators and supporters like you who offer kindness in a million different ways throughout the year. Financial advice. Health screenings. Auto donations. Job assistance. Childcare. Makeovers. Quilt-making. Birthday parties. Quiet conversations. Warm hugs.

Yes, the holidays are truly a time for kindness. But so is any other day. And what's most remarkable about a simple act of giving is what you get in return — pure joy.

Family Promise is joyful about helping 250,000 family members over two decades. As one mother said so perfectly, "I now have hope for a beautiful future."

Happy Holidays to you and thanks for your sincere kindness.

Sincerely,



Karen Olson  
President

## Welcoming our new affiliates ...

LORAIN COUNTY, OH

COEUR D'ALENE, ID

MONROE COUNTY, PA

WARREN COUNTY, NJ

SEATTLE, WA

BEAUFORT, SC

LEWISTON, ID

NATICK, MA

COLLEGE STATION, TX

SOUTH PALM BEACH COUNTY, FL

# Family Promise and Habitat for Humanity Team Up With a Common Goal

In communities across the country, low-income and homeless families will benefit from a closer relationship between Family Promise and Habitat for Humanity International. Driven by common goals and compassion for those in need of shelter, the two headquarters are working together to assist families in need and reach out to the wider community to educate others about how they can help their neighbors.

Family Promise's 136 affiliates will be encouraged to partner with one of more than 1,500 Habitat for Humanity affiliates in the United States to educate and mobilize faith communities and the general public about poverty issues. "We've had a long-standing relationship with Habitat, from training volunteers to helping families secure Habitat housing," says Karen Olson, President of Family Promise, "and we're thrilled that this cooperation can make such a difference for our communities."

Family Promise has already teamed up with some local Habitat for Humanity affiliates to serve families throughout the country. In Warren County, N.J., for instance, Habitat volunteers helped rehabilitate the day center for the new Family Promise affiliate. In Greenville, S.C., the Greenville Area Interfaith Hospitality Network, a program of Family Promise, is joining forces with the local Habitat affiliate to provide complementary services: Habitat will build transitional housing funded by

GAIHN, and GAIHN will provide ongoing family support services for Habitat families.

Habitat affiliates have been using the faith-based *Just Neighbors* toolkit (a Family Promise product) for years: training staff and volunteers,

educating board members, recruiting congregations and even fundraising. Bob Johnson, formerly of the Global Faith Engagement department for Habitat for Humanity

International and now a Family Promise consultant, explains, "*Just Neighbors* is an excellent tool for informing minds, inspiring hearts and encouraging hands to action."

In October, *Just Neighbors* was part of the training curriculum for 500 AmeriCorps and Vista members, and work is underway to develop a Community Service Edition and Habitat-specific study guides for the program. One AmeriCorps member from Philadelphia said, "I am more likely to continue in activism and service after AmeriCorps because of *Just Neighbors* than any other experience this year." ■

*"Just Neighbors is an excellent tool for informing minds, inspiring hearts and encouraging hands to action."*

*"Just Neighbors was part of the training curriculum for 500 AmeriCorps and Vista members."*

# The Power of the Family Promise Network

**F**amily Promise of Las Vegas Director Terry Lindemann was surprised by a phone call she received this past spring from a family service case manager working for the state of Michigan. The woman was about to retire, she told Terry, but had to try just one more time to find the birth son of a woman who'd contacted her. Thanks to the Internet, and by way of Family Promise, she'd found him.

One of the first families Terry had worked with when she joined the Affiliate in 2004 was Mitchell, his wife Theresa, and their son Jerod. They'd been guests of the IHN for three months, and moved into their own apartment with help from the network staff and volunteers. The family stayed in touch with Terry, participating in mentoring and other programs, and Theresa helped out as a volunteer. Even after leaving the IHN program, the services and support from the



*Mitchell with his birth mother, Barbara*

Affiliate were "awesome," says Mitchell, and invaluable as the family got back on its feet.

After their stay, Mitchell wrote a thank-you letter to Family Promise, grateful for the compassionate support his family received. "If we didn't have that kind of help," he recounts, "we would have been spiraling and we would be homeless again." With his permission, his thank-you was posted on the Affiliate's website. By chance, the case worker in Michigan found the

note online, and, because they'd stayed in touch, Terry knew just where to find Mitchell.

This past May, accompanied by his adoptive parents, Mitchell finally met his birth mother, Barbara. "I'd always wondered where I came from," he says, "not so much for myself, but for my children," including Jerod and young daughters Sabrina and Josephine. That wondering is over, and Mitchell and his family are now in regular contact with Barbara.

Terry gets tears in her eyes, she says, when she remembers how often he used to talk about finding his mother. Family Promise "not only assisted Mitchell and his family with finding a place called home," Terry says, but "through our ability to stay connected with our families over the years and the wonder of the Internet, a lifelong dream has come true for mother and son." ■

## Conference, from page 1



*The Family Promise Choir rehearsing for the Sunday Interfaith Worship Service.*



*Family Promise Board Member Robert Hugin addressing attendees.*

segregation continued to be the pipeline to homelessness. Kozol remarked how important it is for compassionate, enthusiastic people, like this Family Promise audience, to be a part of the lives of low-income children. The "experts," he said, "talk about these children in terms of their future economic potential, not their value as the wonderful little people that they are."

Especially fascinating were plenary and workshop sessions in which former guests recounted their successful journeys through the Interfaith Hospitality Program. C.J., Cynthia and Regina have since graduated to lives no longer defined by their former homelessness. Each woman is now an active advocate on behalf of Family Promise, working to "break the cycle" for the next

generation, as Cynthia noted, to "train them in a different way."

The conference provided priceless opportunities for give-and-take among attendees. For as different as each Family Promise community is, the Affiliates share many of the same struggles and successes. "The amazing thing about Family Promise is that it brings together people who care from so many different traditions and backgrounds," observed Rachel Falkove, director of the Northwest Philadelphia IHN. "We have such an opportunity to motivate people, to whatever degree they can help."

Family Promise Founder and President Karen Olson closed the conference with a moving keynote addressing the very essence of voluntarism. In reflecting over twenty years of achievement, Karen remarked that "the real celebration must always lie in the continuation and perfection of essential work every day hereafter." ■

## Family Promise

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**Family Promise®** is a national volunteer-based nonprofit organization founded on the belief that Americans are compassionate people who want to make a difference. We are committed to help low-income and homeless families reclaim and maintain independence through our five program areas: Interfaith Hospitality Networks provide shelter, meals and support services to homeless families; Family Mentoring provides trained volunteers to assist low-income families; Just Neighbors educates communities about poverty; Community Initiatives foster the development of programs that prevent homelessness; and Public Policy supports initiatives to promote economic stability for low income families.

## Family Promise is grateful for the support of our 2008 Sponsors.



**SAVE THE DATE!**

## Family Promise 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Event

Baltusrol Golf Club  
Friday, May 1st • 7-10pm

*Cocktails, Buffet and Auction*

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