



New Beginnings

Building community, strengthening lives.

Address

1019 Central Avenue
PO Box 455
Great Falls, Mt. 59403

Web Site: www.familypromisegf.org

Staff

Sharon Odden - Executive Director
Peggy DeCelles - Case Manager
Tom Gorman - Driver
Anna Skinner - Driver
Donna Powers - Sunday Staff
Emili Miller - Saturday Staff

Board of Directors

Kate Triplett - President
Les Stevenson - Vice President
Terree Wozny - Secretary
Marv Strom - Treasurer
Pastor Tammy Bull
Dale Schwanke
Tim McGonigal
Judy Held
Becky Pugh
Dee Strauss
Trisha Gardner

Director's Message

As executive director of Family Promise of Great Falls, I am thrilled to be able to provide a report of our activities and successes in our first nine months of operation in our inaugural edition of the New Beginnings Newsletter.

Since opening our doors on January 11 of this year, we have welcomed 17 families into Family Promise of Great Falls. Those families are made up of 41 children and 22 adults. Ten families have moved into permanent homes and all ten of them remain in their homes as of this date. We have four families with us now, our maximum level. Two of these families have secured housing and are awaiting the final paperwork. The remaining two families are working hard to find housing. We have only had two families who found that living in community such as required here, did not meet their needs and they moved on.

The other day one of our former guests was using the computer outside my office to work on her resume. Out of the blue, I hear her say, "Sharon, I love you!" I answered, "I love you too! What brought that on?"

She said, "I was just sitting here thinking that we wouldn't be where we are now, in our house, if it hadn't been for you!"

Now I get it! What she meant was she would not have been able to concentrate on getting a job and finding a home had it not been for the countless volunteers who had lovingly worked so that her children went to bed in a warm, safe place every night, with full tummies. Without the help and persistence of Peggy our case manager, she would not have connected with all the service agencies that came together to make her dream come true - beds with the help of the Veterans Administration through Vista and a Veterans housing voucher with the help of the

American Legion, as well as many community contacts and agencies working together. And her home, though very modest and scantily furnished, she describes as the house she has always dreamed of!

So this concept works and will keep on working and we thank all of you reading this who have played a part! Without volunteers, donations from individuals, foundations, churches and businesses as well as prayer support we could not do it! Thank you for helping to make dreams come true and new beginnings happen!!

Many Blessings
Sharon Odden

Hub (Day Center) Update

Since the open house last January, the Family Promise Hub has really evolved.

Located at 1025 Central Avenue, the Hub now has two waiting areas, one just outside the entrance and the other inside adjacent to the case manager and executive director offices.

The inside waiting area also includes a counter with a work area, which has two computers. Executive Director Sharon Odden explained that this area is used by guests searching for both housing and employment. Children also use the work area to play games.

The kitchen is now complete with new cabinets, countertops and appliances. Odden says that staff and guests lived in a fish bowl for some time until window treatments were installed.

The addition of art makes the Hub warm and inviting. The Hub's large and open dining and living room has a play area with an air hockey table and shelving with games and toys.

This living area also includes a crib for napping youngsters and a recently purchased stroller. There's another computer in the kids' area.

Great Falls Early Childhood Coalition comes in once a month to stock a reading nook, which provides books for children and adults. There is also a selection of periodicals available for guests.

A utility room, located off the living area, contains a new washer and dryer, shelving for supplies and a huge sink, which is used to bathe babies and toddlers.

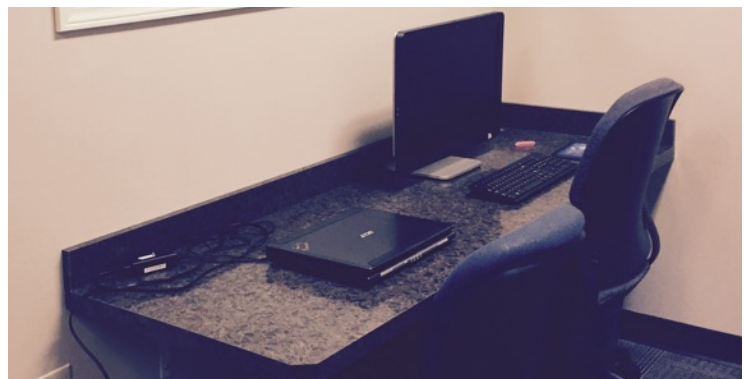
The latest addition to the Hub is four large closets in the living area. Since Family Promise can host up to four families at a time, each family will have their own closet in which to lock up their belongings.

"People say they feel really comfortable here," adds Odden.



Outside Waiting Area

Inside Waiting area with
Computer Desk

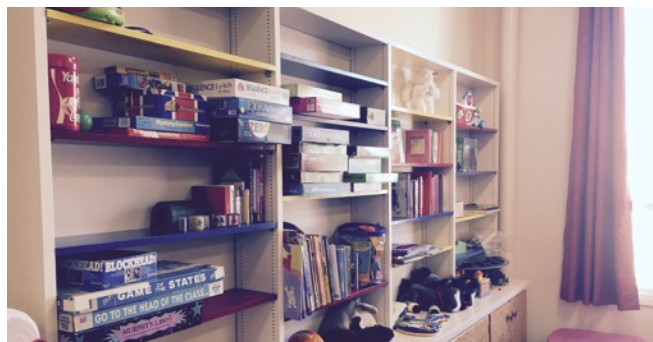




Kirchen Areas



Living / Dining Room





Staff Profile

Meet Executive Director Sharon Odden

A Great Falls native, Sharon Odden moved to California for a few years as a child before returning to Montana and graduating from Big Sandy High School.



Originally a teacher, Odden later received a master's degree in career guidance and counseling. She worked 15 years at Easter Seals Goodwill and then eight years for the State Children's Mental Health Bureau. She was the first regional program officer for central Montana handling 11 counties.

Prior to joining Family Promise, Odden was retired for two and a half years. Odden says she and her husband, Daryle, cut a deal when she decided to come out of retirement and "he does everything but the ironing!" Odden completed a two-year program through ECLA and became a lay pastor in June.

She has two daughters while Daryle has two sons. They have 14 grandchildren and two great grandchildren with another due to arrive in February.

In her free time, Sharon enjoys camping, reading and music. She sings in her church choir. She also spends time at the gym.

There have been some bumps in the road during the first nine months, but "things are going more smoothly," explains Odden. "I think we've learned a lot about screening families in the last months," says Odden. "We're getting good at finding out what we need to know before they start." Odden adds that the quicker families find their own housing, the better. Studies show that families are more successful with follow up, and Family Promise is trying to provide that needed case management.

"This is a fabulous way to end my career," says Odden with a smile, "the career I thought was already ended."

This is the first in a series of staff profiles.

Current Host and Support Congregations

Host Congregations	Support Congregations
Our Savior’s Lutheran Church	Redeemer Lutheran Church
First Baptist Church	Latter Day Saints 5th Ward
First United Methodist Church	First English Evangelical Lutheran Church
Episcopal Church of the Incarnation	Quaker Society of Friends
	Union Bethel AME
First Congregational UCC	Christ United Methodist Church
Seventh Day Adventist Church	Latter Day Saints 4th Ward
Holy Spirit Catholic Church	
New Hope Lutheran Church	Living Grace Church
Central Christian Church	Corpus Christi Catholic Church
Bethel Lutheran Church	Latter Day Saints Two Rivers
First Presbyterian Church	

Congregation Profile

Holy Spirit Catholic Church



In the fall of 2012 when the idea of bringing Family Promise to Great Falls was first discussed, Holy Spirit Catholic Church didn't hesitate to agree to becoming a host congregation. They were the first congregation to do so.

Kathie Malby, the coordinator for Family Promise at Holy Spirit said it took her a little longer to recognize what was involved. Her first reaction was she thought she could make some sandwiches. When she attended the coordinator's orientation she recognized what a huge undertaking this would be. She knew they would need to get the whole congregation involved. Kathie said she recruits volunteers every time they prepare to host and she thinks they have at least 150 volunteers currently.

Holy Spirit has the unique opportunity of hosting the families in an actual house. The Monsignor Joseph Gluszek Hospitality House has been a part of Holy Family Church building since the 1930s. It sits between the chapel and Holy Spirit Catholic School. Kathie said the house was being used mostly for storage and to house an occasional visiting priest.

The house is small but very cozy. Holy Spirit's youth group totally cleaned the building to make it ready and all the furnishings were donated by members of Holy Spirit. Kathie said hospitality is first and foremost to her and the volunteers she recruits.

They love having the guests there and work hard to make them feel welcome. Kathie greets the guests when they arrive on Sunday with a smile that truly says "You are welcome in our home."



Washington Foundation Grant Press Release

Family Promise of Great Falls receives \$30,000 in grant funding

Family Promise of Great Falls has secured a grant that will greatly help the agency fulfill its mission of helping homeless families in north central Montana.

Family Promise of Great Falls is a non-profit, interfaith program that provides a community response to homeless families with children through shelter, meals, and comprehensive support services.

The organization received a \$30,000 grant from the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation. It will be spread out over three years at \$10,000 per year.

"I was surprised and thrilled that we were able to obtain this generous financial gift," said Great Falls Family Promise Executive Director Sharon Odden. "It will go a long way in helping us meet our goals."

According to Odden, the grant money will cover operational costs such as laundry supplies and personal care products, plastic bins and pillows as well as bus passes and gas cards. The grant will also help pay building rent, utilities and paper and printing costs.

Since opening its doors in January of 2015, Family Promise of Great Falls has worked with 11 member Great Falls area churches and 10 supporting churches. To date, the organization has served 14 families with 30 children and 16 adults. Family Promise of Great Falls has also placed seven families into permanent homes.

Events

Mayoral Proclamation



Great Falls Mayor Michael Winters made the proclamation for National Family Promise Week alongside Family Promise of Great Falls staff and board members on October 6.

Salute to Women Award

Our amazing director, Sharon Odden, was selected by the YWCA of Great Falls as a Salute to Women honoree. She was formally recognized at a ceremony on Saturday, September 26! Way to go, Sharon!



Current Program Needs

Freezer

Laundry Soap

Swiffer Wet Jet Refills

Packets of Aspirin, Tylenol, Ibuprofen

Children's Fleece Blankets

Basketball Hoop

Pillows

Towels

How You Can Help

We will be getting our own trailer soon. We would like to give local businesses the opportunity to invest in our program and we will put their logo on our trailer. For a \$1,500 investment, they can have their their logo seen all over town on our trailer. Anyone wishing to take advantage of this great advertising opportunity can contact Sharon Odden at sharon@familypromisegf.org.

Family Promise is a United Way organization. If you make a donation to United Way, you can designate it to go to Family Promise of Great Falls.

If you would like to receive future newsletters electronically and in color, please send your email address to sharon@familypromisegf.org.