



2016 Community Report

Family Promise of Hunterdon County, once again, responded to the emergency needs of families in crisis. In 2016, we served fourteen homeless families, including a total of 41 people; of which, 25 were children. Over 90% of those families who left our shelter in 2016 left to move into permanent housing. Thanks to our ongoing case management and a lot of hard work on their part, all of those families are doing well. We love the chance to cheer on parents as they get jobs and often, move onto better jobs to support their family. Two of the families who moved out of shelter in 2016 are pursuing an education. All of these families are very grateful for the love and care that they received from our volunteers. This kindness and respect will stay with them for a very long time.



*Building
Communities,
Strengthening
Lives*

SECOND CHANCES

Brad and Patricia

For many people, drug addiction is a dirty little secret. That is, until it isn't.

Drug addiction altered Brad and Patricia's life to such an extent that they became homeless. Although Brad was never in the Family Promise of Hunterdon County's (FPH) homeless shelter, his wife and two daughters were with us as a direct result of his addiction. He's not proud that he led them into homelessness, but he is proud of the remarkable progress he's made since then. An overdose made him realize the extent to which he had hurt his family. That tipping point led him into rehab. Brad has now been clean for two years and is once again able to provide for his family so they never become homeless again.

From the depths of dad's addiction and a homeless shelter for mom and girls, this family has made incredible strides. Once Donna helped them find housing they could afford, Brad and Patricia both set upon a path to stability. Brad now works full time at a family-owned convenience store. Patricia works as a home healthcare aid and loves her job because she connects well with her patients. She also gets home in time to meet her daughters when they get off the school bus every day so she has no child care issues. They have been able to maintain their housing, build credit, and have just purchased a used car. They're even talking about being able to take a Disney cruise with the girls some day!

Patricia is extremely grateful to FPH and especially all the volunteers. She admits that she was very scared when she came into the program, but the volunteers were so wonderful that she was put at ease very quickly. Her



circumstances were so stressful that she loved having someone kind and caring to talk to every day. When the kids get older, she looks forward to having the time to be a volunteer host herself.

Based on their experience, Brad and Patricia have a message: "Don't be afraid to ask for help. There are good people out there who want to do good things. Some people have too much pride to ask for help, but you have to ask for it when you really need it. If it weren't for you guys we wouldn't be where we are now."

We are in awe of this family and so happy to help them go from homeless to housed and beyond. FPH not only provided a place to go when Patricia lost her housing, but we helped them on a path to self-sufficiency. A big thanks to all our volunteers who showed love and care and supported this family on their journey.

2016 Achievements

\$573,158 estimated in-kind donations of volunteer time, real estate, transportation, meals, furniture and supplies for our guests.

SHELTER provided for
14 FAMILIES
25 children and 16 adults

3,136
shelter nights provided by our
volunteers

92% of families exited the shelter into
permanent housing.

57 FAMILIES
received Christmas gifts from our
"Adopt a Family" program.

Welcome New Host Site!
**The Lebanon Baptist Camp will house
our families for two weeks in 2017**

21 FAMILIES
were helped through our mental
health program

Can't They Just Get a Job?



People are often surprised – sometimes shocked even – when we tell them that families in our shelter often have jobs. Many people assume that if someone is homeless, they're probably unemployed too and that's part of why they are homeless.

But more often than not, that is not the case. Although it's hard to comprehend, many people can be working, often full-time or close to it, and still be homeless. Indeed, our program is more than just shelter. It's a program designed to help families achieve long-term stability. For our families, getting there can be a long and frustrating process and far too often, it's a tall order. We see firsthand that the gap between "I am working" and "I am stable" is enormous. Here's why.

According to a draft of the county's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness: "The math is simple yet sobering: according to the United Way of Hunterdon County, 50% of the jobs in Hunterdon County pay less than \$20/hour (and these jobs will account for 75% of new jobs over the next decade). The HUD-determined Fair Market Rent for a 2-bedroom apartment is \$1,654/month. Add to that complications such as limited affordable child care and the high cost of personal transportation often necessary to get to employment, and it becomes obvious how a slide into homelessness is likely for many Hunterdon County residents."

In our client families, we see increasing fragility that puts to rest the notion that just getting a job is a solution. In addition to the cold, hard facts of income and housing costs here in the county, several other factors contribute to and complicate the issue. We use an analogy of a four legs of the table: housing, employment, child care and transportation. For our clients, striving as they most often are to get to a place of stability, those four legs are rarely sturdy.

Housing: Again, fair market rent, which HUD uses to determine program eligibility, in Hunterdon County is \$1,296/month for a one-bedroom and \$1,654 for a two-bedroom apartment. What's more, the inventory of housing is very limited. In fact, county-wide vacancy rates dropped to 3.2% in 2015 from 5.9% in 2010. Availability of HUD-defined "low income" housing is at best extremely limited and at worst, non-existent.

Employment: According to the Hunterdon County United Way, 50% of jobs in our county pay less than \$20/hour. As of the fall of 2016, there were 121 open jobs in the county. Of those, more than half (67) were in retail, restaurants, and transportation; jobs that paid \$9 to \$17 per hour. Only 12 of those 121 jobs paid more than \$25 an hour, according to the state Department of Labor. So even if a family has two wage earners, they would have to earn over \$3,300/month or close to \$11 an hour each for a full 40 hours a week to keep their housing costs below 50% of their total income. Yes, many folks can (and do) work two

jobs but getting those scheduled around each other is challenging, particularly when child care is involved.

Child Care: In order to work, parents must have access to free or deeply discounted child care. Facilities that accept NORWESCAP vouchers have been closing and many that accept the vouchers now require a subsidy payment of up to 20% (sometimes \$100/week). That subsidy is out of reach for minimum wage workers earning \$250 to \$400 a week. What makes the situation even more challenging is the fact that child care centers are not typically open on nights and weekends when many restaurants and retail establishments have available shifts.

Transportation: In Hunterdon County, our clients need reliable transportation to work because convenient public transportation is simply not available. FPH has car donation and Neighbors in Need programs to help with limited private funding. But the four to eight cars we typically receive each year only meet a fraction of the actual need. And the cars most clients have are older so they end up struggling with high maintenance and repair costs, which they can rarely afford.

The Unstable Table – A Case Study

Jessica and Anthony (their names have been changed) have one pre-school aged child. They both have GEDs but neither has a college degree. One has a criminal background from a long time ago that requires the payment of fines over several years. Both parents work between 30 and 40 hours each at minimum wage jobs. They have access to reduced cost child care, but it's not available on nights and weekends so they have to manage their work schedules carefully. Anthony got on overnight shifts that paid him \$1.00 more per hour. Not only is the extra money helpful, but he can take the LINK bus home in the morning. For Anthony to get to work in the evening, Jessica has to bundle up their daughter and drive him.

So far, so good, right? Well, because they both work, they receive very little in SNAP (food stamp) benefits and they have no housing assistance to offset their \$1,000 monthly rent plus about \$200 a month in utilities. Now subtract costs for day care, auto, food, and other basic necessities, and there is very little, if anything, left. Incredibly, they make it work. Each month is stressful as they manage down to the last dollar. After moving into our shelter from living in their car, they are very grateful have a home for their daughter.

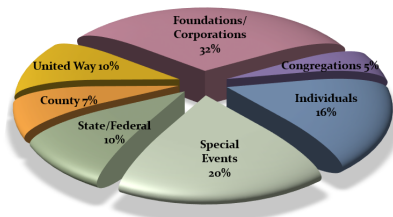
As you can see, Jessica and Anthony's table is incredibly unstable, and it will take years to change that. Without the financial help and case management from our agency and others, this family would easily spiral downward. And their story is not uncommon.

So the answer is far, far from, 'Hey can't they just get a job?'

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

We remained fiscally strong with diverse sources of funding for our operating expense. We manage several restricted government grants when funding is available. However, we are nimble enough that we don't have to staff up or down whenever we gain or lose program funding. In other words, we do not rely on this funding to function or operate our shelter program. It's also important to note that this funding is often critical to being able to keep community residents in their homes (through the Homeless Prevention Program or HPP) and to rapidly re-house those who are homeless (through the Homeless Prevention/Rapid Re-Housing or HPRP). That said, the breakdown of all of our sources of operating funding for 2016 shows our diversity in funding:

Family Promise of Hunterdon County
2016 Funding Sources for Operating Funds



Shining a Light on Right at Home Daycare

Right at Home Daycare in Lebanon Borough is no ordinary daycare. It is arranged to resemble home and made to feel very much like a loving home by owners, mother and son team Margie and Mike Marcucci. Margie's sister, Carmela (aka Miss Mel) Leap has been the director since the day care opened. Right at Home was the brainchild of Margie, who founded the center 18 years ago.



Margie wanted Right at Home to feel like home and be "like a giant playdate" and not be institutional. So she and Mel focus on inclusion and kindness in their daycare with the hope that the message sticks with the children long after they leave their care.

We are huge fans of Right at Home and consider them a full-fledged partner in our efforts to stabilize our families. One of the four legs of the table required for family stability is child care. The majority of our shelter families are headed by single parents, so having access to high quality, affordable child care is critical. Right at Home prides itself on its ethnic and socio-economic diversity. It's a place where all are welcome and absolutely everyone is made to feel "right at home."

Although Right at Home families come from many different economic backgrounds, Margie, Mike, and Mel have a deep understanding of the unique needs of families who come from Family Promise. They know that many parents struggle with guilt over leaving their

children to go to work, and see firsthand how much of an issue a lack of reliable transportation is for families who are struggling to make ends meet. They see the incredible stress in parents trying to juggle work, home, and kids on very tight budgets. So they do whatever they can to alleviate the stress of the cost of child care and will reduce or eliminate an excess fee when they can. Theirs is a strategic business decision that, while noble, does have a negative impact on their bottom line. Margie's response? "Though we cannot save the world, we think we're here to save our little corner of it."

We like the way Margie thinks when she says that "if we all support these families together, it's easier to help and it's not a burden on everyone. When we raise people up, all people, then we are helping to balance the scales."

Thank you to Margie, Mike, and Mel, and the rest of the Right at Home staff for the loving care they give these children and for supporting our families in their efforts toward long-term stability!

FAMILY PROMISE STAFF

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