

CONCORD CONSIDERS PARTICIPATING IN “FAMILY PROMISE” PROGRAM SUPPORTING HOMELESS FAMILIES

The Greater Concord Interfaith Council has invited a consultant from Family Promise, a national organization with a successful program for helping homeless families find their way back to a home, to help Concord faith communities discern whether we can support a Family Promise program in the Concord area.

This program has been run successfully in other states and there is a group in the Seacoast area of NH that has been in this type program for 7 years, a group in Nashua that is up and running and a new group is starting up in Salem-Derry area. The Salem-Derry group is still in the planning stages and not up and running yet. It will take 18 to 24 months to get this program organized to take in families. Families stay on the national average 58 days in the program.

It is recommended 13 churches be involved so each church hosts the families one full week per quarter or 4 times a year. A host church takes in the homeless families for an evening meal, evening of games, visiting or homework assistance and sleeping quarters for one week at a time. Then the families move on to the next church. Host churches should have space for about 16 beds, meals and a kitchen. There is no cost to the host church other than perhaps increased cost for utilities during the week that church has the families stay there. Maybe the evening meal would be in the church budget, or members of the congregation can donate it all. If there is more than 13 churches, some extra churches can be donors for meals or on committees. Adults get a light breakfast before going to work or school. Children eat breakfast and lunch in their schools.

A day center is needed on a permanent basis. The day center provides an address for these homeless families to receive mail and social services as needed and a place to keep their personal belongings. The director will have an office in the day center. There will also be a couple of rooms available for social services or counseling. The main room will have computers available and cribs for infants, lockers or closets for the family's personal belongings. Showers and laundry facilities need to be available. Day centers can be housed in abandoned fire stations or other public buildings such as schools, churches or in private homes that have the space.

The director is a paid position. However some places do prefer also to pay a driver rather than rely on volunteers and they have their own bus or van. If caseworkers are used they too may need to be paid. All volunteers and guests are screened and have background checks. Two sets of volunteers needed per night the supper and evening volunteers and the volunteers to spend the night with the guests.

To run this program there is also the need for fund raising committees, transportation committees, host church committees and day center volunteers and data base person to keep records and addresses send out minutes, and other secretarial services. The program needs to be incorporated in the state and have a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. There will be meetings for all to attend to run this program and minutes taken paper work to be filed recruitment of workers and volunteers, etc. The fund raising committee raises money to pay for the director and other expenses. Transportation Committee arranges for transportation to take adults to work or school or day center and the children to their respective schools and younger children to day care centers. School age children stay in their same school. Host church committee arranges the schedule for the host churches.

The next organizational meeting of this group will be July 29 at West Congregational Church.