

## Family Promise of Whatcom County

What began as a dream a few years ago was finally made into reality this spring.

A national program that works with local congregations to provide temporary space for families experiencing homelessness has come to Whatcom County, thanks to the Interfaith Coalition and countless community volunteers! In January Sarah Lane joined the team as the Family Promise Director, and in Feb and March the Family Promise Day Center was remodeled and ready for guests. Somehow, in the middle of all this, Sarah was able to coordinate trainings, hire support staff and set up this brand new outreach program. Hopefully you saw the April 3<sup>rd</sup> article in the Bellingham Herald—the pictures of the volunteers washing dishes, stocking shelves and planting flowers at the Family Promise Day Center were just perfect—it was an incredible team effort!

We opened our doors April 2<sup>nd</sup>, with the **Church of the Assumption** being the first congregation to host families and we were at capacity within a few days! The maximum number of people we can help at one time is 14. The need for shelter in our county is growing at an alarming rate. Approximately one of every 26 Whatcom County children experienced homelessness for all or part of the 2015-2016 school year, and this is an increase from one in 32 during the previous year.

Families experiencing homelessness are sleeping in cars, out in the woods, or on the floors of friends, facing fears about how to keep their children safe and well fed. Some families are forced to live apart from each other.

Sometimes all it takes for a family to get back on their feet is having a month or two when they can save their rent and food money. Family Promise is an incredible way for our community to come together and be a part of the solution. We have already had three families graduate the program into permanent housing—that's six adults and nine children! We are making a difference—one family at a time!

Assumption's own Marie Gonzalez has been busy sewing unique pillowcases for the families! She also mended some sheets that were donated to Assumption for the program, and offered to mend items for any of the Family Promise families. Here's what Sarah had to say about her recent gift:

**“Yesterday, volunteer, Marie, from Church of the Assumption, stopped by the day center to drop off handmade pillow cases for a new family whose kiddos love superheroes. The family has been transformed into “The Incredibles,” with extra fabric offering the opportunity to make eye masks or headbands! No doubt, with these gifts from Marie, they will be transformed with superpowers to become super-fast, super-strong and super-invisible! Of course, our families are already super! So are our volunteers! Thank you to Marie and everyone who makes our houses of worship “home.” “**

An extra benefit of this program is watching many faith communities work together, including:

Host Communities (each hosts families 4 weeks per year):

- Assumption Catholic Church
- Christ Lutheran Church, Ferndale
- Christ the Servant Lutheran Church
- First Christian Church, Disciples of Christ
- Garden Street United Methodist Church
- Hope Lutheran Church, Lynden
- Northlake Community Church
- St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church
- First Conference Center
- First Congregational Church of Bellingham
- Sterling Drive Church of Christ
- Sacred Heart Catholic Church
- Saint Paul's Episcopal Church



**Marie delivering handmade pillowcases for a new family**

Support Communities (provide hosts with food and volunteers):

- Center for Spiritual Living
- Roosevelt Community Church
- United Church of Ferndale
- Zion Lutheran Church, Ferndale
- St James Presbyterian Church
- Iglesia de Dios Church
- Hope in Christ Church
- Christ the King, Sudden Valley
- Christ the King, Bellingham
- Blaine United Church of Christ
- Bellingham Friends
- Our Saviour's Lutheran Church
- The Table

**"We have to reach out to those who are most in need in our society. We are only as strong as the weakest link in the chain. We want people to know that the Catholic Church cares about strengthening the entire cord of the human community here in Bellingham."**

**--Fr. Scott Connolly, Pastor, Church of the Assumption**

There are many ways to help support this new ministry, all you need is a little training beforehand:

Volunteer at the Family Promise Day Center ([www.familypromisewhatcom.org](http://www.familypromisewhatcom.org))--Lots of info here!

Volunteer at Assumption (e-mail Peg & Cynthia at [familypromise@assumption.org](mailto:familypromise@assumption.org))

Join a team at the annual bed race on Sept 30<sup>th</sup> (e-mail Konrad at [familypromisebedrace@gmail.com](mailto:familypromisebedrace@gmail.com))

Fill up a prescription bottle with quarters (available in the gathering space) and return it to Karen Zuther in the parish office when it's full. One full bottle is about \$10 in donations.

For more information about the program, please call Family Promise at 360-676-6207

Assumption will be hosting again the week of June 17<sup>th</sup> – June 23<sup>rd</sup> and July 15<sup>th</sup> - July 22<sup>nd</sup>.  
Also, Dec 16<sup>th</sup> – Dec 23<sup>rd</sup>



**2<sup>nd</sup> Annual**

**BED RACE TO HELP CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

**September 30<sup>th</sup> Civic Field Parking Lot 2PM – 4PM**

**[familypromisebedrace.com](http://familypromisebedrace.com)**

**2017 Champions**



**2017 Most Funds Raised**

