



NEWS RELEASE

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City invites public, non-profit organizations to participate in Family Promise

Potential Solution Serves At-risk Community by 'Ending Homelessness One Family at a Time'

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. — The homeless population has soared across U.S. cities, including Murfreesboro, since the financial crisis and Great Recession of 2008. The City of Murfreesboro is considering one nationally-tested approach to reducing homelessness by inviting community-wide participation in starting a Family Promise affiliate in the area.

Members of the public interested in learning more about this initiative and Family Promise's holistic approach to helping families experiencing homelessness in our community are encouraged to contact David Cates, Minister for First Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, at dcates@fbcmboro.org or John Callow, City Community Development Director at 615-890-4660 or e-mail to jcallow@murfreesborotn.gov.

Residents of the community, including faith-based and non-profit organizations who express interest, will be encouraged to attend a kick-off Community Meeting in August 2017 to learn more about the non-profit 501(c)3 organization, a non-denominational organization for children and families facing homelessness. The purpose of the Community Meeting is to support local efforts to collaborate on a community-based solution to meet the needs of Murfreesboro's homeless. Representatives from national office of Family Promise will be available to answer questions about the Family Promise model.

“The Family Promise Network Program brings shelter, meals and support services to families without homes,” said Assistant City Manager Jennifer Moody. “Family Promise Networks are a cost-efficient, effective community response to family homelessness. City staff first met with representatives of Family Promise of Greater Chattanooga in March 2017 and became convinced the community should be invited to learn more about how this program could benefit Murfreesboro families.”

Currently, 202 Family Promise affiliates in 42 states are serving the at-risk community by hosting homeless families at faith-based and non-profit facility locations throughout the country. Some 6,000 congregations and 180,000 volunteers make up the networks that have served approximately half a million people.

“Reducing homelessness is a community-wide issue that simply cannot be ignored or shoved under the rug,” said City Community Development Director John Callow. “Learning about the severity of childhood homelessness in our community, the Family Promise model and a creative vision for how we can leverage our compassion and strengths as a community is the first step toward ensuring that every child has a home.”

To start a Family Promise affiliate in Murfreesboro, approximately a dozen host church and synagogue congregations, each with 35-50 committed volunteers are needed. The congregations provide the physical space to host families for one week. Essential facilities include a lounge area for families, a play area for children, a dining area, kitchen, bathrooms and sleeping accommodations. Congregations typically provide a separate room, such as a classroom, for each family. Affiliates typically take 10-18 months to develop following the Community Meeting.

To learn more about Family Promise and the network approach to providing a safe, homelike shelter where families can stay together, visit www.familypromise.org.

Established in 1999, members of the Murfreesboro/Rutherford County Homeless Task Force, now known as the Homeless Alliance of Rutherford County, will also be invited to participate in the Community Meeting. The Alliance is currently headed up by Scott Foster, who is the executive director of The Journey Home—a Christian Community Outreach center for the homeless and at-risk residents of Rutherford County.

The Alliance has been working on a longer-term solution to create a centralized social services campus for a one-stop approach to providing community resources, particularly to the most vulnerable and homeless.

The campus-style approach has proven effective in other cities including San Antonio, Texas and Columbia, South Carolina. However, establishing a one-stop approach is a lengthy process. The Alliance is currently awaiting the results of a needs assessment study being conducted in partnership with the Department of Social Work at MTSU. Following the study’s recommendation, the Alliance will work to organize additional key service providers into a planning committee that will establish a core list of participants in the future campus.

While the problem is complex and unyielding to a quick fix, across the country, communities are making progress to end homelessness. Everyone in the community, no matter circumstances, has value. Building a whole community requires that every person is brought into the community with assets that make the entire community a better place.

For City News online, visit www.Murfreesborotn.gov.

Photo attached:

1. Homeless istock photo.jpg.
2. Family Promise Logo.jpg.

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