

FAITH COMMUNITY HOMES

inspiring hope changing lives

July 2020

Faith Community Homes Helps Families Avoid Crises During Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit low-income families hard.

Many families in our program are either still working or receiving unemployment. A few clients have experienced a decrease in hours and, while they are still technically working, their income is lower. Some parents had to stop working because daycare facilities and schools closed and therefore had no one to watch the kids.

Childcare concerns are particularly challenging for single parents. If schools do not physically open for in-person learning in August, many families will be in a dire financial position.

The pandemic has not stopped our volunteer mentors from mentoring their families. In fact, mentoring is more critical now than ever before. Mentors and families are meeting on the phone and online. Household budgets have been adjusted to account for changes in income. Mentors helped families plan for the best uses of their government stimulus money. Due to the rent support and mentoring provided by Faith Community Homes, none of these families has to worry about where they will live next month and all remain current on their bills.

Highlighted below are examples of challenges faced by some of our families during the past few months:



- A single dad's work hours were decreased from 40 to 12 due to COVID-19 in March, April and May. He was also ill for a two-week period with symptoms that mimicked COVID and was unable to work during that time. Without rent support from FCH, he would not have been able to pay rent for three months.
- A single mom is a direct-care provider at a nursing home. Overtime shifts used to be a reliable source of extra income for her, but now she is reluctant to work extra hours for fear of exposing herself and her children to the virus. Her 20-year-old daughter works at the same facility. Mom's 17-year-old daughter just graduated from high school and plans to attend Harper College in the fall.
- A couple's four children required considerable parent participation and supervision during e-learning. Since school ended, the parents have not been able to work available overtime shifts due to childcare constraints. Mom continues her classes in the LPN program at Harper and is due to complete her degree in December.
- A single mom has continued to receive pay checks for her school job during the closure, but no pay for the overtime shifts she began picking up during the past year. Additionally, since summer school is canceled, she does not have the income that she expected at this time.

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FCH...Avoid Crises During Pandemic *continued*

Mission Statement
 Strengthening northwest suburban families to achieve financial stability and independence through mentoring, rental assistance and support services.

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Special thanks to Elk Grove Township, Palatine Township, Schaumburg Township, Wheeling Township, and the Village of Arlington Heights for providing significant financial and other assistance to our client families.

Our families have little wiggle room with their finances, so any change in income can make circumstances much more difficult. In many cases, long-term plans – creating a savings account, paying off debt, returning to school – have been put on hold due to the uncertainty of the economy and, more urgently, childcare arrangements. During the second quarter of 2020, Faith Community Homes paid a higher portion of rent for some families based on need and circumstances. It is our priority to help keep all families current on their bills and stabilize their finances.

We are more motivated than ever to help these working parents and their children avoid an unrecoverable financial crisis. We remain committed to keeping a roof over their heads and, just as importantly, to being a source of encouragement and hope for these very vulnerable parents and children.

Harte Interviewed on WGN Radio



Sarah Harte

Sarah Harte, FCH Program Manager, was interviewed on WGN Radio’s evening broadcast on May 26. She spoke with host Rollye James about how FCH works with local families to overcome financial struggles, particularly during this unique and challenging time.

To hear a recording of the full interview, visit the “Latest News” section on FCH website home page (fchomes.org). Congratulations to Sarah for representing FCH so well over the airwaves!

FCH Perseveres through the COVID Crisis

The pandemic has changed how almost everyone does their work, and Faith Community Homes is no exception. Each day we are finding the inspiration to “make all things new”, creatively adapting our services to safely reach those most in need. What has not changed is our focus on FCH families and the adherence to our mission.

Our staff continues to work every day, rotating between in-office and remote locations. FCH has accepted new families into the program during this trying time, especially those in short-term need due to the coronavirus crisis. These families receive some financial assistance as well as case management guidance and support.



FCH Perseveres through the COVID Crisis *continued*

Mentoring and case management continues, but generally from a distance using email, conference calls and Zoom. Our priority is to assist families in need while practicing the healthiest and safest ways of doing so. While mentors agree that the process is more challenging when they cannot be together in the same room with families, they are still trying to get the most out of their shorter, less intimate meetings. Having entered into Phase 4 of the recovery, some mentors and families have begun meeting outside or in other “safe” places.

We also want to thank you, the friends of FCH, for your support during this extraordinary time. On May 14, we sent out an eBlast announcing our “Double Your Donation” campaign. We explained that additional funding was needed for three primary purposes:

- To pay additional rent for FCH families who experienced layoffs, reduced work hours, quarantine due to cases at their workplaces, etc.
- To help new families with sudden needs to overcome COVID-related challenges
- To make up for income not realized in our traditional spring events

You responded very generously! With the help of several FCH board members who agreed to double the donation, a total of \$12,604 was raised as a result. A huge thank you for your support!

Save the Date

Due to the pandemic and anticipated restrictions to crowd size, we will be holding Giving Hope, our annual fundraising gala, virtually this year. The tentative date for the event is Sunday, October 11, at 4pm. Event details, including the program and how to access the gala, will be available shortly. We anticipate that the gala will last no longer than one hour.

Annually, Giving Hope is our largest fundraiser of the year with proceeds of \$50,000-75,000. With the local, low-income families that we support facing new challenges during these difficult times, please help us through your active participation in our virtual gala.



As we move forward, however, the need for continued financial support has never been greater. Here are some ways you can help:

1. Donate what you can when you can. A donation envelope is included with this newsletter. You can also donate through our website at fchomes.org.
2. Consider becoming a monthly donor. This can again be done through the donation page on our website. In this way, a larger donation can be budgeted over time while knowing that you are consistently supporting the mission.
3. Make in-kind donations that will benefit families in the program. Gift cards to Walmart, Aldi and gas stations (in denominations of \$25 or less) are most needed at this time.
4. Attend our virtual events as they are announced.



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Heartfelt Letters of Thanks from FCH Families

Dear Faith Community Homes,

We are writing to say thank you! Although it seems so inadequate a thing to say in exchange for what you have given us.

Thanks to you we were able to pay our bills AND save money for a rainy day. While that rainy day did come (a time or two), we were all the more prepared. Thanks to you we didn't have to move our family in the middle of the school year. Thanks to you we were able to pay off a credit card. Thanks to you we were able to save up for a better and more reliable family vehicle. Thanks to you our children had the merriest of Christmas's.

We are SO grateful. We are eternally grateful. Our lives are changed for the better when that didn't seem possible not so long ago. We will never forget the generosity of your donors, the good people who have so willingly, without a thought of any return or recognition, given us so much.

Keep up the good work. God willing, we will someday soon be in a position to pay it forward! Many thanks.

Dear Faith Community Homes,

I personally wanted to thank Faith Community Homes for being my backbone through the most difficult time in my life. I never thought I would be here, but my circumstances were out of my control. FCH has taught me that people really do care, and they want to see you strive and live a happy life. FCH has shown my children so much love and support. They are some pretty lucky kids to have such a big family. Although we have encountered some uncertain times, I can find reassurance from my mentors to stay on the right path – they tell me here are your stepping stones, now go back stronger, smarter, and braver. We are forever grateful for all of you.