

# FAITH COMMUNITY HOMES

inspiring hope changing lives

May 2021

## Single Mom Succeeds by Setting Goals



Stock photo from Unsplash.

When single mom “Lori” applied to Faith Community Homes in 2018, she was barely getting by, financially and emotionally.

Her ex-husband had left her and their four children with significant debt, and Lori’s single income was not enough to cover rent and other expenses. Looking back on this time in her life, Lori recalled: “If Faith Community Homes had not accepted me, I would have been lost.”

The Faith Community Homes rent subsidy allowed Lori and her kids to stay in their apartment and avoid eviction. Soon after acceptance into the program, Lori began weekly meetings with her volunteer mentors (*see her mentors’ story, p. 2*). Her mentors helped Lori identify the steps she needed to take to meet her short-term and long-term goals.

### With her mentors’ ongoing guidance, Lori made measurable progress:

- Lori and her children moved into a less expensive apartment within the same school district. Although the family now has less space, their monthly rent and utility bills are lower.
- Lori filed paperwork to collect child support from the children’s father.
- She found a higher paying part-time job and negotiated a raise from her full-time employer. Currently working an average of 55 hours per week, Lori is earning more now than when she began our program.
- Lori paid off all her credit card debt, totaling more than \$9,000, which resulted in an increase in her credit score.
- She also developed a household budget that allows her to stay current on her bills while also gradually adding to savings.

Lori is excited that her oldest child is on track to graduate from high school in spring 2021 and is already enrolled in community college. That child will be the first member on either side of her extended family to pursue education beyond 12th grade.

Lori completed her time with Faith Community Homes in December 2020. Reflecting on her two years in our program, she commented that her mentors had made the greatest impact of all. It was her mentors who kept her going throughout. Lori found it reassuring “to know that I always had someone looking out for me and my family. Setting up goals to do after each meeting helped me be organized and get things done. I always thought, ‘Oh, I have to get this done so I can show my mentors next week.’”

Lori closed her final evaluation with these words to Faith Community Homes: “Don’t stop doing what you do. My life has changed so much, thanks to your program. Words can’t explain how thankful I am.”

**SAVE THE DATE:  
Come Out to the Ball Park!**



**Saturday, August 28 | 6:00 pm  
Schaumburg Boomers Game**

Mark your calendars and plan to join your Faith Community Homes friends as the Boomers take on the Lake Erie Crushers. There will be fireworks!

**Featuring the Meijer Tennis Ball Toss:** Benefiting Faith Community Homes.

**Important Ticket Info Coming:** Please wait for specific instructions on how to purchase tickets, coming soon!

### Connect With FCH!

#### Get E-News

Sign up to stay in touch and discover more ways we are making a difference, together, in the lives of local families. You’ll also receive important news and advance notice of opportunities to support FCH through fun activities and special events. Simply send an email to [info@fchomes.org](mailto:info@fchomes.org) to subscribe. Please include “Subscribe” in the subject line. Thanks!

#### Follow FCH on Facebook

Help spread the word about Faith Community Homes by Liking and following our Facebook page, @FaithCommunityHomes. With your help, we can reach more people and assist more families!

**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.**

**Relationships Are Key**

In the fall of 2018, Toni Memmel and Mary Weber teamed up to serve as volunteer mentors for “Lori” (see cover story), who had just been accepted into the two-year Faith Community Homes program with her children. Mentor meetings with Lori primarily took place every week at the public library. Once the pandemic hit, their meetings moved to Zoom.

The relationship among these three women began with a series of to-do lists to help Lori get back on her feet. The mentors put a strong emphasis on tracking income and expenses, getting caught up on overdue bills, and taking advantage of assistance from other community agencies.



Mary Weber (left) and Toni Memmel

**Coaching with care makes an impact**

Over time, Lori and her mentors developed a much closer relationship. Memmel and Weber eventually met all four of Lori’s children and appreciated getting to know the family better. Their coaching moved from strictly financial to more personal, including helping Lori learn to better advocate for herself in the workplace.

Lori commented many times that she appreciated how much her mentors grew to care about her and her family. Thanks to her mentors’ consistent encouragement, Lori’s self-esteem improved. These positive interactions and resulting successes undoubtedly worked to prepare Lori to continue to do well in the future.

As she reflected on her time mentoring the family, Weber wrote: “My relationship with Lori is my most important accomplishment. We have trust and respect for each other. I am so proud of the strong woman she has become. Witnessing her wonderful character, selfless hard work and loving nature is so rewarding.”

In the final evaluation meeting, Memmel gave Lori this advice for moving forward on her own: “You can do this! Keep using the steps you have learned to keep yourself on track. If you ever doubt yourself, just think back to how far you have come in two years. You are amazing!”

**Reciprocal benefits realized**

Memmel and Weber experienced something many Faith Community Homes mentors come to realize: the benefits of mentoring are reciprocal. “It wasn’t just Lori who was ‘educated,’” commented Weber. “Toni and I learned so much from her and were inspired. We gained a better understanding of what poverty looks like and the extreme hard work it takes to pull yourself out. I like to think that, because of Lori, we are better people.”

Memmel and Weber did not know each other before serving as mentors together. Now, they are friends and look forward to working together as mentors for another Faith Community Homes family.

## BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: John Sonderegger



John Sonderegger

John Sonderegger is making the most of life and his daily mission is to help others do the same. For decades he has taken on volunteer leadership roles with a variety of nonprofit organizations, mainly in the Arlington Heights area. And the community is all the better for it.

As a member of the Faith Community Homes Board of Directors, Sonderegger has contributed greatly to the organization's direction and development. He first learned about FCH through his church, First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights, where he is a longtime member. In 2007, Sonderegger was elected to the FCH board. He agreed to serve because, "I was drawn by the mission of FCH, its involvement in the local community, its small size."

Faith Community Homes is fortunate to have Sonderegger on its team. At age 89, "I enjoy my role as kind of an elder statesman whose knowledge gained from life experiences helps keep Faith Community Homes moving forward in a positive way." He welcomes the opportunity to serve FCH, drawing on the wisdom gained from a successful career and deep nonprofit leadership experience.

### ***A knack for fundraising***

Sonderegger currently serves on the Marketing and Communications Committee for FCH. He has been on several FCH committees since 2007. An accountant by education, he enjoys writing, planning and problem solving. Very often, he is called to exercise his gift for raising money. He sees the impact FCH makes in the larger community and hopes the generosity he strives for is contagious. "I want to believe that our gifts to FCH have served to encourage friends to do the same." Sonderegger also believes in bolstering the strength of his monetary donations through direct service. "I have followed a practice of getting involved in worthwhile charitable organizations with not only my money but also with my time. If we [he and his wife, Bea] are to support financially in a significant manner, I want to be involved in how those gifts are used."

### ***Expanding perspectives***

Sonderegger's ideas about success have expanded over time. He sees a logical and fulfilling progression. First came his long career culminating in an executive role at the former International Minerals & Chemical Corporation. Once retired, he shifted focus to serving the community. "I have thought of my work career as having provided for the material well-being of family. It's the taking care of the body. Sharing a significant portion of that material well-being serves to satisfy the soul." Sonderegger continues to appreciate the difference FCH makes in the community. "I find it most gratifying to observe how individuals have improved their lives after 'graduating' from the two-year program. Their financial house is in order. They have learned new skills that have led to better income-producing jobs." He is optimistic for the future of FCH and its ability to help struggling families by empowering them to discover, strengthen, and use their gifts to build a better life. After all, Sonderegger's goal is to help others make the most of their lives, just as he has done.

*This story has been abridged. Visit the Faith Community Homes blog, at [fchomes.org/blog](http://fchomes.org/blog), to read the entire article.*

## Thank You for Three Amazing Events!

**SPRING VIRTUAL TRIVIA EVENT** — Thirteen teams and three individuals signed up to compete for bragging rights on Sunday, April 18, with **The Splendid Six** taking their place as true trivia bosses! Congratulations to team captain Joyce Pavelko and her teammates. All are members of St. John United Church of Christ, Arlington Heights. We are grateful to everyone who participated or donated to Faith Community Homes. Ticket sales and donations totaled just over \$2,700!

**DINE-AND-SHARE EVENTS** — Thank you to all who took advantage of two delicious dine-and-share opportunities in February and March. **Lou Malnati's** (Buffalo Grove, Palatine and Schaumburg) donated \$340 from total sales on February 24. During the month of March, **CoCo & Blu Café**, in downtown Arlington Heights, donated \$1 from the sale of every Lucky Latte, adding up to a total of \$337. We are very grateful to these generous establishments and to you, our wonderful supporters, for helping Faith Community Homes families.

### **The Splendid Six**

*From left to right:*

Roland Cooper, Cicely Cooper,  
Martha Mockaitis, Tom Mockaitis,  
Joyce Pavelko, Jim Powers



## Faith Community Homes

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## Message From the Program Manager



*Sarah Harte*

There is plentiful social science research documenting the connection between housing and childhood stress, health and school performance. Children under stress have poorer health and academic performance. Children experience more stress when they live in a home with a parent who experiences severe stress. Unstable housing correlates with lower reading scores and graduation rates.

Feedback from parents in our program reinforces this research. Parents regularly tell us how important it has been for their children to remain in the same school and not be forced to move. Many parents report that since they worry less about making ends meet, their children worry less too.

This spring we celebrate three more children from Faith Community Homes families who are graduating from high school. Would they have graduated if their parent had been evicted? Statistics tell us it is unlikely. One of these children once offered to drop out of high school and get a full-time job to help his single mom pay the bills. Luckily, the mom was accepted into our program and got caught up on her bills. The child stayed in school, worked only on weekends and is headed to college in the fall.

The regular, ongoing work of Faith Community Homes is with parents. Our mentors help parents budget their money and give them tools to support the family independently in the long term. Why do we do this? Ultimately, it is for the sake of the children. We are investing in the future of our community by investing in families. Our aim is for these children to grow up to be healthy, contributing members of society. Our objective is for the work we do with parents today to filter down to the next generation to break the cycle of poverty. Thank you for partnering with us to encourage stable households for healthier, happier children.