

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

EMBRACING OUR FORWARD MOMENTUM *by Erica Chianelli*



As Thanksgiving approaches, I am especially grateful for all who make a difference in the community. Words cannot fully express the gratitude I continue to feel in reflecting on our **Giving Hope: Home Coming** fundraiser luncheon on October 2. As my first **Giving Hope** event with FamilyForward, I am still overwhelmed by the generosity displayed.

From the sponsors to the prize donors; the attendees to the bidders; the volunteers to the entertainers; those who couldn't attend but still donated — to the powerful family story shared that day — WOW. I am in awe at the dedication of our supporters. It is inspiring and motivating. It is a testament to the great work of FamilyForward and the passion we all share for our mission and the families we serve.

As the need for our services continues to grow, we are eternally grateful for all of you who enable us to keep pushing forward. I loved meeting people whom I have only seen on paper, and putting faces to names. I loved seeing friends reunited, catching up and swapping stories. I loved watching long-time supporters meeting new ones.

I loved the fact that I could wear my beloved Loyola Ramblers sweatshirt and jeans! The casual, loving vibe of the event really made it feel like a family reunion. It felt like a giant hug as together we embraced our forward momentum, moving ever ahead. As a newbie observer, it was really exciting to witness. *(Turn to page 3 for photos and highlights from this wonderful event.)*

I was also excited to see the engagement of our newly formed Advisory Board. Formed in August, this group consists of 14 professionals in the community whose purpose is to serve as ambassadors for FamilyForward and raise the profile of the organization, expanding our reach into new networks and growing our foundation of supporters through community outreach, fundraising, and increased awareness of our organization. It was encouraging to see this new group jump in and solicit and secure numerous raffle and silent-auction prizes, and attend the event to show their support.

So, I thank you. THANK YOU for your loyalty and continued support. I welcome your feedback at any time. Feel free to reach out to me at 847-342-0846 or erica.chianelli@family-forward.org. I look forward to further developing relationships as we work together to transform lives, one family at a time.

YOUR YEAR-END GIFT WILL HELP FAMILIES WITH CRITICAL NEEDS



Stock photo from Pexels

In early December, you will undoubtedly receive many appeals from nonprofit charitable organizations to help support their causes. One of those appeals will be a letter from FamilyForward. We are asking you to financially assist the many low-income, working families within our own communities who struggle to pay increased rental housing costs and other inflationary expenses while at the same time provide safe and secure environments for their children.

Through the FamilyForward two-year program, families receive rental assistance, mentoring by trained volunteers with oversight from professional social workers, as well as budgeting and job/wage improvement guidance as they reach for self-sufficiency. As Mom J, a FamilyForward graduate, so succinctly stated, "This program has been a complete life-changer for me and my children. Thank you for helping me get some hope back. I don't know where we would be without you."

Please help us to assist and empower more local families to rediscover hope and restore confidence in 2023! Year-end gifts are welcome now — visit family-forward.org and click the "Donate Now" button. Thank you.

MISSION STATEMENT

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

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Erica Chianelli

Program Manager
Sarah Harte

Case Manager
Pam Van De Walle

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To opt out of future newsletter mailings, please send an email to info@family-forward.org.

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.

FAMILY SUCCESS STORY

BEING SEEN AS A WHOLE PERSON by Sarah Harte, Program Manager



Stock photo from Pixabay

The family speaker at this year's **Giving Hope** event was "Mom J," a mother of two who recently completed our program. Her detailed, deeply personal description of her journey included the following takeaway points:

- When Mom J reached a point that she needed housing assistance, the process of seeking out resources, making inquiry phone calls, and filling out application paperwork was overwhelming and discouraging. She had no one to help her until she found FamilyForward.
- Mom J was frustrated to learn she was disqualified from several government programs and nonprofit agencies because she earned either too much or too little. FamilyForward was the only agency that treated her as a whole person, not merely as numbers on paper.
- Because FamilyForward helped Mom J stabilize her housing, she was able to address some of her children's health issues and pursue a higher paying job. She remains grateful to her volunteer mentors and the FamilyForward staff for their constant support and for giving her a sense of hope during a time in her life when she felt hopeless.

Mom J was able to rise above serious challenges and make significant progress toward a better life thanks to the empowering help and consistent encouragement she received from FamilyForward.

FALL FUN FOR FAMILYFORWARD!

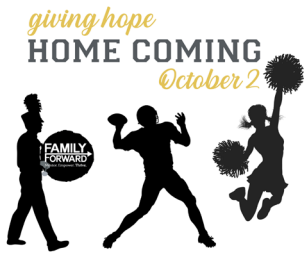
We've had another busy fall, getting out and about in the community, meeting new people and spreading the word about FamilyForward.

Oktoberfest by the Rotary Club of Palatine took place September 16-18. Board member Tina Richards and her husband, Todd, served beer to festgoers. As a past grant recipient, we wanted to support this organization that gives back to our community.

We were pleased to staff a booth at the **Arlington Heights Farmers Market** on September 24. Board members Chris Farnsworth and Lou Walton (*first shift*) and Tim Wayman and Donna Anderson (*second shift, shown in the photo*) were on hand to provide information about our organization. **The Palatine Area Chamber of Commerce Business Expo** also took place on September 24. It was fun to meet new smiling faces and talk about our mission and work at FamilyForward. Executive Director Erica Chianelli and board member Jennifer Strimling shared ways local people can spread the word about FamilyForward and even become mentors.



GIVING HOPE NETS \$65,000 TO EMPOWER FAMILIES



The community stepped up in a big way on Sunday, October 2, for FamilyForward's annual premier fundraiser event, ***Giving Hope***. After more than two years of mostly virtual activities, this year's event featured a homecoming theme. Attendees gathered for a festive fall luncheon at Chevy Chase Country Club, Wheeling, for ***Giving Hope: Home Coming***, and in the process raised over \$65,000 to empower low-income, working families across the northwest suburbs of Chicago.

Friends and supporters, new and old, came together at ***Giving Hope: Home Coming*** for a warm celebration of how FamilyForward is positively impacting the lives of families in need. One program highlight was the stirring and inspirational testimony from a single parent who recently completed our intensive two-year family program (*see page 2 to learn more*).

The event also featured the debut of FamilyForward's very own theme song, "Forward," composed by Clay Farnsworth and Daniel Clayton Farnsworth. Participants enjoyed a gourmet lunch buffet with carving station; live streaming of the Bears game; a warm welcome by members of the Prospect High School Poms squad; entertainment by members of the Hersey High School Choir; a special appearance by Don "Da Coach" Fueling; and a live appeal to raise funds for families.

The silent auction and raffle prizes did not disappoint, thanks to the generosity of many, and Executive Director Erica Chianelli led a spirited live auction for a special cruise on Lake Michigan. Attendees also had fun sporting their high school or college colors to celebrate the homecoming theme. Thank you to everyone who helped make it a special day!





GIVING HOPE 2021 SPONSORS

Varsity (\$4,000)

Village Bank & Trust

Junior Varsity (\$2,500)

For Papa's Sake Home Care
Robert & Nancy Lincoln
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Gerald & Gretchen Gilbertson
Lavelle Law
Northwest Community Healthcare
Claudia and Tom Starck

GIVING HOPE SILENT AUCTION & RAFFLE PRIZE DONORS

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MENTORING MAKES FAMILYFORWARD UNIQUE



Mentoring sets FamilyForward apart from other organizations (stock photo).

At FamilyForward, our unique mentoring program is one of the critical keys to families' success as they work to break the cycle of poverty. Here's how:

Frequent check-ins and active communication. FamilyForward volunteer mentors meet with the family each week. Why so often? Because we know that two years can go by in the blink of an eye. Long-term goals cannot be met without constant progress on short-term goals, and the weekly meetings help keep the family on track. Don't we all do better on our to-do list when we are accountable to someone else?

Customized and strategic approach to problem solving. We understand that every family comes into financial distress for different reasons, and every family's path to financial stability will look different. What works for one family might not work for another. Many families enter our program with income too low to support themselves in the long run. They work with their mentors on finding ways to grow their income, whether it means adjusting a job search to find a higher paying job; going back to school to finish a degree or professional certificate; better balancing a work schedule; or making time to take on a side hustle. Our philosophy is that the way out of poverty is through work, more work, and better work.

Focus on finances. FamilyForward mentors place a strong emphasis on household budgeting to help the family figure out what they can actually afford. Families work with their mentors to set spending goals and to learn how to live frugally, within a budget. Mentors coach the family on how to set aside money from each paycheck, even if it is only a modest amount, to start a rainy-day fund for future emergencies.

Personal relationships. Our mentors talk a lot about money. But over time, as the mentors and the family develop a relationship, other issues may come up for discussion including, for example, car repairs and maintenance; the parent's (or child's) physical and mental health; childcare arrangements; child support from the child's other parent; advocating for oneself in the workplace; learning how to organize one's time; and planning ahead.

Two dedicated mentors with complementary skillsets. Time and time again, participants in our program have talked about the benefit of having two people who are on their team — people who can give advice and encouragement, act as cheerleaders and provide a consistent voice of reason. The moral support mentors provide is just as valuable as the money-management skills they teach. *This article has been abridged. Read the complete story at family-forward.org/blog.*

GRATEFUL FOR GIFT CARDS



FamilyForward has a long tradition of providing gift cards to our program families to help with holiday expenses. Our greatest need is for gift cards to Walmart, Aldi, and any gas station, in the amount of \$25 or less. **Questions?** Please contact Program Manager Sarah Harte at sarah.harte@family-forward.org.

THANK YOU, FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH!

Thank you to the Missions Committee and members of First United Methodist Church of Arlington Heights for their generous donation in August of Target and Walmart gift cards! These cards provided much-needed help to our families to cover back-to-school expenses! We are grateful for this continued support.





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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 FamilyForward through fun activities and special events. Simply send an email to info@family-forward.org to subscribe. Please include "Subscribe" in the subject line.

CHECK OUT OUR NEW VIDEO!

In our latest video, "We Are FamilyForward," Board of Directors Chair Tim Wayman, Executive Director Erica Chianelli, and Program Manager Sarah Harte briefly explain FamilyForward's formation and purpose, our continuing work and success, and our ongoing mission as well as opportunities for community support and partnership. Check it out at family-forward.org and then share it with others to help us spread the word about FamilyForward!

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