



INTERFAITH COALITION

Empowering Whatcom County families on their paths out of homelessness.

Back in April I announced that I will be retiring on August 31st. As my retirement date nears, our communications manager challenged me to an assignment: Write about what I'm proud to have achieved during my time with Interfaith Coalition.

That is difficult for me. I am keenly aware that my successes at Interfaith are the result of many people working together. But something we ask of families in our housing is to tell us their strengths so that they recognize their capabilities to further build upon those assets. So, in honor of all the families that have

done that, here are some achievements I'm proud to have been a part of that will build upon Interfaith's work in guiding families out of homelessness.



With thoughtfulness and input from board and staff, I've succeeded in securing the location for my entire staff to be in one place, a goal that was established prior to me coming on

as Executive Director. Our new home will be at First Christian Church at 495 E. Bakerview. We love the benefits of remote work and will continue to keep that component, but know that face-to-face conversations foster more collaboration, creativity, and cohesiveness in the disheartening and daunting areas of our work.

Working with our Program Director Carolyn Roy to secure the Help Us Move In (HUMI) grant was a door of opportunity swung wide open for Family Promise of Whatcom County. With this funding, we can help change the landscape for many Whatcom families, providing financial support *before* they face the trauma of homelessness.

I helped keep Interfaith's funding strong from the moment I started. Along with securing numerous grants during my time as Executive Director, just one month

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into my role I was planning our Annual Appeal with Volunteer Engagement and Communications Manager Lindsey McGuirk. We were both new to our roles amid Covid chaos. Yet, we knew that our discomfort and fears paled to the families we were helping. So we pooled our collective skills, kept our struggling families front of mind, and came to you for help. And help you did. Nearly \$30k over our goal was raised that year! At a severely isolating time of the pandemic, I learned that Interfaith Coalition is far from alone in our mission. You showed your allegiance to the vulnerable community that Interfaith empowers, and you continue to do so.

Perhaps my proudest achievement, though, is that at no point did we stop serving families. We hit obstacles, we encountered dead ends, we were literally up against a pandemic shutdown. So I stopped looking at how things *should* work and instead at how things *could* work. For the sake of families in crisis, day by day, dollar by dollar, we kept them attaining their goals toward homeFULLness. And it is working.

I am honored to have had time with Interfaith Coalition.

Thank you and shalom,

Deanna

5 PEOPLE. 4 WHEELS. 1 BED. THE 5TH ANNUAL BED RACE!

The Family Promise of Whatcom County Bed Race is a family-fun event that makes a difference in the lives of children and families experiencing homelessness right here in Whatcom County. Join us by gathering five teammates and decking out a bed to race. Challenge each other to raise money for our program that helps families on their paths out of homelessness. Support we provide includes Keys to Good Tenancy classes, rental or utilities assistance, tutoring to children at our Learning Centers, and meals provided by volunteers.



Teams can enter through June 19th. Entry fee is \$100 per team. Compete for Fastest Bed, Best Theme, and Most Funds Raised!

Not much for racing? No problem! You'll still make your mark by donating directly. Your donation will fund resources for families in crisis. A secret benefit? It's rewarding to do something positive for others!

As of this printing, we have \$5,112 toward our \$30,000 fundraising goal. Help us make it across the finish line! Donate to the Family Promise Bed Race by mailing a check in the provided envelope (write "Bed Race" in the memo), scanning the QR code to the right, or visiting interfaith-coalition.org/familypromisebedrace



Cheer on the teams at the Family Promise of Whatcom County Bed Race on Sunday, June 26, 2 - 4 PM at Civic Field Lot. The event is free to attend.

Thank you to these 5th Annual Bed Race Sponsors!

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FAMILY PROMISE: Restoring Dignity in Families Through...



Attentiveness

From showing where extra bath towels are kept to where to put their trash bin at the curb on move-in day, our Housing Coordinator Shannon's care with families reinforces their worth. Through these small gestures, we hope that message begins to sink in.



Playfulness

John, our car repair volunteer, was making repairs to a donated car at one of our homes. Three kids watched from a window. Suddenly, they burst through the front door yelling, "We want to see the big, hairy guy do his magic!" John looked at the kids, held out a wrench and said, "Okay, but you're gonna have to help."



Simplicity

When our Housing Coordinator Shannon is getting a family settled in their space, she makes a point to walk them through how to connect to wi-fi and use the tv. Providing wi-fi allows parents to apply for jobs and children to do homework, while providing a tv gives them a chance to snuggle together on the couch for family movie night.

Con't from back cover: **HOMELESSNESS THROUGH A MOTHER'S EYES**

Jolynn and her 13-year-old son, William, first became homeless when she was evicted from her Bellingham apartment after 11 years. The eviction, Jolynn admits, was due to complaints from neighbors of the noise disruptions that would happen when she was away at work. "I was a single mom of three, including a teen with ADHD and generalized anxiety disorder, plus two teenagers who were rebelling."



Those two "rebellious" teens (aren't all teens rebellious?) are now in their 20s, each living in a place of their own with their significant others.

After the family was evicted, Jolynn's oldest children lived with friends and Jolynn tried finding another apartment for her and William. But she had three strikes against her. The first was bad credit. "We'd get close to securing an apartment in Bellingham, but they'd pull my credit report and that would be it," she said. The second was staying within her budget with what she earned at her full-time job and finding apartments that she could afford at Fair Market Rent. "They're hard to find here," she said. The third was that she earned too much to qualify for low-income housing. "It didn't make a bit of sense," she said shaking her head.

When she could afford it, Jolynn would pay for a motel room, but that dipped into what she was trying to save for rental deposits. When that money ran out, the family would switch between living at a friend's house and living in a tent in a former neighbor's backyard.

After months of living in homelessness, Jolynn and William were welcomed into Family Promise of Whatcom County. At the time they moved in October 2018, the housing program was still on a rotational model where congregations took turns opening their spaces for families to rest, sleep, receive meals, and build a support network. Holistic case management was provided at an offsite location.

Although the rotational model entailed continuous shifting, it provided a strong connection to volunteers who were empathetic, patient, gave space, and listened.

One day, William was severely struggling from a lack of routine and the newness of his situation. He was acting out and eventually ran to the room that had been set up for him and Jolynn. Walt, a volunteer with Good News Fellowship, came up to Jolynn and handed her a cup of coffee. "Just sit down for a moment, enjoy this cup of coffee, then go talk with William," Jolynn recalls Walt saying to her. She exhales as she shares this memory.



Today, Jolynn and William rent their own Bellingham apartment and recently signed their second year-long lease at the apartment complex.

"William has calmed a lot and that has to do with the stability of us living in one place," Jolynn remarks. "I hope that he looks at me as someone who's strong, and that he knows it's okay to be vulnerable and that it's okay to say, 'I'm struggling.'"

This year alone, we have helped more than 30 Whatcom County families with children ...



- ... start a savings account.
- ... get tutoring for a child.
- ... receive groceries.
- ... pay a utility bill.
- ... move into their own home.



**SAVE THE DATE
THE AUCTION IS BACK!**

- » Sunday, September 18, 5:30 pm
- » Twin Sisters Brewing
- » Live and online auction

Details to come at interfaith-coalition.org



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of WHATCOM COUNTY
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**5 PEOPLE.
4 WHEELS.
1 BED.**

Family Promise of Whatcom County Bed Race
Fund-RACE-er to End Family Homelessness
June 26, 2 - 4 PM • Civic Field Lot

HOMELESSNESS THROUGH A MOTHER'S EYES: A FAMILY PROMISE GRADUATE SHARES HER STORY



"Because we were living in a motel and had a car, we weren't receiving help. Being homeless was an ego-buster."

**"Why am I embarrassed about this?
It's not like I chose it."**

"When I first became homeless, I hid it from my coworkers," said a mother of three and former Family Promise of Whatcom County guest. She finally got up the courage to tell her boss about her situation. Without her knowledge, her boss took up a confidential fund among staff, letting them know that a coworker was experiencing homelessness and offering the opportunity to help.

"One day I showed up to work and there was money on my desk. At that moment I thought, 'Why am I embarrassed about this? It's not like I chose it.'"

Read the full story inside.



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