

2022



A Bridge Communities Partner

Families Helping Families (FHF) is celebrating our 28th year of guiding homeless families toward self-sufficiency. We owe our longevity and success to our amazing volunteers (we have no paid staff or office) and generous donors. Thank you!

I thought you'd enjoy hearing from some of our mentors – the front-line volunteers who meet weekly with and support our **FHF** Moms and their children. Mentors are the heart of our program. Bridge Communities, under which we operate, recently completed a study to find out what is most important in determining a client's success in transitional housing. The answer was not surprising. The strength of the client's relationship with her mentors was directly related to her success in the program. Many clients and mentors become family and stay in each other's lives without the structure of the program. As you'll read, both the clients and the mentors feel enriched.

Vicky Joseph

Mary: Mentoring is a journey that will challenge your patience, cause you to question your most basic beliefs, empty your soul and then fill it in ways you never expected. The past 28 years with **FHF** have enriched my life by opening my eyes to poverty in our community, given me friendships that define my life, and provided me with perspective on my own priorities.

Jo: I feel very privileged to be able to work directly with clients these past 11 years. I see clients flourish with the knowledge that there is a team of people on their side, rooting for them. I witness a growth in self-confidence, self-worth, and the belief that they can achieve things they once thought impossible. One of my early clients entered the program homeless and fearful for her safety. Her two older children are now college graduates. Another client was able to purchase a home. Nothing is more rewarding than seeing a client graduate from **FHF** with a new sense of self, pride, and confidence.

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Mentor Jo with baby J. Cuddling babies is a happy benefit of the job!

Natalie: My main goal for each family I have the honor to mentor over the past 5 years is to ultimately assist with ending the cycle of poverty permanently for that family. Many of our families come from generational poverty and do not know another way. As a mentor I want to provide a safe place to land when they come into **FHF** and to assist them with learning new skills to help ensure they have hope for the future.

Denise: I started this journey with **FHF** 10 years ago. When a new client joins the program there is an abundance of hope but sometimes, after much anxiety and heartbreak on both sides, a client decides to leave the program, or we must ask her to leave. Some clients feel that mentors are too invasive, and they don't like all the rules. The program is hard, and it is not for everybody. I pray that my clients who were not successful here have found other avenues that work for them. I am immeasurably proud of the women who have completed the program. They are determined and resilient and I am so fortunate to have been part of their lives.

Trish: I have volunteered with **FHF** for 12 years. The homeless mothers I have worked with are all different, a variety of ages, backgrounds, and specific traumas that have led them here. But what never varies is each woman's determination to give her children a better chance at life. Poverty makes this difficult. It's a cycle that feeds on itself. A broken car leads to a lost job, a lost home. A lack of access to childcare makes it impossible to find a new job. A lack of support brings stress and despair. For some women, this program provides the first safe place they have ever lived. With **FHF's** vast community of partners and donors, we can provide resources to slowly remove obstacles to success - education, debt reduction, job training, legal help. It's like moving a wall brick by brick. At its best, it gives a chance to breathe until gradually, and then suddenly, a woman finds the possibilities of her own strength. Seeing a path to a different life, she becomes unstoppable. When that happens, it's a beautiful thing to watch. And to be a small part of that journey is always an honor.

The Bruce Terlep Memorial Education Fund

Bruce Terlep was an enthusiastic supporter of FHF. Sadly, he passed away in 2017. His wife, Ginger, who is a FHF mentor and board member, and his three sons established this fund to help FHF moms and their kids go to college.

The BEST way out of poverty.... education!

"S" has been named to the National Society of Leadership and Success (NSLS) at Lewis University. She's about to graduate with a bachelor's degree in computer science.

"HL" is about to start her internship in Recreational Therapy at a local hospital and will graduate with a bachelor's degree in May.

"M" is completing her prerequisites and has just applied for the nursing program at COD.

"L" is working toward her degree in social work.

"Z" is working toward a bookkeeping certification at COD.

"MP" is taking classes toward her bachelor's in computer science.

"A" graduated, passed her nursing boards and is now working for Northwestern Hospital.

HOME OWNERSHIP!

When one of our FHF Moms graduates from our program and buys her own home, we get EXCITED! Congratulations to **"MM"** who overcame poverty, abuse, and living in her car with her four children. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in business and is now a very proud homeowner.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Monetary Donations: To pay housing and utility costs. Please make checks payable to Families Helping Families. Our cost is \$35 per day for a family.

Mentors: Volunteers willing to go through training and become involved in the day-to-day lives of our clients.

Cars: Our families need serviceable cars to get to school and work. Your donation is tax deductible.



Thank you June, for your generous donation of your car. "L" is now able to work and go to school because she has reliable transportation!

Service Projects: If your group is looking for a service project, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss it with you: famhelpingfam@gmail.com.

Professional Services: Occasionally we need the services of an attorney, physician, dentist, etc.

Resource closet: We welcome donations of personal products and cleaning products since our clients cannot buy these with their food stamps. Ask us for a list of needed items: steveandkay2@gmail.com.

Other donations: Get added to our LINK email list to see what our clients need and to offer donations of clothing, furniture, etc.: fhflink@gmail.com.

Gift Cards: Sometimes our families have budgets that come up short. Gift cards for gas, groceries, Walmart, and Target are lifesavers. Any amount is appreciated!



Please mail this form with your donation to:

FHF/Sally Meno, 1164 Dickens Ave., Naperville, IL 60563

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email address (needed for emailing your receipt):

Donation: (Check made out to Families Helping Families)

\$ _____

Donation to Bruce Terlep Memorial Education Fund

\$ _____

(If your company offers to match your donation, please include this information with your check.)

Visa/MasterCard (circle one):

Verification Code _____ Expiration: _____

Name on Card _____

Authorized amount to charge:

\$ _____

We have no paid staff or overhead...

We are all volunteers!

- **\$35 Provides housing for a family for 1 day.**
- **\$245 Provides housing for a family for 1 week.**
- **\$1050 Provides housing for a family for 1 month.**

For questions or to make a payment via phone, call Sally Meno at 630-778-0981 or email sallymeno@gmail.com.

From FHF Moms:

“MM” I was alone, hopeless, broken, scared, hurt, vulnerable and lost. This journey with **FHF** has been hugely transformative. I can proudly say that with a lot of love, encouragement, guidance, and room to blossom I am now my own hero. Thank you. A million times thank you.

“L” Where should I start? **FHF** has been so kind, giving and helpful. Not just financially, but with wisdom, advice, and encouragement.

“S” Thank you for your friendship and support. We are so lucky to have you in our lives. Thank you very much for everything you have done for us!

“A” It feels so good to be surrounded by wonderful women supporting me through this transformational process. I feel so thankful to be a part of the **FHF** universe. Thank you for creating so much space for me to grow and feel safe and to love and be loved.”

“MP” I feel at home in my FHF apartment. My kids are safe and happy. They are doing kids’ stuff, riding bikes and sidewalk chalk. I’m loving school and just got a raise and bonus at work!

“T” My mentors were the first people who ever believed I was worthy of love.