

Dear Family Promise,

I would like to thank you for all you have done for my family and I. When we became homeless I did not know what I was going to do. Having a wife and two children ages 5 and 3 I knew it was going to be hard. I wanted to protect my family from what was going to be a very bad experience as much as possible. Being that my son is 5 there's a good chance he will remember this experience. The thought of my family being in a shelter was unbearable. I was going to do all I could do to make sure that did not happen. We grabbed what we could from our apartment before we were locked out. Mostly kids clothes and toys. We went to a motel which was \$55 per night. Buying food daily, gas to take Nadine to work and the kids to school and earning enough money for me to work the next day was challenging but I did it for about 3 weeks. Needless to say the money went fast and we came to the realization we needed help and would have to seek out a shelter. Thank GOD he lead us to Family Promise. We called 211 and all of the shelters in Milwaukee were full. The operator then suggested Family Promise in Wales a suburb of Milwaukee. When I think of a shelter I think of a big open gym with transient people some of which don't smell so good. Cots elbow to elbow and sharing the space with the mental ill. Please don't think I lack compassion for the transient homeless and mentally ill. I do have compassion for them. Even more now that I have been in this situation. I just did not want that experience for my wife and kids. When I arrived at Family Promise and went threw the intake I was relieved because I knew at that time it was not going to be the horrible experience I was so fearful of. I knew they had a place for us to be during the day and local churches would provide us shelter at night. A room with some level of privacy. What I did not expect was what the overall experience turned out to be. My children loved it! There were other children to play with and the volunteers were so nice to all of us. The volunteers prepared our rooms before we arrived at the church and prepared dinner for us. The entire set up and the way we were treated by the volunteers completely removed the "shelter experience" for my children. For that I am eternally grateful. Although me and Nadine were very aware of our situation the environment that Family Promise provides along with the way we were treated by Family Promise staff and the church volunteers took the edge off our situation and allowed us to focus on working our way out of it. While we were doing that my Mother called and told me my Father wanted to give us a house but it's unlivable in its current condition. It's been empty for over 10 years but he would give it to us. My parents don't have much but they wanted to help us. I know that old empty house was my fathers dream to fix it up for his self but he was giving it to me and my family. We were homeless in Wisconsin. We could get to Louisiana but the house was unlivable. My Dad didn't have space for us and we didn't have the money or resources to take advantage of a life changing opportunity my Dad was giving us. The Family Promise in Wisconsin contacted the Family Promise in West Monroe LA and explained our situation. The Family Promise in West Monroe explained because we are homeless they can help. But they expect the same from us as every other family they help and that's to work to correct our situation as soon as possible. For us that meant find jobs and do whatever we needed to do to make the place my Father was giving us livable. We have done that. Nadine starts her job tomorrow. This is our first night in our new home. It's not pretty yet. We have a lot of work to do but it is livable and it's ours! I can't thank Family Promise of West Monroe enough. They too provided a safe family friendly environment. Everyone was really nice to us. And most importantly it takes what is a really bad situation for any family to be in and removes the feeling of tragedy. Again my children loved it. Thanks to Family Promise my children will never know what it feels like to be homeless. As for me and Nadine we felt the mental stress of our situation but not homelessness. It felt more like some very nice people were helping us avoid homelessness. Thank you Family Promise Wales Wisconsin and Family Promise West Monroe Louisiana for all you have done for my family. Thank you to the churches and volunteers who help make Family Promise possible. I hope your program continues to grow there's a lot of families who could use your help. Me and my family will never forget what you did for us.

Eternally Grateful,

James E. Howlett