



At FHF, we manage to have productive meetings with all kinds of distractions!

2023
Celebrating
30 Years!



Dear FHF Friends,

What is your origin story with us? How were you first introduced to Families Helping Families?

You probably know the origin of FHF itself. Thirty years ago, founder Vicky Joseph reached out to our community, in her incomparable way, to find support for one struggling family. Over the years, one family became two, became five, became seven. As of this year, FHF serves twelve families in a two-year program!

Change and permanence.

For 30 years, FHF has served families experiencing homelessness by providing housing, mentoring, and, above all, hope. Your generous donations mean families are safe, lives are transformed, and children can be kids again. I know you will love reading client Hannah's courageous journey from being abandoned as a child to, this year, becoming the first person in her family to graduate from college!

In 2023, FHF has experienced our own transformation.

We are excited to be completing the process of becoming our own independent 501(c)(3). This transformation will help us better respond to the increasing needs of twelve families. For instance, the lack of reliable transportation became an especially difficult obstacle to overcome for families like our wonderful new Ukrainian refugee families. Would you be able to help a mom get to work and her kids to childcare by donating a car? We would love to talk with you about this!

These changes—becoming our own independent nonprofit, increasing the number of families served, finding resources for our families, and welcoming two refugee families who did not speak English—all have one thing in common. They require hours and hours of dedicated service.

FHF has been justifiably proud that for 29 years client transformations were achieved entirely through volunteer efforts. This year, Vicky and members of the board determined that Families Helping Families was at a crossroads. To create permanence for FHF into the future would require a big change and a move beyond an entirely volunteer-run organization.

To that end, I am thrilled to be the first executive director of FHF and to be working to ensure the continuation of FHF and Vicky's legacy well into the future. That's my personal origin story with FHF—from mentor 17 years ago to my dream job!

Change and permanence. As we enter this new era, the great continuity is our profound gratitude for your ongoing support and trust in Families Helping Families.

I look forward to seeing you at our gala benefit dinner on **Saturday, February 3rd, 2024**, to thank you in person for 30 years, to hear your origin story, and to toast to another 30 years of our shared mission!

With gratitude,

Suzanne Thibeault



After noticing that Hannah’s clothes were always dirty, Hannah’s 4th grade teacher took her to the laundromat and showed her how to wash her own clothes. Hannah spent her childhood watching her parents’ cycle of dealing drugs and going to prison. She spent years in foster care. She got involved with an abusive man who later stalked her. She had three children.

But through all of this, Hannah kept her dream of college. For six years, she worked while attending community college, then university, while being a fierce advocate and a loving mom to her children. Hannah graduated with her bachelor’s degree in Recreational Therapy in May—the first person in her family to graduate! She is working in her field and saving to buy a condo. Hannah has given her children the biggest gifts of all. She loves them unconditionally and has modeled the importance of education and hard work. She is a resilient survivor, rising above every challenge, determined that her kids will have a better life.

Her mentors asked how she knew how to be a good mom, she responded, *“I decided to mother my children the way I wish I had been mothered.”*

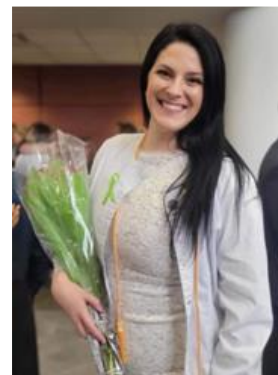
...by mentors Lynne, Jay, and Vicky



“It’s not how you start, it’s how you finish!” When I first heard this quote, I never thought I would be homeless, nor did I think I would become a software engineer. When I became homeless, my resolve not to quit kicked in. Grace brought Bridge and Families Helping Families into my life. This experience was remarkable, and I will always cherish this season of my life. It taught me that trusting the process of listening to my mentors and committing to the program brought life-changing results. The love and commitment from FHF is beyond anything my family could have asked for or expected. I graduated from the program and now work as a Software Engineer. I am eternally grateful. *Sanja*

Bella recently graduated from nursing school. She sent us this note of gratitude:

Thank you for your friendship and support. My son and I were so lucky to have Families Helping Families in our lives. Thank you for everything you have done for us.



**FEELING CHARITABLE?
USE DONOR ADVISED FUNDS**

Do You Have a DAF?

Families Helping Families is grateful for all donations! Donor-advised funds are the fastest-growing charitable giving vehicle in the United States because they are one of the easiest and most tax-advantageous ways to give to charity. Please let us know if you’d like to donate to FHF through your DAF.

Family Updates from Our Mentors

K. Family

My wife and I recently retired and were looking for a volunteering opportunity together to make a difference. FHF is a great opportunity to give back. Our first client and her 8-year-old daughter have exceeded our expectations in their commitment to the program and have been incredible to work with.



Our client is very motivated and has taken advantage of all that our incredible community has to offer. After weekly meetings, she sends out follow up emails and her to-do list before we even get home. Although her daughter was very shy at first, we are now greeted at the door every week with a big smile. We love playing games with her and having her show off her creativity. Someone recently donated a karaoke machine to her and her mom, and we were entertained with their first concert. The reward of giving something so simple as your time is very special. We are hopefully making a difference in our clients' lives, and we are excited to see them make progress on their goals.

V. Family

Since being welcomed into FHF 7 months ago, our first Ukrainian family has made great progress. They love their new home and enjoy lots of outdoor family activities—thanks, in part, to wonderful donations of bikes and fishing gear. Both boys (aged 4 and 8) are settling into their schools, have made new friends, and are doing well. The drawing by the older boy shows the donated car the family was so happy to receive!



After arriving in the U.S., mom and dad worked at Walmart. Mom is now working as a paraprofessional schoolteacher. She is loving her new job and is delighted to be back in the profession she is passionate about. Dad also has a new job as a maintenance assistant, offering plenty of opportunities to gain a wide range of skills and experience. They have all worked incredibly hard and have accomplished a huge amount in a short time, giving them a solid foundation for future growth and success.

M. Family

This is only my second time mentoring with FHF. It is a very different experience from the first time, because we are mentoring a Ukrainian refugee family. They arrived in the U.S. less than a year ago, knowing very little English and finding themselves in an increasingly difficult temporary living situation. Their acceptance into Bridge Communities and then FHF has given them a stable home, a wonderful school for their 5-year-old, and improved employment. With assistance from World Relief, mom and dad are in an English language program and the dad just completed his CDL driving certification. This family is working very hard to learn the English language and American culture in order to achieve their goals of a safe life in America for their daughter, steady employment, and eventually to buy a home.



First-time mentor's perspective



I was first exposed to Families Helping Families through my work as a shuttle driver at a local auto repair shop. I had a lot of good conversations with the clients as I drove them to their homes and jobs. One client's story touched me deeply, and I decided I would like to be a mentor with FHF. I did not know what to expect! Thankfully, I am paired with a senior mentor who knows how the program works

and understands the progression most clients follow.

At this point, I lapse into "we" because there is absolutely no way I could have done this alone. In the beginning, there was pushback from the client; a lack of trust, lying, and other undermining behaviors. Her parenting skills were almost non-existent. At times, my co-mentor was just as baffled as I was. We had to tell each other to just keep trying.

We kept showing up, kept talking and teaching, kept trying different ways to connect, and the miracle finally happened! We are now working with a young woman who is willing to listen, learn, try new ways, and is open to suggestions. She is developing and trying to prioritize a relationship with her one-year-old daughter. At our last meeting, she was able to look back and see the progress she has made.

Our client recently announced "This program is great, and I am going to use what I have learned to make my friends and family do budgets and make better decisions. I am going to teach them what you taught me!".

She's been in the program just under a year and we can't wait to see what happens next.



Save the Date

Help Us Celebrate
30 years
of Changing Lives

Annual Benefit Dinner
Saturday Feb 3, 2024
6pm - 11pm

Cross Creek Country Club
Dinner, dancing, open bar, auctions, friends, fun...

questions: sueshanahan6@gmail.com
visit us at famhelpingfam.org

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 an FHF mentor and board member, and their three sons established this fund to help FHF moms and their kids go to college. Please let us know if you'd like to direct your donation specifically to education.

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 becoming 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.

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

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)

\$ _____

Designate portion of donation for Bruce Terlep Memorial Education Fund:

\$ _____

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

Visa/MasterCard (circle one):

Verification Code _____ Expiration: _____

Name on Card _____

Authorized amount to charge \$ _____

\$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.

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