

2019 *impact* REPORT



BECAUSE CHILDREN NEED FAMILIES

promise686

A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

"Now" is my favorite word. It's not just a demand or a command to my kids-which rarely works! It's a summary of how I see God moving in the midst of the American child welfare system. He is on the move, right *now*. I'm marveling at what's unfolding and I want to celebrate it with you.

Since the beginning, our approach has been to collaborate first and understand what is being done, then determine needs and develop partnerships. This goal of caring for vulnerable children isn't possible in isolation. We recognize the need for collaboration and work diligently to build partnerships with others working toward our same vision.

For six years now, Promise686 has exported the best of our work in developing **Family Advocacy Ministries (FAMs)**. We support local churches and organizations in Georgia as well as other states, and we now have the potential to reach a very large number of at-risk kids and families. The value of collaboration dramatically impacts what we do each day.

In this impact report, we'll share what this value of collaboration and partnership looks like within our organization, from the progress made in 2019 to real stories of vulnerable children and their journey to healthy families.

Andy Cook
Promise686, CEO

2019

INSIDE THE IMPACT REPORT

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A black and white photograph of a family walking away from the camera through a field of tall grass. A man in a light-colored t-shirt is carrying a young girl on his back. Another child is walking slightly ahead of them. The background is a soft-focus landscape with trees and a bright sky.

“

SETS THE LONELY IN

GOD
SETS
GOD
;
FAMILIES
”

PSALM 68:6

OUR MISSION + VISION

"God sets the lonely in families." - Psalm 68:6

Our goal is to mobilize church communities to care for vulnerable children and we carry out this mission by equipping churches to support local foster & adoptive families, and biological families in crisis.

By training churches on how to create and lead successful Family Advocacy Ministries (FAMs), we're working toward seeing every child in a safe and loving family, forever.

THE ADOPTION STORY THAT LED TO A

M O V E M E N T

In 2008, a family's experience led to this journey toward caring for vulnerable children. After waiting seven years to bring their daughter home from Kyrgyzstan, their passion to see every child in a safe, loving family was undeniable. Promise686 began and since then, we've assisted 350 children coming home through adoption and inspired hundreds of families to foster through our Family Advocacy Ministry initiative in churches.

FAMILY ADVOCACY MINISTRIES (FAMs)

WHAT ARE FAMs?

It takes time, money, and emotion to prioritize at-risk kids and their families. We're grateful when a church partner decides to make this investment to care for vulnerable children, and we want to do all we can to help push forward their mission.

To alleviate the stress and confusion that can come with creating any new ministry, we've created a step-by-step model called Family Advocacy Ministries (FAMs). Promise686 implements FAMs to help bring about positive impact in the lives of vulnerable children by:

- Serving foster & adoptive families, and biological families in crisis
- Advocating on behalf of families and at-risk children
- Ministering to families and meeting physical, emotional, and spiritual needs

By creating a support system for vulnerable children and their families, needs are met and lives are changed. Through the generosity of our donors, Promise provides the training, resources, and guidance needed to empower church leaders, ministry leaders, and volunteers to set up and maintain successful FAMs.



OUR HEART IS FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN

When there are 140 million considered orphans worldwide, with over 400,000 of these children living in the United States, we know there's work to be done. God promises to "set the lonely in families" (Psalm 68:6) and we're dedicated to joining this effort.

WHY FAMs?

Churches are often full of people who want to make a positive impact in the lives of vulnerable children, but don't always know how. We believe if churches are empowered to openly and effectively share about the problems at-risk children are experiencing, families will step up, either by becoming a foster or adoptive family or by deciding to support a family in crisis. They simply need a plan.

OUR STRATEGY

BOILS DOWN TO THREE STEPS



PREVENT at-risk children from entering foster care by supporting biological families in crisis.

In many cases, an at-risk child already lives with a loving, biological family, but that family isn't equipped to fully care for their child in that season. Sometimes a house payment or grocery bill could mean the difference between a child staying with family or entering foster care. Churches, when aware and educated, have the opportunity to support a biological family in crisis and help keep that family together.

INTERVENE in a child's life when the state intervenes in a child's life.

When neglect or abuse is involved, the state will intervene. This means it's time for the Church to intervene. Promise686 and our church partners are *not* equipped to determine whether a family is a good fit for fostering or adoption. That's up to the state. What we *can* and *should* do, however, is come around our local foster and adoptive families to provide a support system.

CONNECT children to families, forever.

We provide adoption grants and resources to help families understand the adoption process, learn how to care for adopted children, create a healthy, loving environment for their kids, and bring vulnerable children home.

Our goal is to see every child in a safe and loving family, forever. Why? Because children need families.

We're excited to announce our FAM model, powered by our three-step strategy, has now grown to 504 churches and 24 affiliates in 18 states.

Ready to learn more about how Family Advocacy Ministries work and the impact they have on vulnerable children? Let's dive in.

CHURCH ADVOCATES

Church Advocates are one resource Family Advocacy Ministries provide for vulnerable children and their families. We work closely with these Advocates, from first training them at our clinics then offering ongoing support from our staff. We're incredibly grateful for the impact they have on their volunteers, the families they're serving, and the local community.

See how one particular Advocate led her FAM to serve a kinship placement, supporting a special needs child and her single grandmother.



This year, a local church in Georgia received the guidance they needed to create a FAM, allowing them to support a kinship placement—a woman with no nearby family to help her care for her special needs granddaughter.

Through her FAM, this grandmother has developed more relationships in her church and receives twice-a-month babysitting to actually allow her to serve *more* through a prison ministry. Prior to the support of her FAM, she paid a babysitter (for 3.5 years) in order to stay involved in a ministry she loves.

After receiving training through an Advocate Clinic, the lead advocates of this church were able to successfully recruit and train volunteers to be the hands and feet of Jesus for this family. This Care Community meets the needs of this kinship placement through acts of service, from weedeating to hosting birthday parties. One particular couple invites the family to their house for dinner once a month, building a strong connection with both the grandmother and the granddaughter.

“It has been fun to watch relationships blossom within our own congregation that otherwise may never have.” - Lead Advocate



AWARENESS + RECRUITMENT

One goal of a Family Advocacy Ministry is to raise awareness and inspire caring for vulnerable children. We equip church leaders, Advocates, and their FAMs to spread awareness around fostering & adoption needs, recruit new foster & adoptive families, enlist new volunteers to support these families, and educate foster & adoptive families to provide safe and loving homes.

CARE COMMUNITIES

When churches recruit a new foster or adoptive family, or become aware of a local family in crisis, the next step is to provide that family with a strong support system. It takes an incredible investment of time, money, and emotion to care for vulnerable children. Traditionally, over 50% of foster parents drop out of the system within their first year of fostering. When foster families are surrounded by strong Care Communities, however, 90% will continue fostering after one year.

Care Communities create the opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus by serving families caring for vulnerable children with meals, babysitting, prayer, and much more. FAMs increase the number of Care Communities for families across the United States, and ultimately, help raise at-risk kids in safe, loving homes.



God is at work through FAMs and the Care Communities they're planting across the country! In 2019, a young woman in Georgia fostered a child who had been in roughly 8 homes in 5 months due to behavior-related incidents. This woman faced many challenges with this particular foster placement, from extreme tantrums to attempted run-aways. She desired to continue caring for this child, but knew something needed to change. She called on her local FAM, who has committed to supporting her through her foster care journey. A Care Community served the family by babysitting, walking the child to and from the bus stop while the foster mom was at work, building a playground for their house, and even becoming respite families while the foster mom was out of town.

That child has now been reunited with her biological mother, and both the foster mom and the FAM still serve the biological family through babysitting, meals, and quality time together.

CAREPORTAL

Promise686 implements CarePortal in Georgia, a tool to help churches care for vulnerable children by meeting the needs of families in crisis.

CarePortal is a technological platform that has already served 36,150 children. Via a simple email request, CarePortal provides entry-level opportunities to connect a network of caring people in churches to physical needs of families in their community. This network can provide **preventative support** for struggling families before foster care is a necessity. When the **intervention** of foster care does become a necessity, CarePortal also supports the foster families who are welcoming these children.

In 2019, we launched CarePortal in **four new counties including, Glynn, Carroll, Catoosa & McIntosh. Thus far, CarePortal has created...**



\$611,076

IN GEORGIA ECONOMIC IMPACT



ADOPTION GRANTS

Since we began in 2007, Promise686 has awarded \$3 million, helping 350 children and families connect for a lifetime.

We've awarded **\$265,830**
in adoption grants this year.

A FAMILY'S FIGHT TO BRING THEM HOME

Jeff and Amelia Davis recently returned home from Malawi with their two newly adopted children (ages 8 & 5). If there's one thing we've learned from their story, it's that **adoption takes courage, perseverance, and resilience for everyone involved.**

Amelia's heart for adoption began as a sophomore in college, where she spent a summer volunteering at a children's home in China.

"I had no idea that there was a reality of kids who had nowhere to go, no family to take them in, and no future beyond living on the street in their vulnerability."

Fourteen years and three biological children later, Amelia and Jeff seriously considered adoption but weren't *quite* on the same page.

"Enter Andy and Martha Cook. They came over, encouraged us in our call to adopt, and we decided to begin pursuing this journey." - Amelia

"I was intrigued by the idea of adopting and was at least open to considering, but I wasn't sold. Over dinner I

asked Andy why I should adopt. He smirked and simply said, 'Why wouldn't you?' To this I had no adequate response except for 'You're right.' From that moment on, I was in." - Jeff

In December 2015, Amelia and Jeff applied to an Ethiopian adoption program, completed the home study, raised money for their adoption, completed their dossier, prepared to welcome a child into their family, *and waited...* for 270 days. **After nine months of eagerly awaiting a child, the program shut down and the adoption fell through.**

"We grieved ... big time."

Knowing they were still called to adopt, the Davis family applied to a Chinese program, completed *another* home study, and anticipated bringing a child home from China. As they waited, they felt unsettled... **"it was like something was off with this adoption."** Unable to shake the feeling that they were trying to force something, they felt compelled to withdraw from the process of adopting from China. They continued to wait, to pray, and to trust.

After accepting this period of

grief and waiting, Amelia and Jeff began wondering if there was something different they should pursue. They decided to go through IMPACT training for foster care, but at the end of the training, still felt the strong call to adopt.

Refusing to give up, the Davises discovered a new program in Nigeria. In July of 2018, they applied to this program, and completed yet *another* home study.

[An email from Jeff Davis to Promise686 in July 2018]: *"It's like we've already been through all the mess three times and have been grieving the whole time, but for some reason we feel God saying now it's time... We'll need all the help we can get. It's a big step for us to jump back into adoption. We never gave up hope that it wasn't over, but it's been a heavy couple of years-both of us had job changes and our kids moved schools during this time, too. So, this is more momentous than simply saying yes. We're saying yes again in spite of all that has occurred already and we're excited."*

In December 2018, after completing the necessary

paperwork and training for a Nigerian placement, they received an email about a sibling set in *Malawi* who had been in an institution for three years. Jeff and Amelia had hoped for a sibling set and immediately felt connected to the kids described in that email.

Moving forward with this adoption would mean forfeiting the deposit with the Nigerian adoption agency, but that didn't matter. They knew these were *their* children and within three weeks were matched.

Their journey didn't stop here.

In June of 2019, Jeff, Amelia, and their three biological kids flew to Malawi to meet the newest members of their family. They had a court date soon after landing and spent the next five weeks waiting for the court's decision. The next step was to submit an application to return to Georgia with their newly adopted children, which meant...*more waiting*.

Summer was coming to a close, school was about to begin, and Jeff and their biological kids needed to return home. Amelia stayed in Malawi with the

newest family members, while waiting for the US to approve their visas. This process took another eight weeks, leaving Amelia separated from her husband and biological kids (6th, 4th & 2nd grade) while they started a new school year.

"We were blessed by people willing to come over to our house at 6:45 in the morning to do the girls' hair and get the kids ready for school. Those are the things people don't think about when supporting a family, but were such big things for us."

Finally, after 105 days in Malawi, Amelia and the two kids flew home to reunite with their family.

"When you know you're in God's will, that's when you don't give up. The enemy will show up, but God is faithful."

Walking alongside Jeff and Amelia throughout this journey has been an incredible gift to us at Promise.

"While we were in Malawi waiting for the US to issue visas, Andy (Promise686 CEO)

was advocating for us by putting us in contact with our US representatives. Without their involvement, we may still have been in Malawi now. And the grant we received from Promise was an amazing gift.

Having an organization with such an incredible reputation that's making a difference in the lives of vulnerable children really made a difference for us."

The Davis family officially brought their two newest children home in October of 2019. Jeff and Amelia feel like they can finally "start the real work" of providing these kids with a safe, loving family.

The children will, of course, have much healing to do. While Amelia and Jeff have persevered to find them, they've endured even greater difficulties leading to the present day. Thankfully, healing happens best in a loving family.

"There is a huge need for kids to live in a forever family. Every child deserves this." - Amelia Davis



NATIONWIDE GROWTH

Because of our generous donors, we're able to continue mobilizing churches nationwide. While we currently serve 244 Georgia churches, we work with 24 affiliates in 18 states to serve 504 churches nationwide.

244
GEORGIA
CHURCHES

18
STATES

24
AFFILIATES

504
CHURCHES
NATIONWIDE

MORE THAN ENOUGH

Did you know we partner with Christian Alliance for Orphans to work toward the "More than Enough" goal? "More than Enough" is defined as 10% of churches in every county having an active Family Advocacy Ministry.

Currently, More than Enough Advocates represent 390 counties across 46 states. The goal is for 10% of churches in every county to be involved in foster care by 2025. Learn more at morethanenoughtogether.org.



BY THE NUMBERS

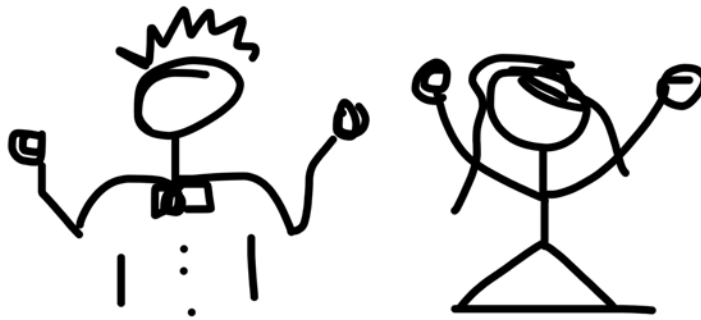
2019

FUN!
(DRAISERS)

MADE FOR HOME

Over **100** volunteers rallied to make our annual benefit a reality, raising **\$360,000**. Hosts, sponsors, and donors had their gifts matched by a generous foundation for a total of ...

\$720,000 RAISED THROUGH MADE FOR HOME



CONGRATS TO OUR PROMISE AWARD WINNERS, KRISTIN WRIGHT + KELLY BROOKS!

Kristin became our first volunteer Advocate to work herself into a part-time job at Grace Snellville, launching more than 10 Care Communities within 6 months. During this time, she and her husband became a foster family and eventually adopted two children, growing to a family of seven. Grace Snellville has since trained an unprecedented 105 local families to become trauma-informed foster families, and have seen 19 children adopted into their forever home.

Kelly began volunteering with Chosen For Life Ministries in Athens, our first official Implementing Affiliate. Soon after launching Care Communities, she and her husband began fostering. After two years of caring for a special needs, medically fragile baby, they adopted the child through foster care. Kelly now serves as the Foster Care Initiative Coordinator at Chosen For Life, where they've supported 43 partner churches in 7 counties, launched 148 Care Communities, and recruited over 75 new foster families.

TOUGH CAMPAIGN

200 runners joined together to engage **843** donors and raise **\$290,000** to support FAMs.



BIG FUN

350 children, parents, and volunteers came together to develop community and celebrate how God sets the lonely in families.

WHAT'S NEW IN 2019?

GOING DIGITAL

We developed an online training!

This new tool is a way to expand Family Advocacy Ministries into more cities across the U.S. by allowing Lead Advocates to view the training digitally versus attending the traditional in-person clinic training.

T R A C K I N G T H E M O V E M E N T

Promise developed Promise Serves, a volunteer coordination tool which also records the progress that church FAMs are making. The online training and Promise Serves are our newest ways to equip individuals to successfully create and lead FAMs, and ultimately, care for vulnerable children.

THE BIG ONE-OH (AND A MOVE!)

This summer, we celebrated 10 years of official ministry AND a new office space, right in the heart of Norcross, GA. Thank you to all who joined us for the Open House + Birthday Party!



THIS YEAR, WE WELCOMED THREE NEW FACES TO THE TEAM



OLIVIA ALSTON | DIRECTOR OF METROPOLITAN PARTNERSHIPS

Olivia earned her B.S. in Sociology from Lincoln University (Mo.) and her Master of Social Work from Clark Atlanta University. She has a background in community engagement, volunteer recruitment, and nonprofit leadership. Olivia is highly invested in her community, serving as a Board Member for a variety of organizations.

ERIN BLONSHINE | OPERATIONS MANAGER

Erin earned her BSEd in English Education from UGA, and is currently pursuing a Masters of Biblical and Theological Studies from Dallas Theological Seminary. She has a passion for serving children and families, and in her free time, enjoys relaxing on the lake and playing with her nieces and nephews.



AUDREY HAYES | CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Audrey graduated from Shorter University with a Bachelor's degree in Communication and has a background in digital media, storytelling, and design. She enjoys hosting creative gatherings, advocating for social good, and spending time with family and friends.

WE BROKE CLINIC RECORDS IN 2019

**THIS YEAR, WE HIT AN ALL-TIME HIGH IN NUMBER OF CLINICS
+ MADE OUR WAY ACROSS THE U.S. FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER**

We worked with partners to train right at **500 leaders** across the nation through **31 Advocate Clinics** from coast to coast.

"After the clinic, I'm now inspired and determined to get my church involved. The material, training, and support offered by your organization makes this a no-brainer decision." - Advocate in California



ANGEL ARMIES + PROMISE686

Did you know Grammy winner Chris Tomlin is now an official Promise686 partner and advocate? His foundation, Angel Armies, is "a community passionate about solving the issues plaguing our vulnerable youth" and they've chosen Promise686 as a **strategic ally** in this mission. As part of the partnership, Tomlin is using his nationwide concert tour to share about our work developing **Family Advocacy Ministries (FAMs)** and the opportunities to care for vulnerable children.

A black and white photograph of a young boy wearing a baseball cap and a jersey, smiling broadly with his arms outstretched. The image is slightly faded to serve as a background for the text.

FAM

FAMILY ADVOCACY MINISTRY

Because children need families

THANK YOU

The impact made in 2019 wouldn't be possible without the generosity of our donors. If you supported Promise686 this past year, we want to sincerely thank you for your gift. You've helped make an impact in the lives of vulnerable children across the country!

WE'D LOVE TO SEE MORE OF YOU IN 2020!

At Promise686, we want to mobilize church communities to care for vulnerable children, and we're inviting you to join us. Stay in touch with our team or get involved with our mission.

Visit livethepromise.org to learn how to bring a FAM to your church or attend a clinic and learn how to care for vulnerable children.

Follow us on social media to stay updated on our progress in 2020: **@promise686**

WAYS TO GIVE

To support our mission, visit promise686.org/donate or give by check:

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