

BUILDING CHANGES

END HOMELESSNESS
TOGETHER



**Washington
Families Fund**
A Public-Private Partnership

hopelink
Helping People. Changing Lives.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 22, 2010

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Local Family's Story Illustrates Partnership and Progress That is the Cornerstone to White House's First-Ever Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness

Historic announcement highlights formerly homeless family from a Washington State model program and delivers a roadmap for federal, state and local collaboration to end homelessness throughout the United States.

SEATTLE, WA, June 22, 2010—Today, the Washington Families Fund, an innovative public-private partnership led by Building Changes, is gaining national attention for its bold approach to reducing family homelessness throughout Washington State.

In unveiling its first comprehensive strategy to prevent and end homelessness, titled *Opening Doors: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, the White House is drawing on the story of Natalie from Issaquah, Washington, to illustrate progress in helping homeless families become self-sufficient.

Natalie, a former member of the Navy, and her two sons were homeless three years ago. Fortunately, they connected with Hopelink (Hope-Link.org), a Redmond-based nonprofit that helps families in crisis achieve self-sufficiency and has received support from Building Changes and the Washington Families Fund since 2007. Hopelink provided Natalie and her sons with affordable housing and support, including employment training. Today she has a good full-time job, is paying off debt, and aims to complete her college education.

“Natalie’s story and the work in Washington State illustrate how the best ideas are often developed outside of Washington, D.C.” said Barb Poppe, Executive Director, United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. “Building Changes, the State of Washington, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have invested significant resources to better understand the unique needs of homeless families with children. What they have learned is helping to create more efficient and effective ways of helping homeless families.”

Opening Doors stresses the need to be smarter and more targeted in the federal government’s response and role to leverage local and regional assets. The plan calls for building on momentum created in communities across the county that show progress in addressing homelessness, despite difficult economic conditions that contribute to an increase in demand for services and support, and a decline in government and private resources.

“Natalie’s story is a perfect example of the need for us to move forward with a comprehensive strategic plan to end homelessness in America,” said Senator Patty Murray. “I am proud to support the Washington Families Fund, Building Changes, and Hopelink, and I am committed to continuing to work with them and so many others to make sure that no family finds themselves living on the streets in Washington State or anywhere else.”

To meet the increased demand and growing need, the State of Washington, the Washington Families Fund, and many public and private partners have been working to develop and embrace new strategies to reduce family homelessness, as signaled by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in the spring of 2009. King, Snohomish and Pierce counties have developed plans to test the new strategies in their communities.

“Hope and hard work are at the core of Natalie’s story—one that is also possible because of the model public-private partnership of the Washington Families Fund. I am proud that partners across Washington have come together to make progress in addressing family homelessness. I am pleased that the national plan draws on and promotes solutions not only at the federal level, but throughout all levels of government,” said Governor Chris Gregoire.

Services and support provided to Natalie and her sons by Hopelink are one example of how a family can become self-sufficient again with help that is targeted to their specific needs.

“Hopelink and our partners represent the hundreds of providers throughout Washington State who strive daily to end homelessness. We are poised to participate in county, state and federal government plans to make an even greater impact.” said Marilyn Mason Plunkett, CEO and Executive Director, Hopelink. “Natalie truly embodies what a family in crisis can achieve given the right tools,”

“We are proud of the tireless effort our grantee partners, such as Hopelink, are putting into their programs and the contribution they are making to their communities across Washington state.” said Betsy Lieberman, Executive Director of Building Changes.

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About Building Changes

Building Changes has supported individuals and families throughout Washington State for more than 20 years, and has administered the Washington Families Fund since its creation in 2004. Guided by a belief that everyone deserves the opportunity for a home, a healthy life and a good job, the Seattle-based nonprofit unites public and private partners to create innovative solutions, delivering expert advice, grant making and advocacy for lasting change. Building Changes serves more than 8,000 individuals annually, including homeless families with children, homeless single adults, housing and service providers and related government entities. For more information visit www.buildingchanges.org.

About the Washington Families Fund

The Washington Families Fund was created by the Washington State Legislature in 2004 to ensure that homeless families with children have the supportive services linked to housing they need to move from crisis to stability. To date, the Fund has awarded nearly \$16 million to 43 programs across Washington State dedicated to preventing and ending family homelessness. Public and private partners have contributed \$26 million and more than 1,000 families including 1,860 children and 1,181 adults have received help.

About Hopelink

Since 1971, Hopelink has provided comprehensive social services to at-risk families and individuals throughout Washington State's north and east King County region. The Hopelink approach – promoting self-sufficiency to create lasting personal and community change – has helped move tens of thousands of people from vulnerability and crisis to independence and stability. The agency has broadened its focus through the years from emergency intervention to include the longer term support needed by at-risk families and individuals to make lasting change. Today, Hopelink provides a full array of critical social services through more than 40 different programs, including housing, transportation, case management, financial assistance, employment programs, adult education and literacy training, a vast referral network and five food banks.