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PROMISE686 EXPANDING IN MONTANA TO HELP VULNERABLE CHILDREN, FAMILIES

KALISPELL, MONTANA—More than 3,000 children live in foster care in Montana, with most residing in and around the larger cities, including Billings, Great Falls, Helena, Butte, and the Flathead, according to Aaron Scofield, Montana director for Promise686. “The children and families often experience one crisis after another, causing further trauma and instability.” Scofield’s organization works to reduce some of the greatest barriers to adoption: financial and physical resources. He partners with local churches “to help children and families connect for a lifetime.”

As an example, a family in northwest Montana recently started the adoption process for a medically fragile, wheelchair-bound child; however, the family needed a highly specialized and costly wheelchair ramp. The local Department of Child and Family Services submitted a request to Promise686. Through the organization’s Family Advocacy Ministries (FAMs), eight churches, two families, and one business collaborated to purchase and install the ramp.

The cost of the ramp was \$8,858, and the group raised over \$8,200. This included, from one family, \$50 in lemonade-stand proceeds, the 12-year-old daughter’s entire savings of \$150, and a matching gift from the children’s parents.

The new, adoptive mother said, “We all have a purpose in life and that includes this precious child.... To be given the honor of not only caring for a medically fragile child but becoming their cheerleader and chauffeur to their doctor appointments and therapy sessions is worth front-row seats.”

Promise686’s Montana Initiative works with local churches to implement Family Advocacy Ministries to help vulnerable children. “By mobilizing church volunteers to serve families in crisis, children receive the care and stability they need,” Scofield said. “We collaborate with state and tribal organizations who identify needs, which are relayed through an online system to hundreds of volunteers in the church community. Needs are met and families strengthened.”

The Montana Initiative mobilized 34 active FAMs spanning six counties, from the Flathead region to Custer and Yellowstone counties, during 2021. Promise686 is working with child-welfare partners and churches to expand to Great Falls, Helena, Butte, Missoula, and Bozeman by the end of 2022. “We hope to see 75 active FAMs mobilized next year, serving more than 300 children with an economic impact of more than \$115,000,” Scofield said. “Currently the churches serve over 110 kids and have an economic impact greater than \$45,000.”

The Montana Initiative of Promise686 is supported by individual donors, churches, For Others Collective, Headwaters Foundation, and the Gianforte Family Foundation. “Churches are key partners in helping meet the needs of the community,” said Catherine Koenen, executive director for the Gianforte Family Foundation. “By connecting these needs with churches, Promise686 is helping some of Montana’s most vulnerable children and families overcome difficult circumstances.”

More information on Promise686’s Montana Initiative is available from Aaron Scofield:
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