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NEW PROMISE 686 MONTANA INITIATIVE HELPS 1,000 CHILDREN IN NEED

KALISPELL, MONTANA—“I never saw a request that went unmet,” says Dee Kale, CarePortal coordinator for Kalispell’s Easthaven Baptist Church. Along with hundreds of Easthaven volunteers, Kale helps area children in need by providing basics, from books to beds.

Kale is one of several church volunteers who works with Aaron Scofield, Montana director for Promise686, which officially launched its state operation in January. Scofield serves a seven-county network of churches, and plans to expand to Missoula, Billings, and Cascade County in the coming year, eventually expanding efforts statewide.

Through Promise686’s CarePortal, churches connect with those in need by responding to requests submitted by partner agencies, including Montana’s Child and Family Services. Schools, state and tribal organizations identify needs, which are relayed through an online system to hundreds of volunteers in the church community.

“Families may have simple needs like books, school supplies, beds, and mattresses, as well as tires on a car so they can make it to various appointments,” Scofield says.

Kale adds, “Not long ago, a family took in six kids from one family, and asked for bicycles. Six bikes were provided. Another time, we received a request for a foster child’s bed. A community member already had a bed in her vehicle, that she no longer needed. She was delighted to deliver it to someone in need, sheets and all. She thanked us for the opportunity to help someone in need.”

CarePortal is a resource of Promise686’s Family Advocacy Ministries (FAMs), which provide churches training and tools to serve foster and adoptive families as well as biological families in crisis. FAMs equip volunteers to care for at-risk children, offer wrap-around support for families and children, and engage in service projects to improve their communities. Scofield estimates the CarePortal has helped nearly 1,000 Montana children.

Scofield helps mobilize churches by developing local FAMs to engage members of the church. “The goal is for everyone in the church to do something,” Scofield says. “We provide the connection, tools, and opportunity for churches to engage in ways unique to their church’s ability and the culture of their community. Every FAM is focused on prevention, intervention, and/or connection—helping meet kids’ physical needs, preventing problems, and helping unite children with strong families.”

The Montana Initiative of Promise686 is supported by individual donors, the Angel Armies Foundation, and the Gianforte Family Foundation. “Help for Montana’s most vulnerable families and children is a community need, and churches are key players in meeting the needs of their community,” says Catherine Koenen, executive director for the Gianforte Family Foundation. “Promise686 is helping them do that, making sure kids are able to live happy, healthy lives in the midst of difficult situations.”

“It’s a great Christian outreach program,” Kale says. “A lot of kids are taken care of through the church.”

More information on Promise686’s Montana Initiative is available from Aaron Scofield: ascfield@promise686.org; 406-931-0879; promise686.org/montana.