

Valley fundraiser centers on box city

Family Promise organization provides, food, shelter, other aid to families in need

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OF THE TRIBUNE

Some community members are spending Friday night in cardboard boxes to raise money for homeless families in the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley.

The parking lot of Our Lady of Lourdes church in Lewiston, 2015 13th Ave., will be transformed into a box city as part of a fundraiser for Family Promise, said board member Toni Kraut. Participants are collecting pledges and sleeping in makeshift dwellings to raise awareness of the homeless in this community and help families in need.

"I just hope the community will support us," she said. "I know it is a tough time, but that's all the more reason our services are needed. We

are in need of some money. Right now, we have enough to sustain us through the end of the year."

Family Promise, a nonprofit organization, provides food, shelter and assistance to families in crisis. A day center in Lewiston opened in early August, and host churches are providing space for families to sleep, while other churches provide meals and other services.

"It's going pretty well," Kraut said. "Eighteen churches are participating, and we hope to get some more on board. We would like to have 13 host churches for housing, and 13 team churches to help with meals, getting supplies, doing laundry or whatever else needs done."

The local organization, which is part of a national interfaith hospitality network, has received several grants to help fund its day center at 921 Ninth Ave. in Lewiston, including a \$39,000 community block grant from the city of Lewiston. An executive director and a part-time van

driver are the only paid positions.

About four families contact the day center for help every week, said Ron Ramos, executive director.

Family Promise goes beyond meeting immediate needs of food and shelter. The goal is to attain stable housing and employment by linking homeless families to available services in the area, Kraut said.

"It's always going to be a struggle financially because we constantly have to look for grants and donations to keep going," Kraut said. "But we're here to stay. It's needed in our valley. That's pretty evident by the interviewing we've done."

Setup of the box city will be from 4 to 7 p.m., followed by live music and entertainment from 7 to 10 p.m. A pancake breakfast will be served to participants at 6 a.m. Saturday morning. More information is available online at www.familypromiselc.org.

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