



### FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TURNING 'THOUGHT BUBBLES' INTO OPPORTUNITIES

*by Beverly Worthington, MA, ACNP*

Imagine blowing bubbles. Given the right amount of airflow, they appear in rapid succession — some big, some small, some attached to each other, and even some that pop out of existence quickly. The ones that maintain their form float around with ease for a short time until they, too, vanish from view. I remember, as a child, trying to catch a bubble with my bubble wand, then trying to catch another so they could join together — always trying to create the biggest collection of bubbles I could at one time. It was an exercise in patience and persistence.

My first three months with FamilyForward have been a lot like blowing bubbles. With each new encounter I have within our communities, flurries of bubbles fill my head. I call them “thought bubbles,” which represent the abundant opportunities we have — as individuals, organizations and communities — to influence meaningful change and create powerful impact. These opportunities are big and small, simple and complex. Some pop quickly, but many simply keep floating until it’s appropriate to explore the possibilities each one holds. Even as that happens, more bubbles appear, which means we have the capacity to grow into new ways of thinking to overcome the ever-changing challenges present in our communities.

#### **Thought bubbles in action**

When I began my new position, the board and staff of FamilyForward were already engaged in a strategic-planning process to identify some of their bubbles, and I’m excited to join their exploration. While learning on the go, I am inspired by the many ways FamilyForward continues to turn thought bubbles into opportunities — acting boldly to change families’ lives, and the surrounding communities, for the better.

FamilyForward is keeping families housed in the face of rising rental costs and limited options for affordable housing. Many working families in our communities are struggling to keep up; one emergency or unexpected event can threaten their home stability. We at FamilyForward work to build villages around families — through staff, mentors, community resources and more — who validate that they are not alone.

#### **Building support systems**

While we establish goals and provide other support to improve families’ financial states, I truly believe it’s the consistently compassionate human connection that makes the greatest difference. We all need a solid support system around us to help build confidence that we can make our way in the world, even if we require a little help along the way. We have an opportunity to augment our impact in significant ways. As I continue to collect bubbles through engagement with associates, families and supporters, I invite you to reach out to me, at [beverly.worthington@family-forward.org](mailto:beverly.worthington@family-forward.org), with thoughts about how FamilyForward can become an even better partner in the community. I’m looking forward to all the ways we will grow together.

# JOY STORIES

Read these brief stories of progress and hope from three families in the FamilyForward program as of late 2024.



## Moving past paycheck to paycheck

Mom L, a single parent who has lived paycheck to paycheck her entire life, recently told her volunteer mentors, “I have never looked at my bank statements before. I always thought it was ancient history!” Her mentors have shown her how to use her bank statements as a tool to identify spending patterns and set goals for future spending. Mom L admits she has become more conscious of her spending in the moment because she knows she will see the transaction when she looks at her bank statement in a few weeks. She told her mentors, “You guys have me thinking!”

## Rent assistance comes through in health crisis

Mom Y needed surgery for complications from a chronic health problem. She needed to be off work for two weeks to recover, but she had no more paid time off. FamilyForward paid a higher portion of her rent that month because she missed an entire paycheck. Without FamilyForward, Mom Y, who is a single parent, would have fallen behind on rent and possibly been at risk for losing the apartment.

## Actively managing finances pays off

Mom A graduated from the FamilyForward two-year program in August 2024. During her time as a participant, she paid off more than \$12,000 in debt. She reported to her volunteer mentors that she now has a better handle on her finances than she did when she entered the program, and she feels like her head is above water for the first time in a long time.

These stories illustrate some of the many ways FamilyForward tangibly impacts the lives of families who are struggling to move past living paycheck to paycheck toward achieving self-sufficiency. With help from volunteer mentors and professional staff, parents participating in our program grow in confidence and practical skills and feel empowered to actively make progress as they work to improve their lives in practical, personal, and professional ways.

*Visit [family-forward.org/blog](https://family-forward.org/blog) for more family stories.*

### MISSION STATEMENT

Strengthening northwest suburban families to achieve financial stability and independence through mentoring, rental assistance and support services.

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*Special thanks to Elk Grove Township, Palatine Township, Schaumburg Township, Wheeling Township, and the Villages of Arlington Heights and Palatine for providing significant financial and other assistance to our client families.*

# THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS FINANCIAL DONORS

We are grateful to the following people and organizations for their generous financial donations in 2024.

With your partnership, FamilyForward continues to help local families build a brighter future.

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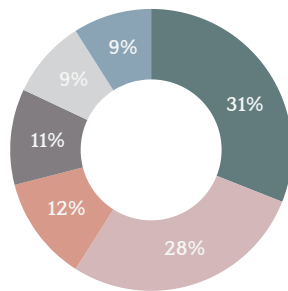
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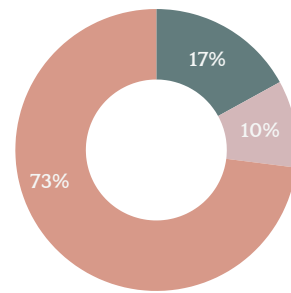
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- Fundraising Events
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- Administrative/operating expense
- Fundraising expense
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Additional types of support for which we are also very thankful include sponsoring events, purchasing event tickets, participating in auctions, and donating goods and services. Thank you!  
 Visit [family-forward.org/supporters](http://family-forward.org/supporters) for more.

# MEET BEVERLY WORTHINGTON

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FAMILYFORWARD

Beverly Worthington, MA, ACNP, began serving as executive director of FamilyForward in late October 2024. Over the past several months, she has been busy getting to know the board of directors, staff and volunteers, and digging into the perspectives and processes of how we serve families and make a difference in our local communities.

Beverly and her family (including her spouse, the Rev. Quincy Worthington, four children and several pets) moved from Indiana to Illinois three years ago and currently reside in a northern suburb of Chicago. Since moving to the area, she invested time in learning about the resources available in and around the northwest suburbs for people who are struggling to meet basic needs. It didn't take long to discover FamilyForward.

When the position of executive director appeared on her radar, Beverly felt drawn to the role because of FamilyForward's mission, which resonated strongly with her. Beverly grew up in a low-income, working family in Cleveland, Ohio. "I've experienced firsthand the effects of chronically living in survival mode. The choices I've made throughout my personal and professional journeys were informed by previous experience — and a deeply rooted belief that everyone deserves a fair chance in life."

Beverly feels inspired by the mission and work of FamilyForward and she brings a unique set of talents to her new role. One strength is the ability to analyze concepts and actions within the context of the whole process or vision. "If you can count on anything, it's that I will thoroughly think through opportunities to uncover potential short- and long-term impacts." A lifelong learner, Beverly's curiosity has ultimately shaped her leadership style and how she builds relationships. "What's really come from that is a deeper connection with humanity and my own humanness."

As she learns and grows in her new role, Beverly is also developing and refining her own personal vision for how she will help power the mission and work of FamilyForward and its impact across the northwest suburbs. "I know we will continue to live into FamilyForward's vision with the same strong dedication that has seen us through the last 21 years." *This article has been abridged. Read the complete story at [family-forward.org/blog](https://family-forward.org/blog).*

## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

### WE ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR SUPPORTIVE FAITH COMMUNITIES

#### St. John UCC's continued commitment to FamilyForward

We would like to recognize and thank St. John United Church of Christ, Arlington Heights, for its long-term support of FamilyForward. In addition to the church's annual donation to our mission, members consistently step up to make individual donations, provide gift cards and birthday party kits for families in our program, and actively participate in fundraising events. The church is always well represented at FamilyForward's golf outings and annual *Giving Hope* event. A number of church members have served on the FamilyForward Board of Directors, including Paul Cochran, who organized and led the Faith Community Homes Organ Concert for many years. Member Tim Wayman currently serves as board chair. We truly appreciate the continued commitment of the St. John UCC congregation to our mission.



*Members of St. John United Church of Christ supported and enjoyed FamilyForward's 2024 Giving Hope event.*



### FamilyForward

302 N. Dunton Avenue  
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### SAVE THE DATE

FamilyFOREward Golf Outing | Thursday, June 12

Chevy Chase Country Club  
1000 N. Milwaukee Ave, Wheeling, IL 60090  
Shotgun start at noon. Registration opens soon!



### CONNECTING IN THE COMMUNITY

On Wednesday, January 22, community leaders gathered at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Palatine to connect and learn about the good work being done and brainstorm more ways to help underserved people in the northwest suburbs. We were also introduced to Shadrach Comfort Dog of the Northbrook-based Lutheran Church Charities (LCC) K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry, who will be visiting different locations throughout the community, bringing his calming influence whenever needed.

**Cool fact:** FamilyForward Board Member Jen Strimling (pictured with FF Executive Director Beverly Worthington and Shadrach), is a comfort dog handler with LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs!

It's always a gift to connect with others passionate about building strong and resilient communities.

