

Karen Olson

**Founder and President of Family Promise
(formerly known as Interfaith Hospitality Network)
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"I don't see how the issues of homelessness and poverty can be solved unless there is a spiritual renewal right now. People are motivated by their religion to address social justice issues. Yet, you really need to work outside the churches to accomplish this."

Karen Olson

Areas of expertise

- Building grassroots social activism through Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities of faith
- Religion and the reduction of poverty



Topics in the News

- The President's tax cuts and the short-and-long term effects on the poor
- Low wage workers
- U.S. homelessness
- New, community approaches to affordable housing

Biography

Karen Olson is increasing civic participation among people of faith. She founded Family Promise, formerly known as Interfaith Hospitality Network (NIHN) in 1988 with the mission of providing shelter, meals, and comprehensive support to families without homes. Family Promise assists religious and community organizations in outreach to the homeless through increased community involvement in direct service and advocacy. This network now has more than 87,000 volunteers with 103 affiliates in 28 states, and almost 3,000 congregations throughout the country participate in the program. Recently, Family Promise trademarked a social justice curriculum focused on poverty, not just homelessness. Ms. Olson is developing partnerships in this work between Xian, Muslim, and Jewish congregations.

Recent Interviews & Articles

- *Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette*, February 18, 2007, "[Homeless advocate to speak in city; Local leaders to hear talk on interfaith group](#)"
- *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, February 8, 2007, "[Ray of hope: Interfaith networks are forming in Manatee and Sarasota counties with a focus on helping homeless families](#)"
- *First Coast News*, November 2, 2006, by Angela Spears, "[Local Churches Providing Shelter to Homeless Families](#)" 
- *Houston Chronicle*, October 19, 2005 "RECOVERING FROM RITA: Trailers offer shelter close to home as repairs made; Up to 2,000 East Texas families are eligible, but some anti-poverty groups are critical"
- *The Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, July 22, 2004 "[New idea sparks hope for homeless help](#)" 
- *Billings Gazette*, July 20, 2004 "[Billings social-welfare program helps homeless with work, housing](#)" 
- *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sunday, November 23, 2003 "[Teaching Empathy About Poverty](#)" 
- Ms. Olson has been interviewed about Family Promise's national network in *The New York Times*, the *Charlotte Observer*, the *Buffalo News* and *Family Circle* magazine, on CBS-TV's "Saturday Early Show," and by various local media outlets.
- [Read](#)  a *Florida Times-Union* (Jacksonville, FL) interview with Karen Olson from August 20, 2001.

Organizational links for this expert

[Family Promise](#), formerly known as Interfaith Hospitality Network (NIHN)

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