

Using our community led model we have always been equipped to help build bridges for the families and community we serve. Fighting the equity issues in our community has been a part of our mission since day one. We have fought tooth and nail trying to fill the gaps between our community members and the resources that they need. With everything changing so abruptly for us all back in March 2020, we were forced to figure out a way to fill yet another gap, Digital equity. We found out very quickly that our families did not have access to devices and/or WIFI. Also, there was a huge knowledge gap that our families were faced with. We had to find ways to help still provide the services that we were already doing, plus now we had a digital divide.

Our families have been equipped with devices and hotspots by either us, or the school district which helped get access into the homes, but we still have the lack of knowledge that so many families were facing. We have provided training classes to teach parents, volunteers and staff to learn how to use the devices and the programs that are needed for them to complete the school work provided by the district. We have volunteers and partners that have a strong knowledge of technology and have helped us fill the gap for many of our families. We also have homework help sessions for our children to attend either online or in person. Promise neighborhood has still been providing food boxes and other family support via delivery or pick up. One way that we were able to continue to provide to our families is by delivery. We have done many individual deliveries but we also provide “Parade” style drop offs as well to our families. We include food boxes, crafts and fun things for the kids during those drop offs to encourage them to continue learning at home. Our greatest success story is just as simple as we have been able to continue our programming and services throughout this past year, providing our families with the most support as possible.

We have set up our building for success during the Covid-19 pandemic by providing sanitation stations, masks, hand washing measures and a strict cleaning schedule. We also adhere to the same health questions as the school district and take temps at the door. We have added a day to our regular programming to be able to serve more children as safely as possible.

One thing that I know will continue to be a permanent change is how we continue to bring our programming to the streets. We know that for some of our families it is hard for them to get to us. We will also continue to provide distance learning help and continue to help our children and families learn and grow to continue to close the digital equity gap.

Promise Neighborhood of Central MN

We have always maintained a close relationship with our families and would recommend that to any other organization. We were able to continue to provide the services that we provide because we have such a close relationship with them. They trust us with their children and believe in our work, we have continued access because of the nature of our relationships. Covid or not, we will provide the best possible service we can.