

Good Works, Inc. — A Community of Hope

Celebrating 32 Years!



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Keith Wasserman, Founder/Executive Director

*"I made the WIDOW'S heart sing, I took up the case of the STRANGER, I was a father to the FATHERLESS."
(Job 29:12-13)*

Dear friends,

April 2013

Today I feel warmth, hope and birdsong in the air, and am reminded what a *beautiful* place Southeast Ohio is. Thank you for continuing to affirm, through your encouragement and gifts, the worth of Appalachia and its people. I speak for many who have received your kindness during their time of struggle: thank you!

Imagine with me now... a microwave dinner, the fast-food drive-through, and one car in the driveway of a house occupied by one. Familiar as these sights and experiences are to all of us, they leave a little gnawing in my soul. Perhaps yours, too. Sure, when I eat alone I am physically fed, but on the inside I may be empty of connection and love. This makes me ask: What happened to the shared meal? It feels lost somewhere on the highway of individualism, scattered with our fragmented families. Rich and poor alike feel this hungry loss.

Simple as it seems, in the Good Works community we are trying to reclaim the value of the shared meal. In particular, we want to recover meals shared in a spirit of generosity between people who feel they have little in common because of the difference between their bank statements. But over chicken and noodles, green beans, rolls and sweet tea, we discover that we are the same, because essentially, we all need to eat. This is a gut-level realization, which at its core means we share the common vulnerabilities and needs of being human: we need to be valued. We need the love of God.

I think 5:30 pm must be a sacred time around here. Almost everything stops, and most of the best things start: *"My name is Nancy, and I am thankful that I got to see my son today."*

That is, we learn each other's names and stories. We express gratitude for our lives, and eat together, intentionally including people for whom friendship or food is scarce. This sit-down, community dinner happens about five days a week at the Timothy House, and includes residents, staff, volunteers and guests. Often, the residents have the opportunity to serve the rest of the household by preparing the meal.

We've formed a similar tradition over lunch at the Hannah House to deepen our relationships with Transformation Station volunteers who come to serve in exchange for a resource they need. In addition to many other meals shared by residents and guests, we have a special lunch three days a week when a huge assortment of people gathers to eat together. Delightfully, new volunteers who once felt like strangers find a home at the heart of it all, sometimes behind the kitchen sink!

We do more dishes on Friday nights, when the meal includes 100 to 150 friends and no-longer-strangers. Amazingly, this is our 20th year of Friday Night Life: connecting people from all walks of life over the gift of food...and in the midst of this, uncovering a bit of the kingdom of God!

As shared meals become a familiar source of nourishment in my life, I am mindful that they necessitate *sharing*— of purse and time and self. They require all of us to be vulnerable and present with another human being. Personally, I am humbled most when I receive this kind of hospitality from someone whose generosity is costly to them.

Thank you for *your* sharing— your many gifts that allow us to love our neighbors in this way. And I would challenge you... perhaps the most subversive, loving thing you will do all week is eat with someone who is not like you!

— Dawn Tobin

IN THE NEWS...

- The 11th **Good Works WALK** was a great encouragement to us! Almost 600 people participated in 5 different walk experiences on February 23rd. THANK YOU to each of you who contributed and walked. To check out some photos of the event, visit our Facebook page: www.Facebook.com/Good.Works.Athens
- This past month, we hosted three weeklong **Alternative Spring Break** groups from universities in Pennsylvania and Illinois and Tennessee. We are so grateful for these students' desire to spend a week serving alongside others in Good Works community.
- Preparations for **Summer Service 2013** are underway! Soon we will begin the fifth year of our Agricultural Internship for local teens, and our second year of the Kingdom Internship for teens from local congregations. We also welcome people of all ages to do a Week of Service with us, and invite you to consider this for summer 2013.
- We are preparing the **Good Works Gardens** for spring planting these days! With the help of many volunteers, we hope to plant and maintain three community gardens and 17 gardens at the homes of our neighbors in rural Athens County this year.
- **Service Living** has continued to attract Ohio University students who want to get off campus and meet the people, learn the history, and understand the values of rural Appalachia. Now in its fourth year, this partnership with Ohio University has a weekly meeting on campus and 7 weekly Transformation Groups. To learn more, visit: <http://serviceliving.wordpress.com>
- A new season of **Neighboring 101** has begun! Participants in this weekly class held at the Timothy House are discussing the book *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* by Christine Pohl. Dr. Pohl is coming to Athens to speak with our community on May 4th. For more information, please contact us.
- We are planning a special 20th anniversary of **Friday Night Life** event on May 10th from 4:30 to 7:30 pm. If you have ever sponsored or attended Friday Night Life, this celebration should include YOU! Please come and bring a side dish to share.
- **Senior Friends** is our initiative to match volunteers with seniors in Athens County. We are seeking more volunteers to serve through friendship and visiting. How about YOU?
- Did you know that you can give to Good Works online through the **Network For Good**? Just visit our website and click on "Make a Donation." We can also make arrangements for a regular gift via an electronic fund transfer. Email us or contact Sherilyn Weinkauf at 740.594.3339 for more information.

In our life, work and meals together with people who are suffering, we often come face-to-face with profound vulnerability— both our own and that of others. Simultaneously, we are able to taste something of eternity...the goodness of God in the here and now. We owe our gratitude to his guidance and provision. Thank you for mingling your goodness in!

Love is a verb,



Keith Wasserman