

John Smith Died Today
By Paul Richard

Somebody died today. You did not know him. Actually, there are very few people left who knew him. He just died...and no one cried over the loss. This is what his obituary read.

John Smith died today.

These are the ones that we look over. They are the small ones that we hardly even notice. But indulge me for a moment and imagine what their life might be like. Many of the people living in nursing homes today have someone who regularly comes to visit them, whether friends or family. But there are some who know that they are facing a day in which no one will be coming to visit them. No one knows that they even exist except for the precious few paid workers who come by to provide the services they require. They are not only in nursing homes. Some of them even own their own property. John Smith may have married but his wife died 10 years ago. Maybe he had no children or maybe he did and they died or their relationship went so bad that there is no longer any interaction. His friends have all died. There is literally no one in his life that will come to see him today. There was no funeral for him. There was no graveside service. He died and was buried. The end.

This does not always happen. Sometimes someone comes along and something amazing happens. I know of this one story of two young women who married the sons of one woman. Unfortunately they both died leaving them all as widows, but for the older woman this was especially hard because she no longer had a support system. This woman was on a path to become like John Smith. But one of these women did something amazing...she chose to stay with her mother-in-law. She made a commitment to her that saved her from the fate of John Smith. (You can read about this account in the Bible. It is the story of Ruth.)

Good Works Samaritan Projects gives people the opportunity to help those individuals in our community who are isolated and without the resources to care for their property. These volunteers are sent to assist with whatever the project may be, but it is not just about the project. It is not just about the project. It is also an opportunity to discover who this person is. But the GW goal for this particular client is that someone would choose to become involved with this individual as a friend. This is a commitment similar to what Ruth made to Naomi. Although this does not happen very often, it is very exciting to see the ways interns and volunteers got involved with these individuals during the summer. What follows are a few stories of what happened during our Summer Service Program at Good Works.

Consider for a moment...you are living alone and you get a \$150-200 water bill. Not just once but for over a year. And then the water company comes and shuts off your water because there is a leak. After the water meter the homeowner is responsible for the water line to the house and the plumbing in the house. Crystal Park United Methodist

Church from the Canton, Ohio area came to Athens to help this woman. They went through the arduous work of digging during the August heat to find the leak in the water line and fix it. She was blessed to see young people working like that! She was impressed that people who did not even know her were willing to come and help someone like her. Most of the time the group was there, at least one member was taking time to visit with her. She enjoyed this aspect of the project.

Another project that we did was for a woman in Chauncey. She asked us to hook up a few pipes for her. When we began the work we realized that she had major plumbing problems, in fact she had not been able to use her indoor plumbing for months. Webster Christian Reformed Church from Rochester, New York helped her while they were in our community. When they saw the extent of the problem they steeled themselves and committed to making sure that she had functioning plumbing by the end of the week, no matter the amount of work nor the cost. They just wanted to leave knowing that they had helped this woman in a significant way...which is just what they did.

There are people from our communities who die alone every day. They are listed in the obituary sections of our newspaper. They are the people that we cast aside and forget about. But God does not forget about them. And he may be sending you or me to them, but when we go we will find Jesus waiting there for us to welcome us in the disguise of this person.