



# *Good Works, Inc. — A Community of Hope*

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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 29:12-17).

## *Celebrating 27 years!*

October 2007

Greetings from the community of HOPE called Good Works !!



This month, I would like you to hear a personal story of homelessness from one of our former residents. I HOPE you will be as impacted as I was when I read this story!

### **MY EXPERIENCE AT THE TIMOTHY HOUSE**

In October of 2006, I was diagnosed with diabetic retinopathy (a gradual loss of visual acuity that I had first noticed in February). I spent my days off (and most of my savings) seeking help from various physicians and agencies. By December, I could no longer see well enough to do my job, which was with one of the largest mortgage companies in the world. As my savings dwindled, and I received no help of any kind from any agency, I began to investigate the resources available to the indigent in Dallas (where I had lived for the past seven years). I was horrified at both the conditions of the facilities and the seemingly predatory looks I received from the denizens of these establishments. I have no family living, so I resolved to return to Athens, Ohio, where I had lived, worked, and attended Ohio University off-and-on for nearly twenty years.

Upon reaching Athens, I inquired at the County Health Department if they knew of any place where the indigent might find shelter in town. The staff there went so far as to call the Timothy House and arrange for a phone interview. After speaking with a staff member, I was informed that there was space available, and that it would be best if I attended a free community dinner, where I could catch a bus that would bring me to the Timothy House. I arrived at the Timothy House on a cold February evening, and was quite surprised by what I found.

I had expected to find a somewhat run-down place where I would be sleeping barracks-style amid drunks and derelicts (for such was my observation in Dallas). I wondered if I was strong enough to endure such an existence. I assumed that I would be allowed to stay at the shelter overnight, but would have to shuffle the streets during the daylight hours, carrying all of my belongings with me. I wondered what I would do for a shower (I thought perhaps I could sneak into one of the residence halls at the university and get a shower during midday, when most of the students would be in class). I knew of three free community meals that were offered weekly in Athens, but I had no idea what I would do the other four days (I had already accepted that I would only be eating once a day).

What I found at the Timothy House was quite different from my expectations. It is located in a cheery house in a pleasant neighborhood. I would not be forced to move out every morning and re-apply for shelter every evening, but rather I was assigned to a room with private space available in closets and drawers. Dinner was served every weekday at the house, with the kitchen being available to cook the other meals of the day (and weekends). All of the food is provided by donation - no one goes hungry, and the fare is sometimes MUCH better than you might imagine. My first dinner at the Timothy House included a plate of lamb that would have cost between \$8 and \$12 in a Dallas restaurant. There are also shower and laundry facilities available. I had never expected that I would be given access to a washer and dryer. The Timothy House is not just a warm place to sleep. The staff sees to it that everyone is housed, fed, and allowed to stay clean. But most of all, it is a SAFE place...All of the ideas that I had about "homeless people" were wrong.

At the Timothy House, I never met anyone threatening or even overly discourteous. The household duties are shared among the residents, and everyone is willing to offer advice (based on their own experience) on how to get along in straightened circumstances. The ages, backgrounds, and education levels vary WIDELY. It would be impossible to stereotype a Timothy House resident. The most unexpected facet of my experience at the Timothy House was this: I never met anyone I didn't like. For the balance of my life up to that point, no matter where I lived or worked or went to school, I always

encountered at least one person to be avoided, someone unpleasant. Perhaps it was a sense of shared adversity, but everyone I met there was respectful and kind to me. Many of them I still maintain friendships with to this day.

Every resident of the Timothy House is paired with a "caregiver" shortly after arrival. This is a staff member with whom to meet on a weekly basis (or more often when the need is felt). In this way, it becomes less likely that anyone will be "lost through the cracks." I received help in applying for both state and federal assistance with my disability, and the efforts to which the staff went to assist me in securing employment were truly commendable. My weekly meetings with my caregiver provided me not only an opportunity to voice my frustration and give vent to what (at times) amounted to deep despair, but also I received the encouragement and empathy I needed. I was never made to feel "homeless" and I was able maintain a dignity that (I believe) would have long gone by the wayside without the amity of the staff and volunteers. I still count my caregiver (as well as other staff members and volunteers) as a friend.

I spent four months living at the Timothy House before I was able to again move into a place of my own. Until the onset of my disability, I had always lived and worked and attended school by my own endeavor, and it was very hard for me not to be able to do that for a time (as I am sure you could image). While those were the most difficult four months of my life, I am grateful beyond measure for the help I received there. At times, the Timothy House was my ONLY succor. More than that, though, it was a societal education without price. All of the callousness and the smugness that I sometimes felt towards the "less fortunate" are gone. My naivety in assuming that governmental programs are in place, ready to adequately assist the disabled, have been replaced by a resolve to tell of my experience. The Timothy House was there for me, when no one else cared or would "lift a finger," and it is a debt that I can never repay. - Dutch Waits

**IN THE NEWS...**The Athens **Zoning Board** of Appeals did not grant us permission to use the house at 93/95 Central Avenue (next door to The Timothy House) as a shelter and transitional housing facility for homeless families. We had about 80 letters of support and zero letters in opposition. I am so thankful for the 70+ people who attended the zoning hearing and their many positive comments about Good Works. I am also very sad at the outcome of their decision. Who will care for these vulnerable and needy homeless families? I have written an essay on my thoughts about the Zoning Board's decision. It is on our web page under WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW... We are having a **FAMILY WORK CAMP DAY** on Saturday November 17th. Families can serve 8:30- noon or 12:30 pm - 4:00 pm or both. Families can also come in Friday night and stay overnight. We will gear the projects to the age and skills of the children and adults coming. Contact Paul Richard if you'd like to come... Our new initiative called **HOPE AND POSSIBILITIES** begins October 15th. This is the date Chip Guyton will begin meeting face-to-face with anyone in need to provide assistance and advocacy to our neighbors as they struggle through the challenges of poverty. Athens County remains the county with the highest rate of poverty in the state with 27% of the populations living under the poverty line. For more information on the H&P program, visit our web page and click on WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW... You can also meet some of our **new staff** on the WHO WE ARE section of our web page. Photos and bios are available... Please remember our **Good Gifts store** as you consider gifts to friends this holiday season. Our vision is to help the poor internationally by buying their handmade products and selling them locally. You can shop our store on Luhrig Road or invite Good Gifts to your church or social event.

**CURRENT NEEDS:** meats of all kinds, paper towels, toilet paper, zip seal freezer bags (all sizes), spray disinfectant, trash bags-30 gallon size, Athens Transit Bus Passes, canvas wood carrier (for the wood stove), copy paper, postage stamps, bunk bed step ladder, power drills, gas power trimmer/weed eater, finish nail gun/air or electric and a mattock. We are also seeking \$10.00 gift cards for gas/food that can be provided to our friends at Christmas this year. We still need cars and vans for our Transformation Station program and we are hoping someone will donate a "meals on wheels" truck to us to pick up food from OU. We are still seeking a volunteer who knows how to lay carpet. Know someone you could ask to help us for a day or two this fall ?

THANKS for your loving kindness and ongoing encouragement. Your gifts do sustain us. Thank you for remembering Good Works as you give generously to those in need!

Love is STILL a verb,  
Keith Wasserman



PS - The ministry God has trusted us with has everything to do with *connecting* people from all walks of life with the poor so that the kingdom of God can be experienced. PLEASE PRAY with us as we seek new volunteers to serve in our Senior Care visitation program, our computer training class (Training for Life), The Timothy House and Friday Night Kids Club. We need people willing to serve with us right now.