

Good Works, Inc. – A Community of Hope

Celebrating 34 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 2015

Here in Athens County, spring is upon us! The earth’s seasons change, and likewise human energy inevitably waxes and wanes. This presents the question: What does it take to sustain our vision to be a Community of HOPE with our neighbors struggling with poverty over the long haul?

In the same vein, people frequently ask me about the future of Good Works. My answer is, in a word, sustainability. To keep doing what we’ve been doing, and do it well. Thirty-four years in, and we are still learning to love our neighbors who are without homes, widows who are without support, and children without a sense of stability in their lives. The key word here is *learning*. In general, people learn through practice, and if you extend this concept further you get *practices*— things you do on purpose, again and again, often when you don’t feel like it.

Gratitude, hospitality, truth-telling and promise-keeping are four practices which, flowing out of our Christian faith, make up part of the invisible underpinnings of our community. The contributions of our friend Christine Pohl have been invaluable to us in this area. Her book, *Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us* gives a thorough explanation of these four practices, and we highly recommend it! While what follows doesn’t tell the whole story, here are a few examples what these practices look like in our community:

“What are you grateful for?” We take time to answer to this question, regularly! Around the dinner table at the Timothy House, shouted out by children at Friday Night Life, expressed tenderly in the form of affirmation to one another during our staff meetings... gratitude has become a staple ingredient in the community. It is a spiritual “nutrient” we need to eat, regardless of how we feel. We find that gratitude is a powerful sustaining force in our lives.

Hospitality is about welcoming people. However, we understand biblical hospitality to be different than what one might receive at a hotel, for example. There, a host might ask, “Can I get you anything else?” In contrast, one of our guests might be asked, “Would you pitch in?” Our vision to help people find “place” is one way we express hospitality. While newcomers are not forced to participate, they are invited to contribute to the larger mission in small ways such as washing dishes after a meal. The primary message being communicated here is belonging. Hospitality is about truly including people and inviting them into your life and network of relationships.

Truth-telling: One of the ways our community practices truth-telling is through the practice of “clear”. This is our way of talking about how we are doing in our relationships with each other. In community, conflict is normal. The question is how we will respond to the inevitable offenses and disappointments. Will we sweep them under the carpet and hold grudges, or do our best to address our interpersonal struggles honestly? This is difficult, and we fail regularly. But, we keep working at it because in the back of our minds we know that good communication and integrity lead to trust, and ultimately, to fruitfulness in our ministry.

Promise-keeping: Essentially, we try to keep our word. We make an effort apologize if we have to break our word. We try not to backpedal and give a list of reasons why we weren't able to carry out what we promised. Rather, we take responsibility for the situation. For a ministry like ours to operate in fruitfulness, this is really essential. One small example is staff and volunteers showing up when they are expected. This builds trust and enables us to rely on each other and extend ourselves to love our neighbors.

IN THE NEWS...

- Please receive our **heart-felt THANKS** to each of you who participated and supported the 2015 Good Works WALK. This was such an unusual year with the winter weather and the lower than expected participation. So many wanted to come but could not. Even so, we were encouraged that the WALK raised \$49,000 this year! Thank you to each of you who contributed. All the funds raised support the costs of operating the Good Works Timothy House.
- As you read this newsletter, we are preparing for **Summer Service 2015** including visiting Work Retreat Groups (short-term mission teams) and Summer Interns. This really is a large part of the Good Work year, and your support sustains our vision to BE a Community of HOPE! Each summer, we are able to plant and maintain many gardens for our neighbors, offer internships to teens, reach out to children with our daily Kids' Club and provide an every-day lunch. If you know about possible food resources for the Summer Lunch, please contact us.
- Earlier this year, we welcomed two new **Appalachian Immersion** interns, Jonathan Lawrence and Megan Roberson. We are excited that they are here for this season of serving and growing in love for God and their neighbors! If you are aware of someone who might want to explore this 9 to 12 month residential internship, please contact us!
- **Friday Night Life** moved back to the Good Works property in early April. We are celebrating 22 years of this initiative, and continue to be grateful for the blessing of groups who sponsor the meal, individuals who volunteer, and the inspiring ways that the recipients of the meal become participants. You are invited to come visit Friday Night Life, and experience our practice of gratitude for yourself!
- **Service Living**, our initiative in partnership with Ohio University will complete year #6 at the end of April. We are very encouraged to watch students "step off campus" to form service-based relationships in their weekly Transformation Groups.

IN CLOSING, I want to say this: It is beautiful to watch the interconnected relationships that form between people who are socioeconomically different. We smile as we watch people who would not naturally be drawn to one another develop friendships as they work together on behalf of others. Thank you for sustaining us as we carry on with the vision to BE a community of HOPE.

Love is a verb,

Keith Wasserman

