



Good Works, Inc. — A Community of Hope

Celebrating 38 Years!

PO Box 4, Athens, OH 45701
Phone: 740-594-3339
Email: email@good-works.net
Web: www.good-works.net

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)*

Greetings with JOY and gratitude!

April 2019

Spring is finally here and WE are very thankful. This is a new season with many visiting groups coming to serve alongside us. We feel the joy, energy, and unity these groups bring, and this is very encouraging!

This month we have asked Doug Schmaltz to share with you:

When I first met Emma, she had recently lost her husband, Max, very unexpectedly. Max and Emma had been working together to raise their three grandsons, the children of their daughter, Cindy, who has struggled with addiction for years. Emma was well into her 60s when she became the sole caretaker of the boys and as Emma aged, her health began to decline as she coped with the effects of a heart condition and a bout with cancer. She was forced to lean on Good Works for support. We helped to maintain her home, which was quickly falling into disrepair, and the family rarely missed a Friday Night Life meal, where nutritional and social nourishment were readily available.

All that being said, Emma would never allow herself to be defined by her struggles. In the face of incredible and mounting hardship, Emma maintained a quiet dignity and perseverance that defiantly resisted despair. She was quick with a hug at Friday Night Life, and when we would visit her at home, Emma would happily offer whatever hospitality she could muster.

Because of her indomitable spirit, I wasn't shocked when Emma approached me about receiving help with a vegetable garden. In fact, I was excited to be invited into another context in which I, and our volunteers, would be able to interact with Emma and the boys. When Emma and I sat down to talk about the particularities of receiving assistance, she was finishing up a course of chemo treatment and was often terribly ill. She looked at me, exhaustion written across her face, and explained that she wanted to be able to put good food on her family's table.

In that moment, Emma opened my eyes to something that I wouldn't have seen without her help. It occurred to me that what Emma was hoping for was empowerment. So much of her life was defined by overcoming the crisis of the day and bracing for the next one. Life was happening *to* her. A garden, she hoped, would give her back an element of control. She couldn't stop herself from getting cancer or prevent Max from passing away, but she most certainly was going to have a say in what ended up in front of her boys at dinner time. A garden was going to help restore a piece of her shattered dignity.

Now, I wish I could tell you, as our supporters, that it worked out that way, but Emma passed away this past summer. During the two seasons that we gardened together, Emma's health continued to spiral downward, and we scarcely produced more than a handful of potatoes and a few radishes.

As I look back on our experience with Emma, I want to find some sort of silver lining but the work we do is real and not the plot of a TV movie. When we're invited to experience life with someone who's really struggling, sometimes it's difficult to tease out the hopeful stuff from the wreckage. In Emma's case, I hope that she felt some sense of dignity when she looked out her window at her garden. I think she might have. I hope that she felt God's presence and love as we dug the potatoes out of her hard, clay soil. I think she might have. I hope Emma knows how much we cared for her and the boys. I think she might have.

Maybe the take-away from the whole experience is not to expect certainty in our work together. Maybe the lesson is to be resilient, like Emma—to keep our hands to the plow and not look back. — Doug Schmaltz

Doug Schmaltz has served on the full-time staff of Good Works since 2011. Doug has been the primary person overseeing Good Works Gardens and the 15-20 gardens we have established and helped to maintain at the homes of those we serve in rural Athens County. Doug is married to Emily and together they have 3 children at home.

IN THE NEWS....

- The Good Works WALK total for 2019 is almost \$41,000. We are so grateful to everyone who participated, and contributed, and supported the WALK. We are in the early stages of talking and planning a fundraising event for 2020 that will be intergenerational, educational, and interactive. We are happy to receive your ideas!
- Keith was featured in a national publication in March called Our Daily Bread. It was a short feature about being homeless by choice. To read about some of these experiences in 11 cities over the past 25 years, visit our website.
- We have a tentative plan to break ground on our new initiative called SIGN OF HOPE in early September. We are close to our financial goal and plan (hope) to have all the funds we need at that time. Sign of HOPE is a new home which will have two first-floor bedrooms to assist people experiencing a housing crisis who cannot climb steps. Each bedroom will have a bathroom. Good Works staff will live in the upstairs of the house, which will be located on the corner of Central Avenue and Second Street, very close to The Timothy House.
- 2019 will be a sabbath year of sorts for our Good Works Gardens. After eight consecutive years, we are going to take a year off.
- This year's focus for our Spiritual Formation Retreats will be on the many practices of Good Works including Truth Telling, Promise Keeping, Hospitality, and Gratitude. Maybe you know of a small group who might benefit from a morning or all-day Spiritual Formation Retreat!
- The Good Works Transformation Station provides appliances, bicycles, non-emergency food, and cars. In March, we provided three cars, which brings the total to 177 cars provided to families and individuals.
- Know about Week of Service? This is a GW initiative to provide a way for a volunteer to come and join us for a week. The oldest WOS participant was 73 and the youngest was 16. For more information contact us.
- This year The Good Works Board has decided to recommend the entire staff take a sabbath week and "cease" from our work for one week. We are making plans to do this in May.

In closing, I want to thank you for walking alongside us and supporting us through the normal ups and downs of ministry. The fruit of what we are doing is not always easy to see, but we know something about the power of the unseen seed. As we press on, we are committed to being teachable, and seeking first the Kingdom of God as we pursue new, creative, sustainable, and innovative ways to love and serve our neighbors.

Love is a verb,



Keith Wasserman



Good Works staff gather every Tuesday for a time of worship through song, scripture and sharing.