

The ministry God has trusted us with started year #40 on January 1st, 2020. These short reflections come from volunteers who served at The Timothy House in 2019 and offer some perspective on what it is like to be a volunteer there.

“There was a 9-month old baby here for the first time today, and that really made me think about what it is like for a small child to grow up in a transition between not having a home and trying to find one. I’m sure this baby doesn’t know anything different but how will this affect her going forward? I would be so scared but this baby doesn’t even know to be scared. Hopefully, Jennifer and Seth find a home soon so Seth can grow up with a sense of stability and comfort rather than stress and insecurity. Jennifer is strong for carrying herself and Seth as well as she does”

“I have been trying to make conversation with the residents since I began to volunteer here but I think I was hesitant and unsure how to do this effectively when I first started. I didn’t know how to start a ‘get-to-know-you’ conversation without asking “what’s your major”? Here’s the thing . . . I am a communication major so conversations should be my specialty. But I was approaching these conversations from the wrong angle. I don’t have to start by trying to find commonalities – the power of any conversation is better than none. It’s worth it to jump in to any random topic, and the people who want to engage will. Everybody is searching to be seen and known and loved, and if I keep that in mind, it doesn’t matter if we are talking about sports or the weather or what state we wish we lived in. What matters is the effort to listen to another person in the middle of their struggles and to show them they matter enough for any conversation.

“The Timothy House was so full tonight, and it was really beautiful to watch all of the interactions take place. It made me think even more about the difference hope and company can make for people experiencing poverty. Isolation breeds desperation and despair, but having so many lively, joy-filled people around can create an atmosphere full of hope. It’s easier to have a positive outlook when someone knows they have a full community to support them. Poverty is not just an economic issue but also one that is very, very human, and it’s important to remember how important the social factors are as well.”

“I think one of the issues connected to poverty that people don’t often talk about is loneliness or isolation. At dinner tonight we were talking a lot about Thanksgiving and the types of activities we look forward to doing with our families to celebrate the holidays, and I realized that a lot of people who are living in poverty or experiencing homelessness don’t have the luxury of going to visit families to celebrate. They might not have any transportation to go visit them or be able to afford a bus ride or flight “home”. There might also be a sense of shame connected to their situation or they could be too embarrassed to see their families when they are struggling to make ends meet. Additionally, some families might not welcome them home if they believe their poverty is part of a personal failure or lack of effort. While everyone else is celebrating with their families, the holidays could be a period of loneliness and isolation for those living in poverty.”

There was so much energy tonight. I love it. What I’m thinking about right now is the resilience of the three kids who just arrived. They had their first day of school at new schools today and have obviously been through a lot of changes recently (and instability). But they still know how to smile and look for the little joys. They have to balance adjusting to a new surrounding with

rules and unfamiliar people and completing their homework and just being kids. Experiencing poverty as a child makes an already confusing and overwhelming period of life even harder, but these kids show that there is hope. Maybe we all could learn from them.

“There are a lot of cultural stereotypes and assumptions surrounding the concept of homelessness or poverty, but the more people learn about and interact with people experiencing these things, the more people realize how untrue those assumptions are. Unfortunately, circumstances could leave anyone in poverty. It doesn't mean someone is lazy or stupid or less than others because they are experiencing poverty (I have known this for a long time, but I am always impressed by how much more I have to learn). For example, I met Robert tonight and I was surprised to learn that he had once dreamed of being a geneticist working in labs and sequencing genomes. I couldn't even do that if I tried. He is thinking of going back to school to learn more, and for some reason that impresses me. I didn't expect him to be uneducated, but I also did not expect him to be so interested in science (which is something I find difficult). It reminds me how important it is to keep an open mind and listen to other's stories.”

“There were only two residents here tonight, so the volunteers out-numbered the people actually living here. It was still a joyous (but quiet) night though. We completed all the chores pretty quickly we all worked together, and I had to remind myself that every little thing we do, no matter how small and seemingly insignificant is part of the greater movement of love. I reminded myself that even dusting the surfaces in the living room or standing in the kitchen chatting helps make the Timothy House and Athens a better place. The small number of people here tonight made the place really seem like a normal house and not homeless shelter. Just like any family, there are busier and quieter days, and it's important to remember to find purpose in every moment”.

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We feel so grateful, encouraged and inspired by all of the different people who volunteer their time and share their lives with the people Good Works serves. We are so thankful for all of the love and kindness and generosity which has sustained us over all of these years.
– Keith Wasserman