

Good Works, Inc. – A Community of Hope

Celebrating 39 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)*

Greetings with gratitude!

March 2020

It is "almost spring" here in southeast Ohio. We wait with expectant hope that change is coming and for all of the wonderful expressions of LIFE coming in the next few months!

As most of you know, Good Works began in 1981. In 1984 after several years operating out of the basement of our home on Elliott Street in Athens, Good Works purchased our first property on Central Avenue, which was named The Timothy House in the late 1990s. Last year we conducted 282 phone interviews, met with 157 people face to face, and provided more than 3000 nights of food, care, and shelter to adults and children who experienced homelessness in the 9 counties we serve. One-third of the nights we provided were to children.

We live inside the holy tension of wanting to help everyone we can and the limitations we have as individuals (emotionally and mentally) and as a community. When the need far exceeds our capacity, we struggle. We grieve. At times we feel helpless and frustrated. We have tried our best to create structures that are sustainable for all of us; staff, interns, and volunteers. The needs that come to us from very vulnerable adults and children – often at a point of desperation – are far greater than what we can do many days. For example, in The Timothy House (TH), the decisions we make have a lot to do with our capacity as a facility and our capacity as caregivers. We have 15 beds (legally) and we are constantly moving people around to accommodate more people. Several years ago, we began to "pull back" from serving some adults who were not committed to recovery from their opiate addictions. We don't have someone on staff right now who has the knowledge and experience necessary to do the very difficult work of helping people trapped between their desires and their desperation. One of the biggest concerns we have is about how someone who is not committed to recovery sabotages someone in the house that is doing well and doing the hard work of recovery. The process is never simple and we want to make decisions as a community based on the question "what is the most loving thing we can do?" At The TH, we try to balance our love for those who are seeking our help with our love for those we have made a commitment to help. I serve pastorally with our staff and I want to be attentive to how much "compassion fatigue" my co-workers are experiencing. The work we do is hard but we continue to see a lot of fruitful outcomes as we invest our lives – many days with JOY – into those who stay with us.

Our struggle to balance the boundaries is also revealed in our initiative called Neighbors Helping Neighbors. On an average year, we send 300-400 volunteers to the homes of primarily older women, and those who struggle with a disability, to visit and do labor-intensive service at their homes. We have more requests for help than we can fulfill. After we receive an application from someone, we send an advance team to meet this person, build a relationship and look at the particular project they need help with. There is far more need than we can faithfully address and we want to be very careful not to promise more than we can complete. And sometimes what we say can be misunderstood, in part because of the desperation of the person needing help. This year, because of the combination of our commitment to building Sign of HOPE and the fact that we have less Appalachian Immersion interns, our capacity to serve is more limited. We grieve as we feel the pressure and are forced to do less. There is a lot of internal struggle in our hearts and heads.

Because we are learning to love, we struggle with our limitations. Could we do more? Should we do more? Where are the volunteers who find JOY in coming alongside to help us? Does anyone see the *sea of need*? If we are not wise, questions like this can turn cynical and we do not want to slip into that. LORD, please help us to be grateful at all times.

IN THE NEWS...

- We are so grateful for the 20+ Work Retreat groups already scheduled to serve with Good Works this year. Many thanks to Nick Smith who is the “point person” on the staff for the groups who come to serve. We still have a few openings for the fall of 2020.
- At Friday Night Life, we also continue to host 25-35 teens who come each week for both physical and social nutrition. It is good but also hard at times. We are so thankful for the 10+ volunteers who work with our teens every week! FNL moves from The Plains UMC to the Good Works property in April and we start year #28. Would you consider organizing a group to sponsor FNL this year? We serve about 120-150 people now.
- Good Works finished another season of Praxis in 2019. Praxis is our formal arrangement with Ohio University professors inviting students to participate in different volunteer opportunities with time set aside for reflection and discussion.
- Good Works provided car #185 in February. Thank you for passing the word on our need for cars! The Transformation Station is truly transformational.
- LifeTogether is our worshipping community, which meets every Sunday from 5-7 pm on the Good Works property. This small group engages in liturgical worship followed by a pot-luck meal together. You are invited to join us!
- Good Works offers a 1-week internship called Week of Service to anyone 16 years or older. Come for a week. Take a vacation with a purpose. Email us for more information and an application.
- Would you consider giving monthly through electronic giving? We have a special arrangement with our local bank and the fees to Good Works are very small. For more information, contact Sherilyn at 740.594.3339 or through the Good Works email.
- We are still praying for more Interns to contact us and apply to serve with us for Summer Service 2020, which takes place from June 7 to August 8.

In closing I want to encourage you as I do almost every year to come visit. If you live locally and you have not visited recently, please take the time to arrange a visit. If you need to travel, let us know and we can make overnight arrangements for you in the Hannah House. Maybe you would also enjoy serving alongside a Work Retreat Group or spending a morning or afternoon in the Carter Cabin while you are here?

Love is a verb

Keith Wasserman



Good Works Timothy House 2020



Sign of HOPE March 2020



Transformation Station car #185