

# 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 from the *community* of HOPE!

April 2020

At this writing, we are doing our best to navigate the many challenges of health and safety among ourselves and with those we care so deeply about. We appreciate your prayers and support. These are delicate days and we want to be WISE and LOVING in all we say and do.

Friday Night Life (FNL) begins year #28 this spring. This month, we are providing "ready to eat take-home" food every Friday with the help of volunteers. I remember starting FNL in 1993 in the kitchen of what we now call The Timothy House. Residents were moving out and there was a growing desire in us to stay connected, so we invited them back to have dinner on Fridays. Many people came and kept coming!

Our vision for FNL has grown and developed over the years through the early philosophy of "sit with" to our current vision to *create space* for hope and healing to be experienced. Like a conductor over an orchestra, I often feel like we are bringing people together who would not naturally choose to spend time together. Someone once said "maybe the most subversive act you will commit this week is to eat with someone who is not like you". I am very inspired and encouraged as I witness the coming together of adults and children from ALL walks of life week after week, and how authentic friendships are being formed. For us, hospitality begins with creating a safe place and moves towards telling or reminding each person who participates that we are genuinely glad to be with them! When people feel welcomed, respected and listened to, they feel loved. Over the years, we found ourselves unexpectedly engaged with a kind of youth-ministry. Today, in addition to all of the adults who participate in FNL, we have the opportunity to develop relationships with 25-40 youth and teens who participate in FNL. We have also been very encouraged by the steady stream of volunteers who are willing to make a minimum 6-month commitment to volunteer for three+ hours on Fridays and develop relationships with our kids and teens. This reflection is by one of our former volunteers.

Perhaps my most formative experience in medical school was neither in the classroom nor the clinic, but rather on a playground in rural Athens, Ohio. The beginning of second year I joined the executive board of Physicians for Patients, a new social medicine club at Ohio University's Heritage College of Medicine. As Advocacy Chair, I provided opportunities for classmates to get involved in their community to know the population they serve. Only after sending out emails and creating events did I realize that I, myself, did not know my community. I had known that Athens was the poorest county in the state but had yet to see it in my medical school bubble. Seeking out opportunities, I discovered Good Works, an Athens organization that helps those in need in the local community. The growth that I experienced working with Good Works, along with my clinical experiences, has contributed to my preparation in pursuing the emergency medicine specialty.

For a year and a half with Good Works, I spent most Friday nights hanging out with local kids by making crafts, conducting science experiments, and playing games. I bonded with many of the "regulars" including Jennifer. Jennifer has a difficult home life and faces bullying at school. She is also witty, an incredible artist, and a talented singer. I often saw her at her highs and lows and thus was able to champion her successes and likewise give her space to talk about difficult topics. Being able to communicate with empathy and respect is particularly important in the Emergency Department. The emergency room sees patients and family members experience loss, difficult news, severe pain, and chaotic situations. Our words matter. I have found through my emergency medicine rotations how much patients look to their physicians for advice or words of comfort, especially when making decisions in a critical moment. Additionally, my time with Good Works has helped diminish the "otherness" of those who experience poverty. It has humanized for me a population of people that had been previously out of reach. It gave me a deeper understanding of how social issues come into play

with patients getting appropriate medical care. Emergency medicine sees this arguably more than any other specialty. It sees those without insurance, without primary care, and without a way to pay a bill.

*Caitlin Kelly served on the Good Works FNL team for several years. She finishes up her degree in medicine this spring and plans to serve as an emergency room physician.*

## IN THE NEWS...

- We are pressing on as best we can. Through all of the Good Works initiatives we have established new protocols and procedures for our everyday life together. If you want to know more about how we are thinking about the current health situation and what we need or are struggling with, feel free to call, email or write Keith at 740.541.0816 or at [email@good-works.net](mailto:email@good-works.net)
- Most of our Spring 2020 Work Retreat Groups have cancelled primarily because of the uncertainty we are all experiencing. We are feeling the loss of these volunteers and all of the wonderful support they bring to the people we love. Work Retreats have also been a significant revenue stream for many Good Works projects.
- At this writing we are still hoping for and planning our Summer Service Initiative (this will be our 23rd year) and we are still seeking summer and yearlong interns. We have 7 week-long groups scheduled as of today. Things are changing every day, but we have a good protocol in place for communication with all of our volunteers and up-coming Work Retreat Groups.
- Friday Night Life moves from The Plains UMC to the Good Works property on April 10<sup>th</sup> and we start our 28<sup>th</sup> year!
- For up-to-date information from Good Works, you can visit our website and click on April News and Updates or follow us through our Facebook page or Keith's Facebook page.

In closing I want to say this: This is a very vulnerable time for everyone but especially for those who struggle with a disability (both mental and physical), a lack of income, a lack of a support system, and who have no place to live. I feel certain that the ministry God has trusted us with is to persevere in loving and serving the people who count on us for help. Years ago, I began to understand another aspect of the story of the woman who "wasted" the perfume on Jesus (see Mark 14:1-10). When others criticized her, Jesus responded to them in Mark 14:8 and said "she did what she could." I am still committed to doing what we can.

Love is a verb

Keith Wasserman



Friday Night Life began in the kitchen of what we now call The Good Works Timothy House in the spring of 1993. After a few months, we moved FNL to the basement of Central Avenue UMC and stayed there until the year 2000.