

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 from the community of HOPE!

June 2020

We are well. We are grateful. We are very thankful for all of you who read our monthly newsletters and support us!

WE have really struggled with making decisions regarding Good Works Summer Service and have decided (by faith) to cancel the remaining Work Retreat Groups as well as our Kids Discovery Club this year. We had seven groups scheduled. Several had cancelled in May and because of the health and safety concerns we have, we decided to ask the remaining groups to re-schedule for another time. Of course, this is very unusual for us but these are very unusual times. The staff remains healthy at this writing. We are re-thinking our summer initiatives and are looking forward to creating new forms of innovation in our mission. We **are** planning our Summer Lunch and we have some specific ideas for doing some things with our teens after lunch. This is a 7-week initiative which begins on June 15th.

LEARNING to love.

Most of you know that I think our primary identity is learners. One of my mottos is "The more I learn, the more I know how much I need to learn." Learning to love people who are wounded by life, and who struggle with poverty, or are in recovery and/or emotional distress is a life-long process for me. It often begins with a vision to build trust. I ask, "how will these words or actions I am using increase trust and how will they diminish trust?" Trust is essential for the kind of relationships that truly become life-giving. Building our capacity to love others must be intentional and is sustained by community, not individualism. This often involves learning how to listen as a first step. It has taken me some time to understand both the importance of listening and how to listen. This sounds simple, but it really involves several steps. First, I am learning to listen to the *environment* that the people we are getting to know live in. In our context, this is rural Appalachia. I believe this demonstrates genuine respect both for the people and for the place where they (we) live. Second, I listen as a learner, not an expert. This means I must begin with a mindset of humility in an effort to learn *from* those I am listening to. At Good Works, we spend a lot of time seeking to understand not only where people are coming from, but also how they are thinking about or handling their current circumstances. Do they reference any existing resources or a support system? How are they feeling about the people in their life? How do they describe what they are going through? These questions become even more significant when people are "sheltering in place." Finally, I listen for the opportunity to "inject HOPE" through conversation, service and presence. I listen for opportunities to speak good news.

The way we choose to love and serve people, and the forms and structures we use to communicate our compassion are as much a part of Good Works as what we do. There is a core philosophy driven by a core theology that forms the way we love. Many years ago, we developed the phrase "*what we do emerges from who we are.*"

For example, I am very concerned that we elevate dignity as a value in how we interact with those we serve, so that what we do is infused with a particular ethic to allow people to do as much for themselves as they can. Our vision for mutuality in relationships is another thing we think about with people who struggle with poverty, mental illness and recovery. When someone calls the Transformation Station for an appliance, over time, we want to talk with them in a way that moves their thinking from an identity of

"needy" to a new identity of volunteer. In my view, giving people dignity as we provide them help is not less important than giving people food or shelter. We want those we care for to *feel* respected because this is what we believe it means to love God and love our neighbors as ourselves.

So much of what we do is to welcome vulnerable people into community (Psalm 68:5-6) and find ways that they can share their abilities to help alongside us. This process takes time. But when someone moves from thinking about themselves as “needy” to their new identity of volunteer, something inside them shifts and they begin to see themselves differently, often as God sees them. I frequently pray that we can help those we love to see themselves as made in the image of God, with dignity, beauty and purpose.

IN THE NEWS...

- We are planning an everyday (M-TH) Summer Lunch beginning in mid- June followed by an initiative to gather local teens (those who participated in FNL and others) for community building activities following the lunch.
- Our work has slowly resumed on Sign of HOPE. We are welcoming individual volunteers to contact us about coming to serve for a day or more. Contact Paul Richard through email@good-works.net to learn more about helping us.
- News about our Saturday, December 5th event called DAY IN THE LIFE is on a new website which is goodworksdainthelife.net
- We have several interns who have committed to serve with us this summer. We are also welcoming Appalachian Immersion Interns to make a 4 to 8-month commitment to serve with us, and live in the Good Works Hannah House beginning in the fall of 2020.
- Friday Night Life has continued every Friday. We have been providing “ready-to-eat” take home food every week with the help of friends and sponsors.
- The Timothy House continues to be open and we are serving people there with new protocols, precautions and procedures.
- THANK YOU to those of you who write us notes of encouragement. If you have not written but want to, please know that we take time to read your letters together on Friday afternoons.

IN CLOSING this month, I want to express my heart-felt gratitude to God and to each of you for this grace of sustainability during these uncertain times. We feel like we are being sustained in our work produced by faith, our labor prompted by love, and in endurance inspired by our HOPE in Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3).

Love is a verb



Keith Wasserman



This photo of our Sign of HOPE house was taken in May 2020



In May most of the Good Works staff participated in our annual retreat. One aspect was a spiritual formation hike on the GW property, led by Paul Richard.