

Good Works, Inc. — A Community of Hope

Celebrating 40 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)*



Good Works Staff & Interns 2021

July/August 2021

Greetings from the community of HOPE, summer greetings with JOY and gratitude!

Our summer at Good Works has been very challenging, but is going well! Our Summer Lunch initiative along with our ministry with our neighbors in rural Appalachia at their homes has been good. We are grateful for the opportunity to love and serve people at the point of their vulnerability. In the spring, we had 6 of our 7 weeks scheduled with Work Retreat Groups, but by early June most of them cancelled and we ended up with two groups for the summer. This was definitely a hardship for us. On an average year we host 25 to 35 different groups who serve alongside us, but 2020 and 2021 has been much different.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors (NHN)

The philosophy behind NHN starts with intentionality. We believe God has called us to make room in our lives to serve those who are widowed, widowers, older adults, and who struggle with issues related to aging and economics. It is a kind of reverse form of hospitality. WE GO to the homes of our neighbors to bring love, practical assistance, and encouragement in response to their request for help; and WE LEARN from them as we serve. While our vision is to "make the widow's heart sing" (Job 29:12-17), we also go as learners in the hope that we can grow in our understanding of some of the history, values, needs, people and beauty of rural Appalachia. We have been persistent and intentional with our time for more than 20 years, serving (on an average year) about sixty families in one way or another each year. This year, we feel the pressure between Sign of HOPE and NHN because we have less volunteers. May God give us wisdom bundled with love.

Love and Vulnerability

Anyone who reaches out in friendship or service to a stranger knows that there is always some anxiety along with the feelings of vulnerability. I have started and organized a lot of things over the years, and I am aware that there is always a season of anxiety (and stress) that one must pass through as you establish what you set out to create. All of our efforts to provide a warm welcome and nutritious meal to adults and children this summer, along with activities for kids require us to be vulnerable on several levels. It is this vulnerability which opens us to experience the kingdom of God. If humility is the door through which we must enter all relationships, vulnerability is the climate we must navigate as people respond to our kindness. Sometimes, people don't see how difficult it is for us to offer ourselves – and how much energy we must put out to love people, especially people who have experienced a lot of hurt, hardship and brokenness. Sometimes people misinterpret our kindness or interpret our kindness in a way that we were not intending. They see it as weakness. But for us to transmit something "life giving" to another person, we must come to terms with the fact that part of our "life" is being given and sometimes we will feel the withdrawal. It is more than sapped energy. We have to wrestle with the fact that sometimes people don't (or won't) understand that what you are doing for them or with them is motivated by love, and specifically the love of God. For years I have said we must learn to "die" to our need to be appreciated or our expectation to hear "thank you". Sometimes people have experienced such deep wounds that they either find it difficult to express their gratitude, or they are unable to see and appreciate what others do for them. We face this a lot, and we are learning to navigate giving and receiving love as a community.

Integrity Matters

As many of you may already know, the book *Good Works, Hospitality and Faithful Discipleship* (Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans) is now available. As the Good Works staff have been meeting to read and discuss the book together this summer, I have become very aware of some of the imperfections in our community. I guess this is somewhat normal, but as I read our book with the community there is a tension between what we have historically known and practiced, and what we are walking in right now in this generation of staff and volunteers. We do practice "clear" as described in the book. We do know that our program is integrity. We do understand that what we do emerges from who we are, and we are still committed to practice "freedom to fail" and the "ethic of inefficiency". Finally, we are aware that working hard to build trust and accountability with one another is an essential part of the health of our community, enabling us to love others well. May the LORD give us grace to walk in what we know to be true and loving as we carry on in this journey to love God and love others who are vulnerable.

IN THE NEWS

- Darlene and I were invited to provide an oral history of Good Works for the archives of Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore Kentucky. We participated in almost 5 hours of video interviews. Asbury Seminary is the theological school which awarded me an honorary doctorate in 2012.
- Summer Lunch (and our Kids Activities Initiative) is our way of welcoming and connecting our neighbors with food and friendship and community. We have been doing this for many years every summer. We continue to be very thankful for our Interns, volunteers and for those who help us locate food.
- Sign of HOPE is moving along. We have been working on it all summer. Most of the materials at this stage cost twice as much as they did last year at this time. This was not part of our plan.
- We are grateful to have 3 Summer Service Interns and 5 Kingdom Interns (ages 14-17) this summer. In addition, we have had several Week of Service Interns.
- A new video on Good Works was recently posted on our website called *Works of Good*.
- Friday Night Life continues every week. We are seeking groups to sponsor the meal this fall.

In closing, I again ask for your prayers. We are trusting the LORD for people – for God to send people to Good Works who desire to love (God, others, themselves). The ministry we have been trusted with is primarily about people, and in this season of my life my focus is on developing people to grow in integrity, compassion, initiative and love.

Love is a verb,



Keith Wasserman