



Good Works, Inc. — A Community of Hope

Celebrating 42 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)*

December 2023

Greetings with gratitude from all of us in the Community of HOPE!!

Winter has arrived! ☺ AS we prepare to enter 2024, all of us in the Good Works community feel very grateful for all the support, encouragement, and kindness we have received this year! On January 1st, we will celebrate 43 years of Good Works! It was January of 1981 that I (with support from my 3 housemates) started welcoming strangers into the remodeled basement of my home on Elliott Street during my senior year as an Ohio University student. This is what I came to realize years later: God had given me the gift of naivete. Had I known then what I know now, I honestly don't think I would have opened my home to strangers. I like to say it this way, God used my "not knowing" to get me to do something I would have never done if I had known what I was doing. Looking back, I would call this "entering the life of faith".

LOVING THE STRANGER

Long before we had the language of "stranger" or "homeless", we used the phrase "displaced persons" to describe the people staying in our basement. Later, I would learn from my devotional time that we were welcoming strangers (Matthew 25:31-46). Over the years, I have learned how important kindness towards strangers is, even when they are a bit 'rough' or 'gruff'. Kindness almost always is the right way to approach and interact with strangers. I also have learned that I must pay attention to my tone of voice, especially on the phone, and I try to be intentional about listening. Carol was one of the first people we welcomed into our new "Good Works" basement. She was from Appalachia, and I had been living in the OU bubble, not very aware that I had been living in Appalachia for the past few years. Carol spoke fast. She had a southern Ohio accent. As I listened to her, I remember asking her to slow down several times because I wasn't understanding her story. She was anxious, and so was I. As I listened, I remember learning from her some things I didn't know about the people, history and culture of the place I live in. This was one of my first "wake-up calls" that the people we are welcoming can also be our teachers. Sometimes, one is surprised by who they are welcoming. Years ago, a man came to Good Works claiming to be a professor walking from California to New York City. He didn't speak English, but he did speak French. To my surprise, one of our residents spoke French and translated his story. A few months after he left us, we received a letter of thanks with a news article, "Italian Professor Reaches New York City". There was a photo of this man shaking hands with the mayor.

IN THE NEWS...

- **DAY IN THE LIFE** took place on Saturday, December 2nd. It was good, very good. We had great weather too! The GW staff and volunteers created two very enriching experiences for the adults and children who participated, and both walk experiences met at the Central Avenue United Methodist Church. We had five speakers: two former residents and three volunteers who shared about the impact the Timothy House has had in their lives. We ended our time with

a rice and lentil lunch. WE are grateful to everyone who came and to everyone who supported (or still plans to support) one day (or more) in the life of the Timothy House for 2024.

- **FRIDAY NIGHT LIFE (FNL)** continues to be so life-giving to so many people. The food, the friendships, the encouragement, the love we all experience is wonderful and healing. If you know of a group of 5-10 people who are willing to sponsor one dinner on a Friday Night in 2024, please contact us!
- **IN EARLY 2024**, we have plans to begin another season of Good Works Gardens, both on our Luhrig Road property and at the homes of some of our Neighbors (mostly widows) in Athens County whom we serve through Neighbors Helping Neighbors. We will also welcome new and returning **Work Retreat groups (WR)** this spring (and summer) from all over the mid-west. In the spring, they will come for a weekend and in the summer, they will stay for an entire week. We are also expecting a new group of interns this coming year. Finally, we plan to launch our new initiative we are calling LOADS OF HOPE. This is a small laundromat built in the basement of Sign of HOPE.
- **A RECEIPT** of your 2023 giving to Good Works will be mailed to you before January 31st, 2024. If you need a receipt sooner, contact us.



THE TRANSFORMATION STATION (TS) provided car #200 in November. We give thanks for every individual and family who has donated a vehicle to Good Works and the impact we get to see in the lives of those who receive them! Every time a participant receives a vehicle, we gather first for a community lunch and then in a circle on the Good Works property. We each offer words of gratitude, affirmation, and encouragement to the person we have worked alongside and have come to know. On this day, the person who donated the vehicle was present to participate in the celebration.

MORE HISTORY: 40-30-20

2024 will be a monumental year for Good Works. While we started in 1981, and 2024 reflects our 43rd year of providing care and community, this will be the 40th year of the Good Works Timothy House (1984), the 30th year of the Good Works Luhrig Road property (1994), and the 20th year (2004) to celebrate the Transformation Station! We have so much to be thankful for, especially how these milestones serve as a catalyst for us to remember and reflect on all the lives we have impacted and all the people who have enriched us.

IN CLOSING, I want to say this: Doing anything for 43 consecutive years requires perseverance, wisdom, grace and a calling from God. I see this more looking back than I did when I started. I know I have been called, and given the gifts, alongside others, to create and sustain a community of hospitality where people who struggle with poverty (and homelessness) can receive help, HOPE, and form healthy relationships with each other and with those who serve alongside us. Good Works now has several different expressions of hospitality & community (TS, FNL, TH, NHN) where people can experience love, practical assistance, and kindness, which often leads to trust and friendship. We also focus on helping each person we serve feel safe, feel heard, feel understood, feel respected, and feel loved. Finally, we are always thinking of new ways to invite those who come to receive something, to experience reciprocity, mutuality, and dignity by giving back. Thank you for walking with us as we give our lives in love which moves strangers to friends.

From our hearts to your home, love is a verb,

Keith Wasserman