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Good Works continues to provide homeless with shelter at Timothy House, but with changes

By Larry Di Giovanni Special to The Messenger
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Two significant changes since November of last year have helped to sustain the Timothy House, a home on Central Avenue in Athens providing temporary shelter to the homeless in southeast Ohio.

One of those changes is that Timothy House no longer provides shelter on an emergency basis, said Keith Wasserman, founder and executive director of Good Works, Inc., which has owned and operated the shelter since 1984. Instead, Good Works requires a face-to-face meeting as part of the application process following a phone call referral.

Churches, relatives of someone in need of shelter, and other concerned citizens can make a referral to Good Works' Timothy House by calling (740) 594-3333. Timothy House will then speak to a potential client by phone, followed by a face-to-face meeting. Referrals are accepted from 8 a.m. to midnight.

In addition, clients with substance abuse issues will only be accepted if they have committed to an addiction recovery program, Wasserman said. He was joined Sunday by Andrea Horsch, director of caregiving for Timothy House, as they provided a Good Works program update to more than 30 people gathered at Central Avenue United Methodist Church.

Good Works Inc. is a Christian-based, non-profit organization that views its work as a ministry, Wasserman said. He acknowledged that the new policies for Timothy House have created a gap in services, “but they are necessary to offer a safe, clean, stable, temporary but home-like place” for individuals and families in need, one capable of accommodating up to 15 people at a time.

Horsch emphasized that the safety of all residents necessitated the change, offering, “We feel an extra responsibility to people who are already staying at the house.” They can include families who stay up to 30 days, or longer by signing a contract detailing solutions for bettering their lives.

The entirety of Timothy House’s \$180,000 in yearly operating costs are covered by individuals who provide donations because they believe in Good Works’ mission, he said, adding, “We know in our heart and in our soul that Good Works’ Timothy House has been sustained by a lot of loving, caring, generous, good people.”

In April of last year, marking Timothy House’s 30th year in operation, a near-disaster struck. Lint outside a drier, and the drier not shutting off properly, caused a fire that consumed the back of Timothy House as well as smoke damage to other rooms. The house was covered by insurance and rebuilt by August of 2014, Wasserman said. Temporarily, its tenants were moved to the Good Works’ main property on Luhrig Road, where its administrative offices, Hannah House for group visits, and Hope Center for meeting accommodations are located.

And Good Works has faced other challenges as well. In late 2013, the organization decided to discontinue accepting \$64,000 in annual state funds used to pay part of Timothy House’s operating expenses. The reason is that the state asked Good Works to share all client information — HIV status, veterans status, disability status, Social Security Number, precise weekly and monthly income, and other personal information, Horsch said. The information is accessible to more than 200 people, and Good Works felt it violated the privacy of homeless clients whose basic needs are food and shelter.

“We just didn’t think that was in keeping with our ethics,” Wasserman said.

Overall, Good Works Inc. operates on an annual budget of about \$650,000, with all of its donations coming by way of individuals, including many who belong to local churches. It serves an eight-county area.

Some of Good Works’ other services include:

- The Transformation Station, which invites people in need of material resources to volunteer with Good Works, and in return, accumulate points through “sweat equity” that result in thank you gifts such as boxes of food, bicycles, appliances, and even used cars. More than 140 families have received cars over the past 11 years.
- Establishing 17 vegetable gardens (and growing) for people with physical limitations who wish to grow some of their own food;
- Neighbors Helping Neighbors, a county-wide program that invites groups of volunteers to help widows and older adults with labor-intensive home repair projects;
- The Good Works Walk, an annual fundraiser and educational event next scheduled for Feb. 20, 2016 from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. starting at First United Methodist Church in Athens;
- The Carter Cabin, a small cabin on Good Works’ Luhrig Road site for those who enjoy peace and solitude, also located near the organizations’ Gift Shop;
- A small Bed and Breakfast next to Good Works’ administrative offices;
- Service Learning opportunities for first-year Ohio University students;

- Summer Service paid internships for young adults focused on discipleship and leadership development.

For more information about Good Works Inc., call their main administrative number, (740) 594-3339, or visit: www.good-works.net.