

July 2020

→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

David Nichols — President (405) 613-3120
Dondino Melchorie — V.P. (702) 688-3165
Ron Minnick — Sec. Treasurer (405) 473-2378

UPDATE

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind. Therefore, we have confidence, and we sincerely care, because we know it is true because we hear His voice. No matter what craziness is going on in the world, we are not shaken. We stay focused on the prize, and we run this race with patience.

Let me ask you something. Has anything that is happening in America lately caused you to feel anxious, fearful, or concerned? Then how would you feel if you had nothing but the clothes on your back, and no more than \$50 in your pocket, and you were being dropped off at the bus station? You have no family that can (or will) help you, and your crime makes you a target for hate. You hope you can find a dry place to sleep tonight without having to break into a house or building. All of your former friends are into drugs and you want to avoid being around them if possible. You want to be successful this time, but you know you will have to have some kind of help. In other words, you need a miracle. Would your anxiety be any greater? Do you have the answer if this was you or your son?

Too many times, I have heard from Christians who say, "They should have thought about that before they did whatever they did that got them in trouble." Sadly, that is not an answer. That is an excuse to say they don't care and it is not

their problem. After decades of that attitude, it has become a problem which affects all of us. It can't be ignored any longer.

What is the answer? Some who don't care would say, "They need to find God." Amazingly, some of them found God in prison, but where is God now that they are out of prison? Was it just a dream? Where are those who came into prison talking about Him?

For the lucky few, there is one place where they can find Him. It is called Hand Up Ministries. Those who find Hand Up find a way to obtain all the answers to all of their fears and anxiety. It may not be fancy, but it gives hope to the hopeless. It provides a ladder to climb out of despair. It provides a way to achieve the answers for the three most critical areas needed for success. These are the spiritual, the physical, and the mental. One without the other two will only take you so far. God wants you to have a complete life. He wants you to have a success that will get you through to the end.

If a man or a woman comes into the Hand Up program, they are guaranteed to be successful if they try. It is their choice. Can you beat that anywhere?



God loves people, but He loves and helps people like us. Want to be a part? Write to us today.

— David Nichols,
Executive Director/
President

MANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN

Almost every day, I meet people, or hear from people, who want to do something like what Hand Up Ministries is doing. I am very grateful for the interest that is finally being awakened in people. People are beginning to understand the great need for helping those who have been incarcerated to find a second chance in life. Those who were incarcerated need a chance to start a new life without the influence of drugs or alcohol. They need a chance to be set free from the addictions which have wrecked their life. Hand Up has a good track record of being able to provide and nurture those chances.

It seems many people are feeling a call to do something to help with this great need. Some are answering the call with boots on the ground to activate and get busy. For example, we are partnering with a group to establish a new Hand Up location in Tulsa. There are others who are simply talking about it and dreaming for it to somehow just happen. The work of Hand Up and other ministries is always very hard work which requires great fortitude and faith to accomplish.

We at Hand Up are very fortunate to have a man like David Nichols. He is not only called to do this work, but he was chosen to step up and put his "hand to the plow" for this work. David doesn't know I am writing this, and he won't know until he reads this newsletter. As the Director for Hand Up in Oklahoma, I see firsthand this calling. I also see the fact that God specifically chose David for this ministry. To me, the difference between just being called and being chosen is simple.

When you realize God has chosen you for a specific task, you cannot say "NO," and you can't stop doing those things which answer the call. The call will only

take you so far. There are times when those who are called retreat when obstacles arise. Many are called to do certain things, but when we answer the call and find ourselves specifically chosen by God for the task, then the fight is on and things start getting done. I, together with David Nichols, know that I am not only called to do this work, but I am chosen by God for this particular time to do the work ahead. I am grateful to have the opportunity to apply my gifts and calling to the work at Hand Up Ministries. I am looking forward to not only the rewards, but also to the battles of accomplishing the task at hand.

I do not want to diminish anyone's call to the ministry or a ministry. I want to encourage that, but it is not enough to be called. We answer that call with a "Yes," and then put our hands to the plow. When we do this, we may discover we have no choice but to move forward. Matthew 22:14 states, "For many are called, but few are chosen." Are you chosen for a task in the kingdom? It may be as a prayer warrior in support of those on the front line. It may be to raise money and support a particular ministry, or it may be to get in the trenches and discover how you can help. Answer the call!

We always need help at Hand Up Ministries, if God so touches your heart .



People are beginning to understand the great need for helping those who have been incarcerated to find a second chance in life.

— Ray Riddle,
Oklahoma Director

TESTIMONIES

I was raised in Dallas and Pensacola as a small child. I can't remember much about them, because I was too young. I have a memory of getting candy bars out of a grocery store without paying for them. My mom made me return them and apologize. It was humiliating, but I learned it is better to confront situations head on. My mother was injured in a

car wreck, and this caused her back to hurt constantly. She took pain medication until she died.

My father worked three jobs, and he still does not speak very often. He was not a large part of my life when I was growing up, but he became more of a part of my life when I was an adult. My parents were not very religious, but I found my way into a relationship with God when I was 12 years old. I started reading the Bible and going to church with my friends. I fell away from God, and I started using drugs and partying. I did this until my children were born when I was 19. By the age of 22, I was raising them by myself, because their mother left. We went to Life Church, and I became closer to God than ever before. I was arrested in 2007, and I went to prison.

In prison, I took Victory Bible College classes, and I graduated. I was baptized and redeemed. I heard about Hand Up Ministries when I was in prison. I was told it was the only place which would help sex offenders get on their feet. As it is, I will have a job soon. With a safe place to live and God directing my path, the future looks good.



I was homeless when I got out of prison, and I would still be homeless if it wasn't for Hand Up Ministries and my relationship with God.

— *Kenneth Day*

I was born in Kansas City in 1964, and I have one older brother. I had a good childhood and loving parents. It was a normal childhood. I grew up going to the Methodist Church. I had a paper route when I was 11, but I didn't do it long because I couldn't make any money at it. I was molested when I was 11. The person who molested me was the neighbor who helped me get the paper route. I became rebellious after this, because my boundaries and my sense of right and wrong had been violated.

I started middle school when I was 12, and immediately fell in with the wrong crowd. I

smoked cigarettes outside of the school. I started smoking marijuana when I was 13, and I started drinking alcohol when I was 14. My mother was an alcoholic. I hung out with older people who drank and smoked. I eventually became an alcoholic before I was old enough to buy alcohol. I got a job bagging groceries when I was 16. I moved to being the butcher because one of the butchers cut off three of her fingers. I started stealing beer from the store after this. I worked there until I was 18. I quit because the store was sold to someone with whom I did not get along.

I joined the Army when I was 19, but I was discharged for alcoholism after almost three years. I started getting into trouble with the law. In 1987, I was given four years of probation, and I went to prison in 1991. I spent three years in prison. I got out of prison, but got into trouble two years later. I was in and out of prison for the next 20 years. I stayed out of prison for nine years, and then I went back to prison when I was 54. I did two more years in prison.

I learned about Hand Up Ministries when I was in prison, and I arrived at Hand Up in June, 2020.



I have my head on straight now, and I won't go back to prison. I am grateful to David Nichols for letting me come to Hand Up Ministries.

— *Michael Mann*

My childhood was chaotic. My parents broke up when I was in kindergarten, and I was in the custody of my father for a few years. He was an alcoholic. I don't remember a time when he didn't have a beer in his hand. I had to take care of my younger brother, because my dad wouldn't take care of us. Our dad had women coming over constantly, but he never had a stable and lasting relationship. My mother won custody of us when I was in fifth grade. That was when I could finally be a kid and enjoy life.

My mother took great care of us. She

was a hard working single mother, and she loved us unconditionally. I got a job at McDonald's when I was 16. I worked with my grandfather during the summer doing roofing and installing siding. My grandfather taught me the value of hard work and responsibility.

After I graduated from high school, I moved to Oklahoma City to find a good job. I met my daughter's mother in Oklahoma City. When we had been together two years, our daughter was born. We broke up when our daughter was six months old. I spent most of my time away from work taking care of my daughter. I had her most of the time, so I didn't have free time to try to find a relationship. This led me down a dark spiral, and I made bad choices. These bad choices led to me being incarcerated.

All of my life, I had always felt a missing presence that I could not find. While in prison, I had the time to find this missing presence without any distractions. The missing presence was God. I had been searching for Him for most of my life, but I had been ignoring the signs He was showing me. Now that I have accepted Him into my life, I feel complete. I know he will always be there for me.

I heard about Hand Up Ministries from my probation officer. I was staying at a halfway house. I found the Hand Up website, and I read the testimonies. I knew Hand Up was a great place to start rebuilding my life for a better future.

Hand Up gave me a place to live while I found a job. Hand Up is a healthy community, and my life now is much better than it was before. I have a home, a job, and a community of men who follow God. Hand Up has a great support system. God has shown me He is forgiving. I don't have to be controlled by my past.



God has provided me with a path to a better future. I am thankful to David Nichols and Hand Up Ministries.

— Stephen Farley

I was born and raised in Muskogee, Oklahoma. My brother was killed in Viet Nam when I was young. My childhood was a good one. My mother remarried when I was seven, and she gave birth to my brother. I played sports in high school, and I had decent grades. I went to church occasionally, but I didn't grow up knowing the Lord.

I started experimenting with drugs when I was a teenager. I went from experimenting to selling and cooking drugs. I never tried to stop using drugs until I came to Hand Up Ministries. The first time I went to prison was in 1998, and I have been to prison four times. The fourth time was enough for me. I knew I had to do something to change my life. I had always had a place to go when I got out of prison, but this time was different. My stepfather had died, and my mother had moved into town. I couldn't stay with her, and I had no idea what I was going to do.

I joined a Genesis One group in prison, and I started reading the Bible and praying. I didn't have a clue about what I was going to do when I got out of prison. I was troubled, but I prayed, and a Genesis One member told me about Hand Up. I applied to Hand Up, and my prayers were answered. I arrived at Hand Up on February 23rd, 2017, and I got a job on March 2nd, 2017. I am thankful to Hand Up. Hand Up provided rides to work, the probation office, and everywhere else I needed to go. I have kept a job to this day. I was able to pay my court costs and buy a car. Hand Up has been a blessing. This ministry helped me when I had nothing and nowhere to go. Now I have a roof over my head, a nice car, and a support system in my life. Thanks to our Lord, and thanks to Hand Up.

— Ivan Barger

We appreciate all our partners and donors. It is your support that enables us to assist individuals back into society as new brothers and sisters in Christ.

A graphic featuring the words "THANK YOU" in a bold, sans-serif font, slanted upwards. The text is set against a dark, rounded rectangular background with a white, starburst or sunburst effect radiating from behind it.