

November 2020

→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

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UPDATE

One thing that is always good about this ministry is that we always have good news. We are always getting men and families off the street and giving them their life back. Some are even getting a life for the first time. Many are finding a relationship with the God they had previously heard about but didn't know. Many others are hearing and seeing this God for the first time. I am getting a lot more people saying "thank you" than ever before. Lives are changing because we care and we show it. You might say, "How can you show you care to someone who has done something evil?" To that I say, "Without God, we can all do something evil."

Without Him in our life, the works of the flesh will rule and reign in our members. We try to control the flesh, but the Bible says it is only when we walk in the Spirit that we do not fulfill the lust of the flesh. I don't even want to take that risk. Do you?

We are approaching 33 men at Chandler. These are almost all mental health clients who deserve to live outside prison walls. Our plan is to sell that location for a better suited property as soon as we can. Please pray for us when we search for it. We still have a work in progress at a place near Tulsa. Your prayers are appreciated. As soon as our loan is complete, we will pursue a location in

Arkansas, where men who have finished their sentence must remain in prison until they have a home offer, which is an approved place to live. This is such a great opportunity to show God's love.

Needless to say, next year (2021) we are going to need a tremendous amount of building materials (maybe used, maybe second hand, maybe the best?). If you have contacts or can help, call me at 405-613-3120. I sense something great is about to happen. I have trained people for Tulsa and the first place in Arkansas. Of course, we are not stopping there. We love you and everybody else. We can prove that.



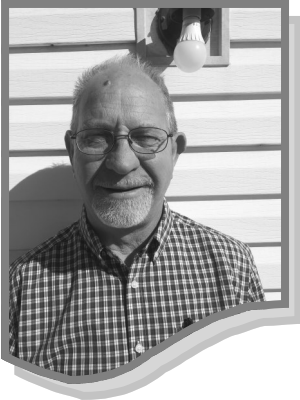
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— David Nichols,
Executive Director

TESTIMONIES

Hello to you! This is Ray Riddle, Oklahoma Director for Hand Up Ministries, Inc. I thought instead of bringing to you my thoughts this month, I would introduce a Hand Up staff member to you. Some of you may not know we have a facility in Chandler, Oklahoma, where men on Social Security, SSI, or SSDI reside. The Director of that

facility is John Hider. John has been doing a great job in this position, and that facility has flourished under his leadership. The following testimony is his testimony since becoming part of the Hand Up leadership team.



Instead of writing my thoughts this month, I want to introduce our HUM Chandler Campus Director.

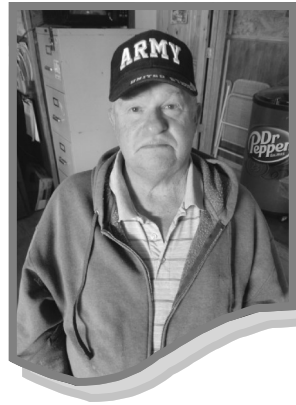
— Ray Riddle,
Oklahoma Director

Hello, brothers and sisters in Christ. Most of you don't know me. My name is John Hider, and I am the director at Hand Up Ministry in Chandler, Oklahoma. I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself to you. Like many Hand Up residents, I had no place to go after prison. I spent seven months at a rundown motel in Oklahoma City, and I was desperate after my money ran out. I cried out to God for help, and my prayers were answered through a man named David Nichols. Hand Up gave me a place to live and a way to start my life again. David gave me a hand up, not a hand out, which is the way I wanted it. I had a chance to get on my feet again. It was a chance to gain my independence and prove to myself I could make it in this world on my own.

I have nothing but praise and thanks for David and Ray and the staff at Hand Up. My testimony would not be complete if I did not say something about Ray Riddle. Ray is my buddy, a true friend in Christ and a true brother. He has helped me and tutored me in this demanding and rewarding job that David has given me to do. Thank you Ray for everything.

We here at Chandler are thriving

and growing by leaps and bounds. We are now a community of 33 men with more coming. I want to encourage each and every one of you to count your blessings and never give in to discouragement. You someone special in God's eyes.



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— John Hider,
Chandler Director

I was born in Mesa, Arizona. My mom and I lived on an acre of land with chickens, cows, and one pig. We moved to Texas when I was eight. I blew up the van on the way to Texas. I thought I was checking the oil, but I was checking the transmission fluid instead. It took us forever to get a ride. Everything was okay once we got to Texas.

I started to go downhill, and I was put in a mental hospital. This started a trend. From that point, I was always in trouble. My life was drugs, drinking, women, and mental hospitals. I went to Job Corp when I was 16, but I met a woman when I was 18 and dropped out. I got married when I was 19 and divorced when I was 20. I remarried when I was 22, but I was arrested the same year. I was in prison till I was 31.

I grew up in a very loving home, but I never thought about God. I referred to Christians as Jesus freaks. I laughed at Christians, and, before I went to jail, I said God couldn't do anything to stop me from going to hell. That was the wrong thing to say. I was looking at 10 years in prison, and I started reflecting on my life.

I have spent most of my adult life in prison, but I don't look at prison as a mistake. I got saved in 2013. Scripture says examine yourself, and this is what I did in prison. I had always heard a person has to get saved in church, but I got saved in a cell by myself. I was fed up with the life I was living, and I cried out with a broken heart. It has not been an easy walk. There have been many trials since then, but I wouldn't trade them for anything.

People asked me what I was going to do when I got out of prison, and I said I didn't know. I was told to talk to Darren Hunt about Hand Up Ministries. He told me Hand Up helps guys with everything. I got out of prison on October 1st, 2020, but they put me on a bus to Muskogee instead of Oklahoma City. I was homeless till a guy paid for a hotel room. To make matters worse, the bus company lost my box, and I didn't have the number to Hand Up. I had to be out of the hotel at 11:00 AM. My box showed up at 8:30. I called Hand Up three days late, and they sent a driver to pick me up.



For three days at the motel, I didn't know what I was going to do, but God said He would take of it. God took care of me.

— *David Lacy*

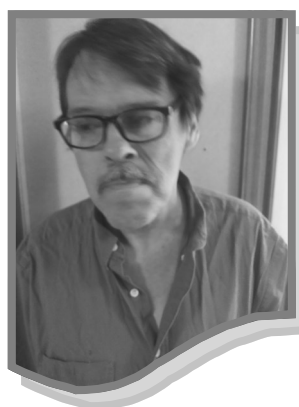
I was born Miami, Florida in 1964. I have a younger sister. I was abused by my dad when I was a child. My parents didn't go to church. I went over a water fall when I was ten. I survived, and this was when I started believing in God and going to church. My parents divorced when I was 13. My dad bribed me to live with him after the divorce, but the bribes were empty promises. I left him when I was 16, and I came to Oklahoma to live with my mom.

I started high school in Altus, but I was expelled from school for truancy. I got a job working at Long John Silvers. I had gotten into trouble for hot checks, and I had to pay the cost of the checks. I started drinking when I was 16, and I spent a lot of money on alcohol. I got married to a 24 year old woman when I was 18. She introduced me to marijuana. I started using cocaine when I was 21. I broke into a vocational technical school, and I stole typewriters. My wife and I pawned the typewriters, but the typewriters had something like "property of vo-tech" written on the side. We were arrested. We both got probation. Two years later, I went to prison for burglary. I was trying to support my crack

habit.

I got out of prison, and I moved in with a woman. I was shooting cocaine, and I stole money from her to support my habit. I went back to prison for trafficking cocaine. I got out of prison, but I went back for something else. I came to Hand Up Ministries in 2016. I went to the Chandler location, but my probation officer had me arrested for a probation violation. I came back to Hand Up after I was released from prison.

Hand Up has given me freedom from drugs and alcohol. I have gotten closer to the Lord since my arrival at Hand Up. God has done much for me. I was hit by a bus once when I drunk. I thank God for life.



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— *Richard Bouchard*

My name is Robert Alan Carpenter, and I am 54 years old. My earliest childhood memory is of the time I accidentally started a living room fire with kitchen matches. This happened in Kileen, Texas. After the fire incident, I was sent to live with my father in McLoud, Oklahoma. I started school in McLoud. I got along fairly well with my brothers. My father took us to church, and we regularly read the Bible while we sat around the kitchen table. This is how I learned about our Lord Jesus.

I moved to my mother's house in Channelview, Texas when I was ten. I wanted to be there at the time, but it was there that I began to go astray from the Lord. I learned about drinking, marijuana, and girls. My stepdad was suffering from the after effects of his experience in Viet Nam. All of these things led me further away from the Lord. I started making wrong choices, and this led to more wrong choices. My mother sent me back to my dad when I was 14.

My dad tried to get me back on the right track. I knew what the right path was,

but the devil was deceiving me. I went down a path of torment and destruction. I was using alcohol and marijuana, and this led to other drugs when I was an adult. I was committing felonies on a regular basis, and this eventually led to a very long prison sentence. Prison led me back to the Lord and a relationship with my God.

I learned about Hand Up Ministries from former Hand Up residents who returned to prison. They couldn't abide by the structured system we all need. Hand Up has afforded me the opportunity to be released from prison without becoming homeless. Hand Up has provided the structure I need, and God has given me the opportunity to become a spiritual person. I am looking forward to the kingdom of God.

— *Robert Alan Carpenter*

Religion wasn't my preference when I was young. I grew up in the adoption agency, and I bounced from house to house. I lived in Newkirk and Ponca City. I was blessed by the fact that my brother and I were kept together. He has always been my best friend and supporter, and I thank God for keeping us together through poverty and hard times. Most of the time, we were rowdy and hard to handle. We were adopted by a couple in 1993. This couple also adopted our sisters. I am Native American, and kids made fun me because my adoptive parents were white.

Due to my slow learning and unpolished social skills, I found myself on timeout, or getting sent home, a lot. I was a handful all the way up to eighth grade. From seventh to ninth grade, I was disciplined more than any other kids in school. I played football and baseball, and I ran track, but my grades suffered. I had a fourth grade reading level in ninth grade, and I was placed in slower classes.

My parents divorced, and this tore me up mentally. I moved frequently, and I had trouble in school. After high school, I waited tables and managed restaurants. I have also worked in manufacturing and loading and unloading trucks, but I prefer restaurant work. By 2014, I had gone through numerous failed relationships. I didn't care, and, due to my selfishness, I made a choice which still impacts my life today. I regret my decision,

but I am grateful for prison, because it helped me grow up.

In March, 2020, a friend told me about Hand Up Ministries. I shrugged it off at first, but later I knew I would need a home when I discharged in June. My case manager told me I should apply to Hand Up. I applied, and I was accepted. I thank David Nichols and Hand Up staff for giving me a second chance and an environment that accepts a former addict like me.

— *Justin Miller*

As I remember it, I was six years old when life started and my eyes were opened. My brother and I were waiting for the school bus, and I was playing tag with two girls. A girl was trying to tag me, and she accidentally pushed me in front of a car. I was hit and knocked unconscious. I lived. All glory and praise to God.

I was in foster care when I was a teenager. I lived with a family which was really into church, and for this I am thankful. That was where I developed a strong love for Christianity. After leaving their home, I went to live with a very strict foster family. I was not the greatest kid, so I stayed in trouble. I was physically abused, but I have forgiven him for the way he mistreated me. As an adult, I have been struggling with staying out of trouble. I don't know if this was because of a lack of structure or if God had a plan for me.

My life now is a battle to do everything right, and there is no room whatsoever to mess up again. Hand Up has granted me an opportunity to be successful, honest, and drug free. Hand Up has provided a home for me. God has given me a second and third chance at life, for which I am grateful.

— *Anonymous*

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.

