

NEWS



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→ MINISTRY UPDATE ←

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RECOGNIZING THE CHALLENGES

There have always been challenges in any ministry. These challenges include things like being overworked, fatigued, and not having enough funds to support the vision. Sometimes, it is a hard task to find the resources to meet the needs, but there are other challenges as well. At Hand Up, our primary clients are those coming out of prison, and they carry the weight of having a felony on their record. The men in this predicament often have other contributing factors. Many have faced a lifetime of drug addiction, alcoholism, and many years of strained family relationships.

Personally, I am discovering, as I work with these clients, that most of them have issues that are not easily seen and don't appear on their Hand Up application. People don't realize that many of these men come with some level of mental health issues. It may just be that they don't sleep well, but it could also be severe anger issues or problems with anxiety and depression. Lately, we have dealt with some men who have problems being around others.

This is because being around others puts them in extreme anxiety, and they shut down completely and cannot function. This becomes a problem when they can't work and have no means of support. These people have mental health issues beyond their control. We count on most of our clients to hold a job and pay their own way, so it is a challenge for us to have residents who can't hold a job.

Besides all of this, the staff has the challenge of knowing how to handle these clients when they become agitated for no apparent reason, or when they don't

understand rational thinking. This often happens when there has been a history of drugs or a history of having suffered violent abuse.

Hand Up residents have to abide by a strict set of rules. These rules will help them succeed in life if they apply themselves and follow the rules. It is a challenge to help these men understand the rules and apply them to their lives. This is especially true when mental health issues are in the way of them becoming a success. We can't come off too hard, because it confuses them, and we can't be too soft, because they won't calculate the importance of the rules.

The challenge is great, because the staff which runs Hand Up is not clinically trained in medical practices or mental health education. The one thing that works is the staff's dedication to the residents and this ministry. The kind of love God has placed in the heart of every staff member goes a long way in meeting the challenges presented by addictions and mental health issues. May God continue to help us find and use that love to meet the needs of our clients.



It requires both strength and mercy to make a ministry like Hand Up successful. Pray for us in this ministry God has called us to perform.

— Ray Riddle,
Oklahoma Director

Jesus looked at them and said,
"With man this is impossible,
but not with God;
all things are possible with God."

Mark 10:27

NEWS

TESTIMONIES

I was born in Barstow, California. My dad bought an alfalfa ranch in Hinkley, California when I was five. My dad worked the farm, and he also worked at Barstow Marine Base. My dad was a hard man, but he was also a good man. I have six older brother and three sisters. All of us worked on the ranch. My brothers roughed me up every chance they got, and this made me a bully at school. I am not proud of that. I got into fights at school.

I left school because I got into drugs, alcohol, and sex. I got my girlfriend pregnant. I got married, but I lost my wife and son because I was being a fool. I knew Jesus was Lord, but I made drugs my lord. I have done some very stupid things in my life. I always had a job, but I continued to drink and use drugs.

I had two more sons with other women, but I lost them because of drugs and drinking. I was told I had a problem, but I would say, "I go to work every day, so how dare you say I have a problem?" I wouldn't stop till I went to jail, but I started again after I got out of jail.

Many good people tried to help me, but I was being stupid. I was arrested in 2016, and I spent four days on the floor of the Oklahoma County jail. I used my bologna sandwich as a pillow. I have never been so ashamed in my life. I told the Lord that if He got me off that floor, I would stop all of the nonsense. I stopped until I went to prison. I smoked some weed in prison. I told my friend about what I said to the Lord in jail. He told me I couldn't ask the Lord to bless me and not follow through. He said it doesn't work like that. He told me the Lord holds everyone accountable.

This made me think about how the Lord sees all and hears all. I learned this in my Bible study. I told myself I would not get to heaven being like I was. I started working out because of Covid 19. The Lord told me he would keep me safe if I did what he told me to do. I got Covid 19, and the good Lord did as He said He would do.

Before I discharged from prison, my case manager told me about Hand Up Ministries. I had been praying for a place to go after I left prison. I filled out an application for Hand Up, and I was accepted. The staff cares

for the residents. Being at Hand Up has been a blessing every day, thanks to Jesus and His blessings.



The Lord Jesus has blessed me. He sent His angels to work at Hand Up Ministry. I have never felt so loved in my life.

— Abel Melton

I grew up in a home with my mom, my dad, and my brother. My dad was a truck driver, and mom was a waitress, so my brother and I spent a lot of time on the road or at a Shoney's. I was saved and born again in my childhood. We went to a church in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. It was called Church on the Move. I was happy, and I felt the Lord come to into my life. This also made my parents happy. Our family was non-denominational, and we knew who the Lord was.

My crime was a terrible, unexpected event. I was sentenced to eight years in prison and 12 years of probation. Even with all the bad things that have happened to me, I still trust in the Lord. He will never forget us or leave us. My case manager told me about Hand Up Ministries. I almost didn't get to come to Hand Up because my case manager didn't do things right, but the Lord came in, and now I am at Hand Up.

I now have a job as a dishwasher. I am with great people, and I am trying to publish my novel. Hand Up has given me hope and a place to feel safe. Hand Up has given me food and transportation.



God has given me blessing after blessing, even if it is just a nice person saying hello. I know it is the Lord.

— Don Staller