

NEWS



April 2021

→ MINISTRY UPDATE ←

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

UPDATE

I had COVID-19 last month, and I didn't feel like writing an article. I can't say it was worse than the flu, but it may have lasted longer. My wife's case was different. She also had COVID-19, and it quickly turned into pneumonia. She was in the hospital for ten days. She is home now, but she still needs to use oxygen at night. We pray for no damage to her lungs.

I want to thank Ray Riddle for the work he did on getting us qualified for OKARR. Oklahoma is part of a national program to set standards for organizations helping homeless people. It is a very involved program which requires effort by the clients and the staff. While it does involve some cost, we believe in striving to be our best and among the best. We look forward to building new buildings, which will be better for us. This will probably cut our utility bills in half.

By next month, I hope to have good information on our financing. We are still working hard to make Tulsa our next location, which will be HUM 4. Much has already been accomplished. We are still working on Fort Smith, Arkansas becoming our fifth location. It takes a lot to get a place up and running. Your prayers and support are greatly needed. When you read the testimonies in our newsletter and on our website, you will see how important this ministry is. We are mostly action, not just talk.

The COVID-19 scare didn't affect us much. There was some sickness, but there were no deaths. Some residents were laid off, but they quickly found new jobs. We average five to eight unemployed, including the new guys. We carried up to 17 men who were

waiting on Social Security or SSI this winter, but that number is down to 12 now. It is sad that our mentally ill have been housed in prison for the last 40 years at a cost of \$50,000 a year to the taxpayers. We could house most of them in our program for \$6000 year, plus \$3,000 for food and other things. For every one we help, it saves the taxpayers at least \$40,000 a year. Just like the early church took care of their needy brothers and sisters, we take care of the mentally ill who can help themselves. We have had a few who we have had to force back on the state.

Here is the sad part. Most Christians have to be taxed to support these people, but they act like I am the enemy for helping these people. Not a single church in Oklahoma supports our efforts to give these people a life that is Christian based. They can be saved, although some churches don't believe that. I am just repeating what they told me. We are not going to depend on anyone, but we do invite you to be a part.



We appreciate those who care. God bless and keep you.

— David Nichols,
Executive Director

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16



NEWS

We sometimes forget, or at least I do, that we have a helper, and He is concerned with every detail. I have a tendency to get involved with a project and act like I have to make it happen all on my own. The Word of God reminds me that my heavenly Father loves me and makes himself available through the Holy Spirit to help me in every way through every day. This is especially true when the tasks seem impossible, and, without God's help, perhaps they are.

In order to counteract this tendency, I have begun to use a chant, or mantra, every morning. I say this chant out loud to myself. I say something like, "I am not alone in my tasks for this day, and I will depend on God to make my way a good success." Since I have been doing this, my attitude has been better, and I believe I am of better service to the staff and residents of Hand Up Ministries.

There are good things for Hand Up on the horizon. We are nearing the completion of our certification process. This certification will keep this ministry in good standing with state agencies, including the Department of Corrections. This process is opening up many new doors of opportunity for this ministry, and it is also opening up more avenues of training for the staff.

These are very exciting times for Hand Up Ministries, and we ask for your prayers as we try to anticipate the new challenges of growth for this ministry. As always, we are grateful for the visionary leadership of David Nichols to help prepare the staff for the challenges we see coming.



The Heavenly Father loves me and makes himself available through the Holy Spirit to help me in every way through every day.

— Ray Riddle,
Oklahoma Director

TESTIMONIES

When I was a child, my father gave me an allowance of \$5 a week. I could spend the money on whatever I wanted. The first things I would buy were an ice cream cone and a soda, and then I would buy ten loaves of bread for \$1. Things were cheap in the sixties. I bought the bread for my mom.

When I was a teen, I did yard work so I could buy a car. I also worked as a painter so I could buy a car from my step-dad. My mom had a garden in the back yard. I was told to dig up the ground for the garden, and I had to pick the vegetables when they were ripe. We grew corn, okra, squash, and tomatoes. Mom canned vegetables. My step-dad worked at a chicken hatchery, and he brought home double yoked eggs.

I went astray from Jesus as an adult, but I found my way back to the Lord. I messed up and went to prison. I never thought I would go to prison. Now, I feel like I can go on with my life. My case manager told me about Hand Up Ministries. Hand Up has taught me how to be supportive of others.



God has done miracles in my life since I accepted Jesus. I have been blessed.

— Isaac Gibson

I was born in Nowata, Oklahoma in 1961. Soon after my birth, we moved to Hardin, Montana, where my dad got a job as a game warden. I had a great childhood. There were mountains. I went hunting and fishing with my dad, and I also went on patrol with him. Life was good. My parents divorced when I was seven, and my sister and I moved back to Oklahoma with my mom. I never heard from, or saw, my dad again. There were no cards, no letters nor calls. I was devastated.

My mom remarried when I was nine. My step-dad already had two grown daughters who were married. My step-father and I didn't get along. He didn't know how to interact with a stepson, and I didn't want anyone taking my dad's place. From the start of their marriage, we all went to church. We attended a small church in the middle of nowhere. Between 40 and 70 people regularly attended this church. Seeds of faith were planted in me there. Hell fire and brimstone scared me to death. I got saved when I was 10, and I was baptized in a farm pond.

My walk with God began when I was 10. Years later, I let the world and its empty promise of happiness get in the way of what is truly important in life.

I needed a mentor so I could learn discipleship. Even though my step-dad's faith was strong, we never talked to each other. I never heard about the grace side of salvation, and I always felt guilty. I got my first car when I was 16, and I didn't have time for God anymore. It was drugs and girls. I came down with a spiritual illness I call "Lucifer Syndrome." I was corrupted by pride, and I was self-centered. It was me, me, me, and I, I, I. I found myself in a downward spiral of bad choices, drugs, and alcohol. My life was party central. I used anything that would give me a buzz and help me escape reality for a while.

I got married when I was 26, and my son was born when I was 28. We got divorced when I was 30, but I got full custody of my son. His mother chose not to be in the picture. I loved my son very much. We did everything together. I realized that God felt about me the way I felt about my son. When I was 35, I knew I needed God back in my life. I started going to church again, but I still clung to my old life. It all came crashing down when I was 45. Because of bad choices, I got into trouble with the law, and I got a "vacation" courtesy of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. I went to prison.

I lost everything, including my self-respect. Hopelessness was staring me in the face. I decided to renew my faith and put God first in my life. When I was in the county jail, I heard a man talk about Hand Up Ministries. I knew this was God sent, and I knew Hand Up was what I wanted and needed. I was able to get an application and apply, but, because of the pandemic, I didn't know if I was going to be accepted. God stepped in, and, with four days left till my release date, I was accepted. My prayers were answered. God has given to me an opportunity for hope and restoration.



I want to thank the Hand up staff and all the individuals I have met here. They demonstrate true Christianity.

— Monty Gregory

I was born in Oklahoma City in 1952. I was the youngest of seven children, and I was raised

as a Roman Catholic. My father was a roofing contractor, and my mother stayed home and took care of the children and the house. I had a fairly normal fifties and sixties childhood. I liked Mighty Mouse, The Beverly Hillbillies, the Beatles, the Mamas and Papas, Aretha Franklin, the Blazers hockey team, OU football, and Marvel Comics. I have always believed in God, and I prayed every night before I went to sleep. In 1970, I started attending Oklahoma State, where I majored in Spanish.

I started drinking alcohol when I was in high school, but I was more of a social drinker than a hardcore boozier. I started smoking pot at the end of my senior year of high school, and I became a chronic pot head during my sophomore year of college. I also took a lot of LSD during my sophomore year. I went from the dean's honor role to academic probation because of marijuana and LSD. Something very significant happened that academic year. I accepted the Lord.

I continued to attend Mass at a Catholic church. I knew the things I was doing were wrong, and I prayed to God that He would change me. I began studying the Bible during the summer before my senior year of college, and I had a fervent desire to do God's will. I was also restless. On Wednesday of the third week of my senior year (the day after my 21st birthday), I met a member of a small, radically fundamentalist Christian group which traveled around the country. They were camped by Lake Carl Blackwell, and they were led by a man named Jim Roberts. I quit college, and I joined the group. I left everything, including my family, my friends, and my fiancée. Most people would refer to this group as a cult. They didn't drink alcohol, nor did they smoke or use drugs. They didn't take medicine or go to doctors. They didn't even drink soda or coffee. There was no sex outside of marriage. The women wore long dresses, and they didn't cut their hair. The men kept their hair short, but they wore untrimmed beards. We didn't watch TV or listen to radio.

I spent 19 and one half years with this group (September, 1973 to April, 1993). I left the group because there were too many teachings with which I did not agree. For a few years, I continued to believe much of what they believed, and I lived in a tent in California. I got in touch with my family in May of 1997. Before I contacted them, they didn't know if I was dead or alive. They received me back with joy, and my brother invited me to stay at his house in Oklahoma City. I returned to Oklahoma, and I got a job.

I had a job, a bank account, a car, and an apartment, but I lost everything in 2002. I committed a crime, and I fled the state. The long

arm of the law caught up with me in February, 2003, and I was incarcerated until December 30th of 2004. I was on probation until the end of 2012. My case manager told me about Hand Up Ministries, and I arrived at Hand Up on December 30th, 2004. I started working at a very large health care laundry on September 2nd, 2006, and I worked there for 11 years and four months. I worked until the end of December of 2017, and then I retired and started drawing social security. I began working in the Hand Up office in January, 2018, and I also edited and typed the articles and resident testimonies which are included in the Hand Up newsletter.

I retired from the HUM office in February of 2021. I stay up late, and I sleep late, but I still co-edit the HUM newsletter with Mark Smith. I also do occasional tasks for Ray.

I would have been homeless if Hand Up hadn't existed. I am grateful to David Nichols for creating a safe haven for the many people he has helped over the years. Of course, I am very, very thankful to Almighty God and our Lord Jesus Christ, without whom we are nothing.



The Hand Up program is a blessing for those who wish to get their life on track and do what is right.

— Chris Benson

I was born in Fort Worth, Texas. I have two older sisters, and my mom read the Bible to us when I was a child. I was molested by a neighbor girl when I was six, and I was molested by a sixteen year old boy when I was nine. I also had a girlfriend when I was nine, and I did sexual things with her. My dad physically abused my mom, and I would try to intervene, even when I was five. My mom took us to a Methodist church every week. I became interested in God when I was young. I wondered what He looked like. My mom taught me how to pray, and I prayed often.

My mother died when I was 11. She was in a Piper Cub when it exploded. I saw this happen. I almost ran up to the plane before it exploded, but something told me to stop. For many years, I blamed myself for my mother's death. I tried to stop her from getting on the plane, because I was afraid something was going to happen. After my mom died, I moved to Tulsa to live with my dad and my sister. In Tulsa, I was

molested by a guy who worked at a convenience store. I was 13 years old when this happened. I told my dad I thought I was gay. He spoke a bunch of Bible verses to me, but he did this in a condemning manner. It was around this time that we started attending a Methodist church. My father remarried when I was 14.

I started smoking pot when I was 14, and I had girlfriend when I was 15. I was intending to have sex with her, but she told me her grandfather molested her, so I decided not to try to have sex with her. A woman who worked in a liquor store let me buy liquor when I 14, so I was the liquor buyer for my friends. When I was 15, my dad busted my lip with a flashlight, and I ran out of the house while my dad was grabbing a rifle to shoot me. I ran to my neighbor's house, and the neighbors took me to the hospital. I refused to return to my dad's house, and I went to live with my sister in Arlington, Texas. I went to school there for about a year, and I bought a car. My dad said he had a heart attack, and he begged me to come back to Tulsa. I returned to Tulsa, but I only stayed at his house for one day. I couldn't live there, so I moved into an apartment.

I finished high school, and I worked in Tulsa till I was 19. I was still smoking weed and drinking. I moved back to Texas, and I got a job as a janitor at a school in Arlington. I did this for two years, and I became the head custodian at an elementary school. I returned to Tulsa, and I started using drugs (heroin, cocaine, LSD, PCP, meth, and pills). When I was 27, I was driving drunk, and I was in a bad wreck. My back was injured, and this still gives me problems today. I was busted for pot and a sex offense when I was 28, and I served three years.

After this, I got some minors drunk, and I had sex with one of them. I was arrested, and I served 16 years of 37 year sentence. In prison, I searched through different religions in an effort to find the truth. I learned Christ was the only way. I knew the only way to live is to let Christ live in me. I got out of prison, and I started smoking weed again. I got arrested for weed, and I was sentenced to two years of incarceration and six years of probation. Hand Up has helped me to become stronger in my faith, and my walk with God is much stronger.

— William Watkins

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.

