

NEWS

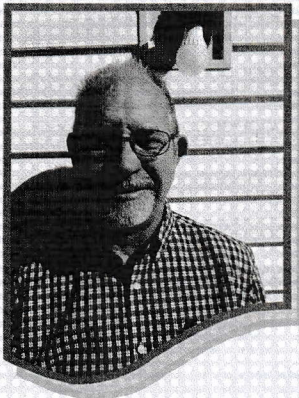
September 2021

→ MINISTRY UPDATE ←

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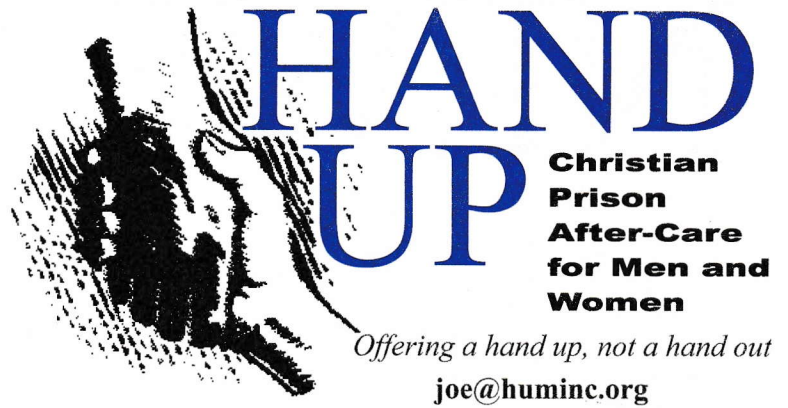
WHAT A BLESSING!

There is no end to the goodness of God and His unfailing love toward us who love Him. With all the negative things going on in our world today, and the general feelings of despair in our political scenes, God is not caught off guard. He knows the end from the beginning. His promise is that He will be faithful to bring us to an expected end (Jeremiah 29:11). It is apparent to me that God is working on behalf of this ministry and preparing a wonderful future that allows us to help many more people than we are currently able to serve. What a blessing it is for me to hear testimonies every day about what a help Hand Up Ministries has been to the residents here. Men tell us how, without Hand Up, they would have been lost in their efforts to get on their feet and start again after prison.



Keep this ministry in your prayers, and stand with us as we believe God has greater things yet to come.

— Ray Riddle,
Oklahoma Director



TESTIMONIES

I grew up on the south side of Oklahoma City. When I was a child, I went to church on most Sundays and Wednesdays. My mother was in an automobile accident when I was seven, and she suffered long term complications as a result of the wreck. She started having short term memory loss and seizures, and she spent a lot of time in the hospital. My dad worked during the day, but he started staying home with my mom when I was 14.

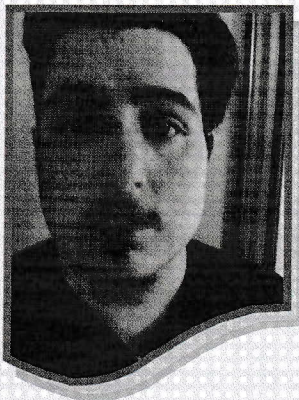
I dropped out of school in the tenth grade. I was failing math, and I was often truant. From ages 15 to 20, I pretty much stayed at home and played video games. I also worked on go-karts. My mother died when I was 18. My dad was in a motorcycle wreck when I was 20, and he was paralyzed from the waist down. From then until I went to jail was a very spiritual time for me. I realized who my true friends were, and I learned God was there for me.

I went to jail when I was halfway through my 21st year of life. I was scared of jail at the beginning, but I had to stay strong for my dad and best friend. I believe jail is something some people need as a sign that you matter and life isn't what it seems. Going to court every day was stressful, but in my dorm they had a Bible study group which met every day. I started attending the Bible study, and I felt a connection. I talked to God, and I asked Him all these questions. Why am I here? Do I deserve this? Is my dad going to be alright? One day I was flipping through my Bible, and I found 2 Corinthians 4:8-10. I knew I was going to be alright.

NEWS

I was relaxed when I went to court, because I knew God was there. I was sentenced to time served, and I was released. I was stuck in Los Angeles. I tried to transfer my probation to Oklahoma, but my dad's house was too close to a school. My probation supervisor told me about Hand Up Ministries. He told me it was a place where I could live and be close to my dad. I have been back in Oklahoma for eight months.

I am now 23 years old. I have my old friends back, and my life is kind of back to normal. I wouldn't have been able to come to Oklahoma and be home if Hand Up hadn't accepted me. I thank God for pointing my probation officer in the right direction. Without my faith and spirit, I wouldn't be here today. God saved me from prison, and He saved my father from dying. He also saved me from going down the wrong path. Thank you for hearing my story.



I believe we were all put on this earth for a reason, even though we may not always know the reason.

— Zachary Stewart

I was born in Goldsboro, North Carolina in 1973, but we moved to Florida when I was seven years old, and I grew up in Florida. I have one brother. My early years were okay for my family. None of us were very religious. My parents divorced when I was ten. My step-mother often put me down, and this hurt my confidence and sense of self-worth. During my teen years, I went to a youth group with a friend from school until he moved away. I attended a Catholic Church when I was a student at

Florida State University, but this was mostly to help the choir. I did this because of my love for music. I never really knew the Lord, nor am I sure I do now.

I worked several different jobs in Florida. I moved to Tulsa when I was 29, and I worked at ATT (Cingular Wireless) for over 14 years. Because of my step-mom's mistreatment, I was scared of people. As a result, I became reclusive and lonely. I still did what was right most of the time. I started removing myself from my friends, and I felt like I had no one to whom I could turn. I was unable to handle medical problems and the bills I had accumulated. After over a year of stress and fear, I committed a crime in 2017, and I spent two years and eight months in prison.

I learned about Hand Up Ministries when I was in prison. I applied, but I later learned Hand Up had not received my application. I sent an application again, and I was accepted. This gave me a relief I hadn't known for three years. I came to Hand Up in January, 2021, and I got a job at a restaurant in April of that year. My life now is much different than it was before. I am much more open to others, and I am always looking to help others when I can. I have a few friends who keep me on an even keel.

I am employed, but I am barely making it. However, I have hope for the future. Hand Up has given me a sense of realization that there is way to move forward. It is not going to be easy, but it can be done. God has opened this door to allow me the chance to move on and still have a choice in this world. I can matter again and not just be a zero erased from history. I appreciate the opportunity to share.

— Anonymous

I grew up in a family that had a lot of Christian values and morals, but we rarely went to church. In my teenage years, I started straying into partying and drugs, and I left Christianity and the church behind. As I got older, I got more detached because of drugs and alcohol. I had two kids, and I got into trouble several times. I prayed a few times here and there, but I never prayed with conviction and honesty.

I spent my whole life blaming God for everything. I was forty when I committed my crime. This was the first time I had been in very serious trouble. I was angry when I went to

prison. I hated God. I met a priest after I had been in prison for two years. Through continuous effort, he was finally able to break through to me, and I began to understand how God works. I understood how people must go through suffering to be saved. I became Catholic, and I accepted God into my life.

When I was close to my discharge date, my case manager told me about Hand Up Ministries. I had nowhere to go, so I applied to Hand Up. I prayed everyday about going to Hand Up, and, two days before my release date, my case manager told me I had been accepted to Hand Up. I was overwhelmed with happiness.

I was leery when I came to Hand Up. I didn't know what to expect. My prayers to the Lord opened up a whole new world to me. At Hand Up, I met people who had made mistakes like I had made, and I found out that God works in special ways. Hand Up has given me a second chance that I never gave myself. I've found self-respect and a sense of purpose. I was hired to work on the Hand Up lawn crew, and I am extremely excited to continue serving as long as I am here. I thank David Nichols and Hand Up for giving me a hand up. Most of all, I thank God.

— *Paul Argo*

I was born and raised in Oklahoma City. My mom, sister, and grandpa raised me, and I had a good childhood. My mom worked two fulltime jobs. Mom was always working or cooking and cleaning. My sister and I did arts and crafts or puzzles on rainy days, and we listened to her rock records on a record player in her room. We also rode our bikes and played outdoor games, and we went to a recreation center to swim, play basketball, and do arts and crafts.

I used to help my grandpa paint houses. I took care of myself during my teen years. My mom worked a lot, and she stayed late at bars. My sister partied and spent time with her boyfriends. I spent time with my grandpa, and I did arts and crafts and read books. My mom's drinking got worse, and I left home to stay with my grandpa. I joined Job Corp when I was 16. I took arc welding, metal cutting, and basic plumbing. I attended church while I was at Job Corps, and I went to

a Christian coffee house. I went to their teen meets. I enjoyed hanging out with other teens, but I wasn't raised in church, so I had a hard time relating to church.

I joined the Army National Guard when I was 17, and I did my basic training at Fort Benning. My grandpa passed away while I was in basic training. I returned to Oklahoma City, and my second family took me in and helped me get going again. I moved into my first apartment, and I started drinking and partying. I got married when I was 20, and I went to truck driving school. We had a son, but we got divorced because I spent too much time on the road. I spent ten years paying off my child support. I also spent five years paying off student loans.

I remarried, and my second wife and I adopted a boy and two girls. I went to jail for an offence with a teenage girl, and we divorced after 17 years of marriage. I lost my wife, my children, respect, and everything else. I spent ten weeks in jail, and I received a ten year suspended sentence. No mission would take me, but my probation officer told me about Hand Up Ministries. Five people were ahead of me on the waiting list. When I checked back with Hand Up, the five men were gone. I came to Hand Up in December, 2009. I have worked the same job for several years, and I help my family when I can.

Father God has helped me all of this time.

— *Jim Musgrove*

I come from a small family. My parents split up, and my mom remarried. We went to Catholic Church, but my step-dad was Lutheran, so we were Lutheran. We bounced around from state to state during my childhood and my teen years. When I was ten years old, my step-father introduced me to the art of mixing drinks. He also introduced me to stealing. My mom and my siblings stopped going to church. We found that drugs and booze were the way to go.

Our friends were into the same things, but my so-called friends always teased me and used me for their gain. I was bullied in school, and I was physically abused by my sisters and cousins. I slowly turned into a mama's boy. I stopped going outside to be with my so-called friends and family

members.

I stayed to myself, drinking and smoking dope. I was failing all of my classes, and this went on for years. By my late teens, I had committed many burglaries. I spent years in and out of jail and prison. My stepfather called me the demon child. I had so much hate and anger inside me that nothing could control me. Then I woke up one day, and I started to use humor with anger. I had to get away from everyone who knew me.

I came to Oklahoma in 2002, and I went to prison for a sex crime. I met David Nichols at a prison in 2005. He spoke at the chapel. I knew Hand Up Ministries was the place I wanted to be. I started going to church again while I was in prison, and I also started going to Genesis One. I came to Hand Up the day I got out of prison, and the Hand Up staff has led me on the right path. My whole life has been turned around since I came to Hand Up. I thank, and look up to, David Nichols and every person here. I have been at Hand Up for six years, and every day I wake up and thank the Lord for me being alive and for being at Hand Up. This is the place I call home. I am treated like family, and I have never enjoyed this feeling as a grown up.

Every day is a joy and a blessing to work at Hand Up. Hand Up keeps us from the wrong things life has to offer.

— Wayne Hodge

I grew up in small country towns. We moved a lot because of my dad's work. He wasn't my real dad, but he was all I knew. My real dad died before I was born. I had a good childhood. Dad worked all of the time in the oil field, so Mom raised my two sisters, my brother, and me. I am the baby of the family. We played outside all of the time. We didn't have much, but we were happy. Now days, it is all about money. Times sure have changed.

I have worked for as long as I can remember. The one I called "Dad" died when I was 13, and Mom married a man who beat us often. That was when I started staying gone all of the time. I was working cows, breaking horses, and building fences. I started roping and riding bulls. I moved out when I was 15. I got my own place, and I

started doing drugs and drinking all of the time. I started cooking meth when I was 16. I was in a bad wreck when I was 18, and I was on crutches for almost two weeks. I went to my mother's house for Mother's Day when I was 19, and my mother fell to the ground and cried because of how bad I looked. I stopped doing that drug, and I have not touched it since.

My friends and I went to church on Wednesday, but it was mostly just to hang out. We went to church when we went to our grandmother's house, but I didn't know the Lord. I went to prison in Texas when I was 20. I worked on ranches after I got out of prison. My stepbrother got me a job on a ranch near Ardmore, so I moved to Oklahoma in 2006. The people there were asses, so I quit. I went to work on a farm near Wynnewood.

I had a kid in 2010, and I got to see him here and there when his mom needed something or wanted to go party. I was locked up in August, 2012, and I haven't seen my son since. I was arrested for having sex with an underage girl, but I didn't know her real age. Now I am a sex offender for the rest of my life.

I learned about Hand Up Ministries when I was in prison. I needed a place to go when I got out of prison, and now I am at Hand Up. I am unhappy about the fact that I can't hang out with family and friends because they have kids. I am trying to get closer to God. Hand Up has helped me get a job, and Hand Up has also given me a roof over my head. Attending church on Sunday helps me get closer to God.

God has given me the life he wanted me to have. Thanks to Hand Up for everything this ministry has done for me.

— Deke Roberts

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.

