

February 2022

→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

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UPDATE

How can a year go by so fast? Last February, my wife and I were battling COVID, and we were pressing the bookkeeper to get our books corrected so we could file for a loan. It is a year later, and I am told that the loan application will be finished before February 1st. Please pray this hurdle will be overcome, so I will have something new to report.

The last six months have been very tumultuous and challenging. We had to start housing men in tents. This caused some of the guys who had reached a comfortable financial level, and who could afford to do so, to move out and give up their bed. Of course, they had to have a vehicle to do that. We also put several people out for staying with their girlfriends or for spending their money on their girlfriends instead of paying program fees. We even put a few out for testing positive for drugs. We also have had four or five who died in the last few months.

Here is our situation. We still have eight men living in tents with 18 more men coming in the next 30 days. We have the tools necessary to treat the soul and the spirit of new men. It is the body we are short of helping. We are doing well on food and clothing, but we don't have housing. We are having to treat them like baby Jesus and put them out with the animals. Not in a camel's trough, but in a tent with no heat. This is not unheard of, but it is

very dangerous in extremely cold weather.

Another problem is men who are leaving who may have the money, but are not ready in more important ways. For example, can they stay off drugs and alcohol without the structure of Hand Up? They will no longer have the accountability factor that helped them reach success. I can tell you that the "minister" who has our loan at 12% interest (and planning on going to 15%) doesn't care. There are three reasons it is hard to get a loan: One is that we are a nonprofit; two is that we are a mobile home park; and three is that we don't turn away sex offenders.

Otherwise, we are the perfect candidate.



We will prevail,
because God loves
all three.

— David Nichols,
President & CEO



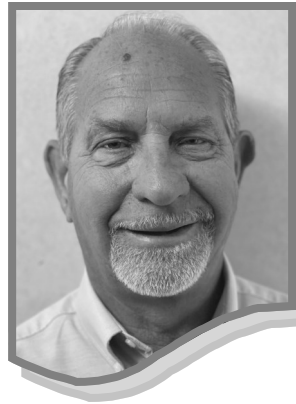
The word "hero" might be a little strong for some people. However, I have come to see that there are many heroes at Hand Up Ministries. These are people who work day in and day out to serve and help others.

These are people who get very little for their efforts, including some who get no compensation at all. Some of these people have been with Hand Up for many years, and some for only a short time, but they all serve with the same dedication and sacrifice.

The person I want to highlight this month is Bernard Lagrow. If you are a faithful supporter of Hand Up, you have no doubt read Bernard's testimony. Bernard is one of the hardest working people at Hand Up. His day starts at 4:30 AM, and many times he goes to the bus station at midnight to pick up a new resident. Bernard is our Transportation Director. He has great job security, because no one else wants his job. He coordinates all of the transportation needs of the residents. He shuffles schedules to get a large number of men to work every day while also scheduling trips to the probation office, the registration office, Hope, Red ROCK, and COVID testing. He even has to schedule long distance trips to help our residents take care of business in other counties. He does this day in and day out, seven days a week.

Besides tumultuous schedules, he deals with vans which break down, traffic accidents, and drivers getting sick. In winter, he has to deal with snow and ice, and he always has to see that all of the vehicles are properly maintained and on the road. Bernard is a very special person who, for the most part, serves in the background. People often take advantage of him, and he is underappreciated. It takes a large pool of people like him to keep this ministry going and functioning as it should.

Bernard's journey here at Hand Up has included major battles with health and other issues of depression and anxiety. He has faced and overcome all of these issues. The Hand Up leadership wants to go on record saying "thank you" to Bernard and countless others like him that are often overlooked.



Bernard is part of the backbone of this ministry, and the Hand Up leadership wants to go on record saying "thank you."

— Ray Riddle,
Oklahoma Director

TESTIMONIES

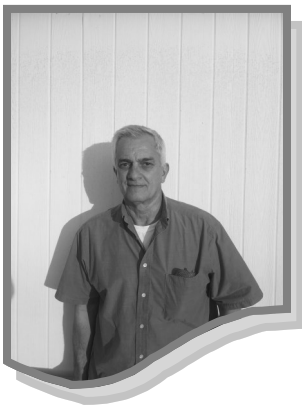
My life started in 1961 in a small town in northwest Arkansas. Life seemed to be great, but, as time went on, my family went downhill. By the time I was 16, we lived in Kansas, Oklahoma, a very small town where life was like country living. I bought my first gun for my 16th birthday, and I thought I was a great hunter. Two months after I bought the gun, my father used it to kill himself in our living room. I ran into the front room to find my father with a gunshot wound in his chest. He was dying in front of me. My world was never the same after that.

I moved around a lot, and I joined the Navy. I could never find peace in life again. I went back to Kansas, Oklahoma in 1997. I had a wife and one kid. A few years later, I committed some of the worst crimes, and I was sentenced to 35 years in prison. I stayed busy in prison by working and learning to play music. I also joined the church. After I had been in prison for a few years, I was blessed when my sentence was reduced to 20 years. I could see daylight.

I always followed the rules in prison. I tried to learn about myself, but I mainly tried to learn about the Lord. I earned my Class 1 boiler license, and I received a license to run my own boiler business. I thought I had it made for my release from prison, but I was surprised to learn that no one would hire me because of my charges. I went to Hand Up Ministries when I left prison. Hand Up is a blessing.

Hand Up has given me a stable place to live, and the staff helped me with all of my probation paperwork. I have a place to grow not only as a person, but to grow spiritually as well. I am getting to know God. If more people had the opportunity I have been given here at Hand

Up, it could really make a big difference in our society, as well as leading more people to Christ. I thank Hand Up for all they have done for me, and I pray for a long lasting relationship here.



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— *Delbert Luper*

I grew up in church. I went to church off and on with my grandmother. My sisters and I would stay with her on the weekends, and she would take us to church. I went astray after I moved away from her and was no longer forced to go to church. I fell in with the wrong crowd when I was in the military, and I made some bad choices. I went to prison.

I learned about Hand Up when I was in prison. I was trying to find a place to live so I could be release from military prison. My life now consists of working, fulfilling my obligations for release, and going to church at Hand Up. Hand Up gave me a place to go once I got out of prison. The military won't release you from prison without a place to go. Since the military doesn't fall under the FBOP, it is more difficult for military offenders to find a place because we don't fall under FBOP halfway houses. Without Hand Up, I would most likely still be in prison.

I don't have to live from paycheck to paycheck. God has blessed me with the ability to help my younger sister.



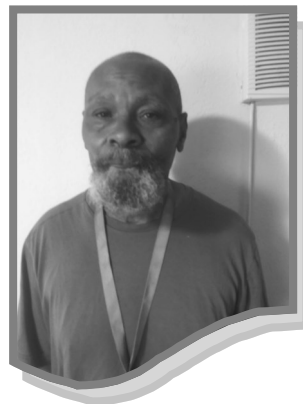
Without God, I would be hopelessly lost. With Him, I have found a place to live and a career.

— *Steven Guzman*

I was born in Granite, Oklahoma in 1953. I had five brothers and two sisters. I don't remember much about my early childhood. I remember going to church, and I also remember shooting a BB gun at people's houses. I started getting into trouble when I was 15 years old. I was arrested for burglary, and I spent a year and a half in prison. I only stayed out of trouble for six months after I got out of prison. I committed another burglary, and I went back to prison, where I served another four years. I was arrested for burglary a year after I was released from prison, and I served eight years of a 15 year sentence. My daughter was born in 1975.

I didn't start drinking till I was twenty, and I started smoking crack in 1996. I got married in 1996, and I moved to Oklahoma City, where I got a job working at a cafeteria. My wife passed away in 2007. I was arrested for domestic abuse in 2013, and I served a little over seven years in prison. I violated my parole in 2020, and I went back to prison. I got out of prison in 2021, and I came to Hand Up Ministries. I got a job at a linen cleaning service.

I went to church most of the time I was in prison. I do what I have to do to stay out of trouble.



Hand Up keeps me away from drugs, and, of course, Hand Up has given me a place to stay and has helped me find a job.

— *Percy Hall*

I was born and raised in a small town in Oklahoma, as were my parents and grandparents. My brother and I were raised in a strong Christian environment. When I was in high school in the seventies, my friends and I started smoking pot, and I went to my first strip club before my 18th birthday. I started drinking and doing hard drugs when I was in college.

As I grew older, I strayed further and further from Christianity. For forty years, I

worked hard and was gainfully employed. I had an abundance of friends, and I obtained all of the things a person strives for in life: houses, a lake cabin, boats, and nice vehicles. My parents and my brother passed away, and, after a few hard years, I found myself in jail with nothing and nobody. I was given a lengthy prison sentence, and I was shipped to the toughest prison in Oklahoma.

Shortly after arriving at prison, a very large man approached me and asked if I wanted to pray with him. After a couple of weeks of praying and rediscovering the Bible, I gave my life to Christ and I was born again. Almost immediately, the Lord began bestowing blessing after blessing upon me. My conviction was overturned on appeal, and I was released after accepting a plea bargain. Shortly before I was released, I heard of a place called Hand Up Ministries. I applied to Hand Up, and I was accepted. Four days after my release, I was told I had been gotten a job.

As I continue to walk with Christ, my situation improves daily. Although I have very little, I am happier than I have ever been in my life.

— *Daniel Dage*

My childhood was very amazing. I had very good parents who cared for me and my two younger brothers. We did family stuff like game night, movie night, and family shows. My parents played hide and seek with us. I had ADHD, which caused me to act out and be out of control. I fought a lot with other kids, but I had a many friends. I played sports. My favorite sport was football.

I still fought a lot in my teen years. I still played sports, but I also started using drugs and drinking. I partied with my older friends, and I stole stuff. I didn't care about anything. My younger brother went to juvenile prison, and I straightened up and focused on football after that. I still smoked weed and drank, and I fought with my parents.

I went to college to play football, but I dropped out after one semester. I went to work in the oil field. My relationship with my parents improved after I left home. I met a woman who was seven years older than me. Our relationship was good at first, but she became mean and abusive. She stabbed me

and hit me, and she accused me of cheating on her. I moved in with my parents when I was 24 years old, and I lived with them for about six months. I moved in with a woman, but I cheated on her. We hardly ever fought, and I stayed sober for a long time. We got married, and I continued to cheat on her.

I committed my crime in 2017, and I spent three years in prison. My relationship with God became stronger in prison. After I left prison, my therapist told me about Hand Up Ministries, and I came to Hand Up a few days later. My life now is great. Thanks to Hand Up, I have a roof over my head and an amazing job. Hand Up took me in when I had no place else to go. There are good people at Hand Up, and it is a drug free environment. God has done much for me. I thought my life was over when I went to prison, but God hasn't failed me. He forgave me for my bad choices, and He gave me a second chance in life.

— *Dallas Johnson*

I was born at The University of Oklahoma Medical Center on January 10, 1982. I grew up on the northwest side of Oklahoma City, but we moved to a small town in western Oklahoma when I was 16 years old. I have an older sister and a younger brother. I have worked all of my life. I have done everything from shoveling stalls to working on oil rigs. I shot meth for the first time when I was 19, and I didn't quit until I went to prison at age 35.

I spent five years in prison. I learned about Hand Up Ministries from other inmates. Since my release, I have been working two jobs. I have also gotten my driver license. I am currently working on getting a vehicle. Because of Hand Up, I have been clean and sober, and I have a roof over my head.

— *James Henderson*

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.

