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→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

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UPDATE

Until I started Hand Up, I had no idea how hateful and self-righteous most “Christians” can be. When it comes to helping people, you would think that would be the priority, but the devil doesn’t care who you are. His priority is to steal, kill, and destroy any person, regardless of status in life. To those who have, it is to deceive with pride and power. To the poor and destitute, it is to completely destroy the little hope they have. Satan uses those that have against those who have not. He uses those who have not to steal from and kill those who have. Those who have not suffer more than the haves, but they will be blessed more in the kingdom of God. Those who have are going to experience “sticker shock” at the price they are going to have to pay if they haven’t followed Jesus’ example and teachings and shown the love of God. The church is not an organization or a building, but individuals alive and moving together by the Holy Spirit to accomplish God’s will. Are you in that body?

We now have 22 men in tents, and that is after more turnover than usual. They at least have cots, sleeping bags, showers, bathrooms, transportation, and plenty of food. All but the new ones have jobs, so they are able to pay what they owe. They have a clean and sober living environment, excellent teaching (not all from me), small group accountability and fellowship, plus

other things.

The bad thing is the fact that we have empty bedrooms we can’t use to house these men. Why can’t we use these empty bedrooms? The churches have convinced the political leaders to punish them more by not letting them sleep under the same roof. They can sleep in a tent, and that is supposed to be okay. That is pure evil, right from the church house. We have 210 men at one location, and they can’t point to one good reason to punish these men who have paid for their crime, except for hate. I can and do house murderers together, and that is no problem. Why? An evil heart of the religious powerful! By the way, Oklahoma is the only state doing this.

Our loan application is being put before lenders. Please pray. The devil loves the fact that we have to pay triple interest rate at present. Not hate, but just plain greed. The lender is a licensed minister of a large organization. Just saying! .



When it comes to helping people, you would think that would be the priority, but the devil doesn’t care who you are.

— David Nichols,
President & CEO

It is very easy for us to get bogged down in the cares of life or the challenges of our business, where we fight problems and issues

TESTIMONIES

daily. It happens to me sometimes. Recently, God has been directing my attention to some of the positive things going on within this ministry. Specifically, I have been encouraged by the stories of many of our residents. We have men at our 59th Street facility who have been clean and sober for 12 or 13 years. This is mostly because of the structure of Hand Up Ministry.

A man who has a felony on his record already has many battles he fights in order to comply with DOC supervision, and it is difficult when you add trying to stay sober. For many years, his go-to solution in times of trouble or hardship has been the bottle or drugs. Now, when faced with the pressures of doing the right thing every day, or possibly going back to prison, it is hard not to rely on what he has always done.

These men are finding victory every day! They are staying away from alcohol and drugs and working hard to be a success. They are reuniting with families and being the fathers they were meant to be. I want to celebrate these victories this month. Whether it has been one week or several years since they have relied on some kind of substance or drink, each day is a victory. I celebrate the victory of 208 men this month at Hand Up Ministry.



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— Ray Riddle,
Oklahoma Director

I was born at home. I had five brothers, and we all went to Concho Boarding School in El Reno, Oklahoma from first grade through eighth grade. Afterward, I went to another boarding school named Riverside, and that is where things started going bad. I started drinking and smoking marijuana. Of course, we all got caught and were punished with work detail. From then on, this was my pattern until I went to prison in 1998.

I was in and out of prison for the next fifteen years. I desperately needed some guidance. I hit rock bottom, and I was about to be released from prison with nowhere to go. I heard about Hand Up Ministries in November, 2020. Hand Up was a true godsend, a place with a true hand up and the guidance and discipline I so badly needed. I can't thank David Nichols enough for taking a chance on me and eventually trusting me enough to man the gate. I thank the Lord every night for giving me another chance.

Because of therapy, the discipline at Hand Up, and the Hand Up staff, I have been clean and straight for over a year. If not for Hand Up, I would be back in prison or living on the street. I am working on getting my driver license and becoming self-sufficient. Things are looking up in my life, and, with the Lord's help, I can see life clearly and positively. My family sees a whole new me, and that makes me feel worthy. When I look back, I see that I wasted a lot of time. Now, I am in the Lord's club.



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— William Harrison

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.



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— Isaac Gibson

I was born in Manhattan, Kansas on November 2nd, 1981. I have one older brother, one older sister, and three younger sisters, all of whom currently reside in Arkansas. I grew up in Hot Springs, Arkansas, and I graduated from Lake Hamilton High School in 2000. I had a pretty good time throughout my school years, and I had no academic or behavioral problems. I still have a good relationship with all of my siblings. Growing up in a big family presented challenges, but I overcame all of them. Overall, we loved each other and got along well.

I joined the United States Navy in 2001. I went to A School after boot camp, and then I was stationed on the USS Nimitz, an aircraft carrier whose home port was San Diego. The Navy was a new and challenging

experience in my life, and it left a positive and lasting impact on me. I came to know the Lord when I was in the Navy. The ship's chaplain was a good friend, and he set me on the path of a good Christian man. I went astray from the Lord after I discharged from the Navy.

I moved back to Arkansas in 2012, and I reunited with my family and rebuilt my relationship with them. I started drinking alcohol and going down the wrong path. I fell in love with a woman, and we got married. She had a twelve year old daughter, and I exposed myself to her in a sexual manner. I served six years in prison. I learned about Hand Up Ministries when I was in prison. I had been granted parole, but I had to have a place to go before they would release me. Hand Up accepted me, and I was granted an interstate compact so I could serve my parole in Oklahoma.

My life has improved since I came to Hand Up. Hand Up has given me an opportunity at freedom and has provided me with a place to stay. I have met some very nice people here. They are genuinely concerned for me. I thank God for all of it. He has given me an opportunity for a new life.

— Jeremy Morrison

I grew up in a small town with two sisters and my mom. Due to his job as a truck driver, my dad was never around. My parents divorced when I was seven. Religion was not a part of our family. I became addicted to meth when I was 15, and I left home after I was expelled from school. I did what I could on my own to survive and support my habit.

I received my first prison sentence when I was 22. I left prison at age thirty, and my habit was worse than it was when I entered prison. This led to another prison sentence. I found the Lord during my third incarceration. I was homeless after I discharged this time, and I was still on drugs. I was sick and tired of everyday misery, and I asked God to help me. He did, and He does. I went to prison for a fourth time, and my fourth incarceration has given me a chance that I see as a blessing from God.

I have been sober for a little over a year. I got early parole, and I got a great

chance to reunite with children, grandchildren, and family. A case manager told me about Hand Up. I wrote to Hand Up and sent them an application. God and Hand Up have blessed me with the opportunity to work and have a warm bed, as well as help to maintain sobriety. I have a chance to obtain all of my goals. I thank God and Hand Up.

— *William Horn*

My parents divorced when I was six months old. My dad got custody of me, and my mom got my sister. My father took care of me until I was 27 years old. My father was not religious, so I did not grow up knowing the Lord. I quit school in tenth grade, and I went to work for my father fulltime. He was in the construction business. My father taught me a good work ethic and the skills I needed to make money. He also spoiled me.

My teen years were normal until I started smoking marijuana and got my first car. I made friends, and we experimented with every drug we could get: cigarettes, beer, marijuana, hallucinogens, cocaine, opiates, pharmaceuticals, and methamphetamine. We partied a lot on the weekends. I was working with my father throughout the week, so I had money for my phone and drugs. All other expenses were paid by my father.

I moved from Alabama to Oklahoma when I was 27, and I became addicted to meth. I committed a sex offense, and I was sentenced to eight years in prison and 17 years of probation. I got sober in prison. My father died three months before I discharged from prison. My workout partner was a Christian, and he spoke to me about the Lord. The Holy Spirit entered me, and all of my sorrow went away.

I didn't know where I was going to go after prison. My cellmate told me about Hand Up Ministries, and I sent an application to Hand Up three months before I discharged. The blessings started pouring in after I arrived at Hand Up. Hand Up helped me with my legal matters, housing, food, and rides. I would have been lost without Hand Up. I have the motivation to stay sober. I am so happy to have Hand Up and God in my life.

— *Jesse Marshall*

When I was a child, I was beaten every day my dad had a bad day at work. To avoid getting beaten, I would go to a girl's house to hide from my dad. Her mom would let me stay the night. I started doing drugs when I was 13. I started out taking pills, and I began using heroin when I was 17. I had son, but he passed away. After my son passed away, I wanted to change my life. I spent two years on a fishing boat, and I kicked heroin.

I returned home after two years, and I met my first wife. We got married, but she left me when I went to jail. Later, I looked for a woman I knew growing up. She had saved my life nine times when I overdosed on pills. I found her on Facebook, and we started a family. I went back to the fishing boat for three years. I sent her a picture, and she posted it on Facebook. A kid saw my picture on Facebook, and that is how I went to prison.

When I was in prison, another woman I knew helped me by putting money on my books and writing to me. I went to church in prison, and I prayed to God for help in my life. I asked someone about what to do when I got out of prison, and he told me about Hand Up. I applied to Hand Up, and I was accepted. Since I have been at Hand Up, the staff has helped me with everything. Ray helped me and gave me a job. I have been working and changing my life.

If not for Hand Up, I would be on the street. Every day, I thank God for changing my life. I also thank Him for Hand Up. Hand Up has been there for me. I really don't have many people I can talk to, but there are people who work for Hand Up who will sit down with me and talk without judging me. I don't want to go back to jail. Hand Up shows me I am not alone.

— *Gary Threewit*

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.

