

July 2022

→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

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UPDATE

Did you ever wonder if something you have prayed for and worked for and literally given your life for would ever happen? We know we shouldn't doubt and just leave it in God's hands, but how many of us never have questions? How many of us never ask why this, or how Lord? We read Abraham believed, and yet he tried to make things happen. Because of that we have the Muslim side of the family who are looking for Christ through their bloodline of Abraham's firstborn of the flesh, and not the one born of faith. Yet, Abraham is not remembered for his failures, because that was not the end of the story. He didn't quit God, and in God's time he received the promise.

Many of us have the same story. It may not be as big, but it is still true. I never dreamed it would take 26 years to get Hand Up where it is today. I didn't know I would be falsely arrested, or that I would have to carry it financially and have the financial risk hanging over me and my family. Around June 30th, we are supposed to close on a loan that is bigger than you can imagine, but is all carried by Hand Up itself. After losing people I thought were friends, and enduring lies, persecution, whispers, sneers, gossip, and people trying to make a buck off of Hand Up, it has all finally paid off. It may not be the end of any of these things, but the promise is here. The birth has taken place. Now let the growth really begin. It has a life people can

see. It is not just a dream anymore.

By the way, Jesus was arrested after a bounty was put on his head. All of the apostles were arrested. All were given a death sentence that was carried out, except for John, who was exiled. Christians today are afraid their name will get soiled or tarnished. The Bible declares the righteous SHALL suffer persecution. God is looking for real disciples. Are you willing to be one?

Here is a note to the unsure. Hand Up has become a multi-million dollar corporation helping thousands of souls who had or have NO hope, period. Your sacrifice can bear fruit if you are faithful.



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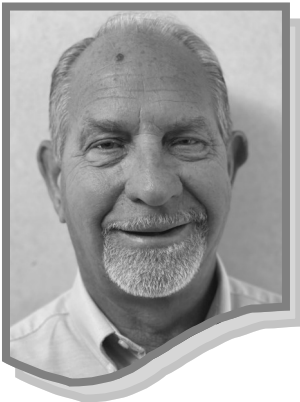
— David Nichols,
President & CEO

All is well here at Hand Up Ministries. We remain nearly full, and we receive testimonies every week from guys who are glad for the help we are able to offer. They are truly grateful to have a roof over their head, and they are grateful for an environment that supports them being clean and sober. Many, or most, of the guys here at Hand Up would be homeless if it were not for this place.

It is a real blessing to be able to provide the support and the environment that

helps men coming out of prison. All I really wanted to do while I was incarcerated was to get out and be able to somehow help other men coming out. David Nichols and Hand Up have provided me with the vehicle and opportunity to do just that.

As long as we receive stories from guys of how we are helping them, I will continue to be a part of this great ministry and the work God has designed for Hand Up.



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— Ray Riddle,
Oklahoma Director

TESTIMONIES

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.



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— Paul Argo

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.

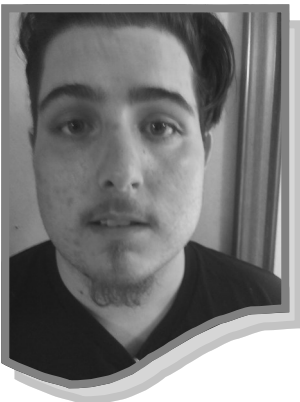
I dropped out of school in the tenth grade. I was failing math, and I was often truant. From ages 15 to 20, I pretty much stayed at home and played video games. I also worked on go-karts. My mother died when I was 18. My dad was in a motorcycle wreck when I was 20, and he was paralyzed from the waist 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.

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. I believe we were all put on this earth for a reason, even though we may not always know what that reason is. God will tell us when the time is right. Thank you for hearing my story.



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— Zachary Stewart

I was born in Stillwater, Oklahoma, but my earliest childhood memories are from when we lived in Germany. I have two sisters and two brothers. Our mom was afraid to let us go outside because a neighbor lady would walk past our house with a meat cleaver. The woman was actually very nice. She would occasionally invite my brother and me to her house and give us snacks. Neighborhood kids picked on me because of my albinism and poor eyesight. We moved back to Oklahoma when I was six. I don't remember having many friends, and going outside to play was not a fun activity for me.

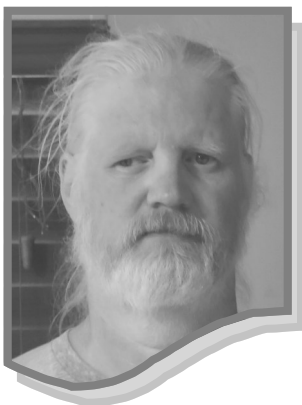
I had one good friend in junior high, plus a couple of others with whom I hung out at lunch. I finally made a friend who, like me, had a more intellectual bent. My friends and I were very good at algebra, and we were the best students in our honors algebra class. I didn't develop any close personal relationships in high school, except for my first girlfriend. I was two years ahead of her in school, and we broke up during the summer before I went to college.

I met an entirely different group of people during my freshman year of college. It was during the summer after my freshman year that I met my wife. We were married for over 16 years, and we had three kids. I had a good wife, good jobs, and great kids, but I failed. My addiction and my inability to communicate with her led to the downfall of our marriage. She hates me now, and her attitude has infected our children.

My family didn't attend church regularly, except in phases, but I started attending regularly when I was older. My wife and I attended church with our children, and I studied the Bible during that time, but it wasn't until I went to prison that my spiritual life became more than casual. There were many classes available in prison, and I took advantage of the opportunity to learn more about my faith.

I heard about Hand Up Ministries from

many people during my ten years in prison, and a prison staffer encouraged me to apply to Hand Up. I have now been at hand Up for about two and a half weeks. I have been able to reconnect with my father, and he has helped immensely. I am still far from comfortable in my new phase of life. Hand Up provided a landing place for me when the state tossed me back into society. The staff truly cares about my success in society, and their attitude is infectious. Hand Up's pantry keeps me fed on occasion.



God has shown up throughout my entire life. He left several paths open. He rarely led me down smooth paths, but I was always better for traveling in those directions.

— Al Ryan

I was born in Kansas City, Missouri in 1968. I am an only child. My dad was in the Army for twenty-four years. My mom and I moved to Larned, Kansas when I was ten, and she worked at Larned State Hospital. I became a wild child in Larned. My mom worked nights and she spent a lot of time in bars. I was left to my own devices. By the time she tried to rein me in, it was too late. She sent me to live with my dad in Junction City, Kansas when I was twelve. I was too unruly for her.

I lived in Junction City till I was fourteen. My dad transferred to Greece, so I went back to live with my mom. I started smoking marijuana, and I was kicked out school for smoking marijuana at school. I went to a thirty day drug treatment program, and then I went to a home for boys till I was sixteen. I got my GED in 1986, and then I went to Job Corp in Clearfield, Utah. I spent two years at Job Corp, and I returned to Larned in 1988, where I worked in feed yards. I got married in 1989. My wife and I moved to Stafford, Kansas, where I worked in a nursing home.

I worked in nursing home in Stafford for a

year, and I got a divorce. I moved back to Larned, and I worked in a feed yard. I remarried, and I had a daughter and a son. I worked in a nursing home for about a year and a half, and then I worked in a body shop for three years. I was incarcerated for six months for a probation violation, and I returned to Larned. I worked in the body shop until 2001, when I started doing concrete work and steel building construction. I shattered my heel at work in August, 2001. I was on workman's comp for a while, and I went to truck driving school in Kansas City in 2003.

I drove a truck for a construction company in Clinton, Oklahoma, and I was arrested in 2006. I spent fifteen and a half years in prison. I came to Hand Up on August thirteenth of 2021. I started working at Magic Linen Services a week later. Hand Up helped me find that job. I became a lead man at work after a month and a half. I would be homeless and jobless if not for Hand Up.

— Shawn Christie



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.

