

November 2022

→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←
Meet the Board

David Nichols — President (405) 613-3120
Dondino Melchorie — V.P. (702) 688-3165

UPDATE



Grace and peace be to all, and even more so to those who are doers of the word. May God keep you through your suffering! We are well on our way to adding eleven beds to use for “doing” the word.

We would have been finished if we could have gotten labor. Instead, we have had to train men in new skills. These men have a mind to work, and they get faster as we go along. We don't have any time to pout over what we don't have. We just keep moving. With 20 men in tents, we have no time to slow down. Our God is an awesome God. He always makes a way where there is no way. The religious don't believe God associates with the lowest and the weakest of society. To them, having anything to do with sex offenders is beneath Him and them. They refuse to admit that He Himself became a sex offender on the cross. He was exposed to all. He felt the same shame as sex offenders do today for exposure. While His was not willingly, it does not change the shame. He knows how they feel, and He is willing to forgive when

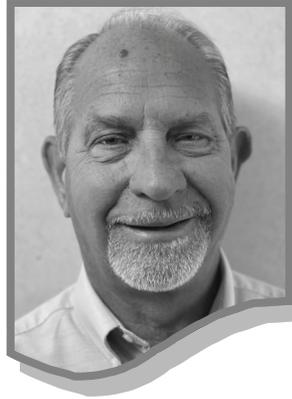
asked. He is even willing to forgive adultery and fornication when it is met with Repentance. Guilt and shame follow every sex offence until the person accepts forgiveness from Christ, even though man may not forgive. Because the law demanded punishment, the carnal man does also. Agape love is not easily accepted or understood, but that is who God is. We also have a multitude of sex offenders who viewed pornography, sometimes addicted to it. Our prisons are full, and the religious just want it covered with penalties and forever shame. Jesus wants to wash the sin away, washed by His blood. Hand Up offers them His blood payment and forgiveness, which the world cannot understand. While I pastor 300, it would be 3,000 or 30,000 if the world did not demand a life sentence for sins it hates. This hate stems from the fear that their own sins may be exposed. By hating lust sins enough, they think it will prevent any of it from coming to their house. In the meantime, the termites are destroying the structure and foundation. Living in fear and practicing fear is not God's answer. 2 Timothy 1:7 states, “For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” Let us show love to all who have need, and be a doer of the word, not just hearing it. Let that love be to all, and not just those we feel deserve it.

— David Nichols,
President & CEO

OPPORTUNITIES ARE PLENTY

One of the things I like about Hand Up Ministries is that we are structured in a way that doesn't make place for excuses. If a man cannot succeed at Hand Up, it is because he is stubborn or not really trying. At the time of this article, there are 208 men the Hand Up 59th Street location, and only five of them are unemployed. These, of course, are new residents who are still taking care of legal matters that come with exiting prison. They will be employed within the week, most likely. Employment is one of the biggest concerns of men coming out of prison. Hand Up has been able to build a large team of employers who are ready to hire our guys as soon as they are available. This takes a big load off the mind of the men in the re-entry process. There are opportunities in socialization and support through our small group meetings. Every resident is assigned a small group of six to seven other residents to meet with once a week and talk about their week. They can talk about anything on their mind, and it remains in confidence within the group. The groups often do things together, like going to restaurants or going bowling. This also provides accountability and support for success. Every week our residents come together for one hour in a meeting where they are given opportunity to worship through song and receive a positive life changing message to help them through the week. What an opportunity! Occasionally, this meeting will become a town hall meeting of sorts, where they can share positive milestones and bring up questions or issues they are having. Hand Up is a community of "men helping men," and within this community there

are a multitude of opportunities to gain knowledge, get support, learn skills, and succeed in the real world. This place has certainly been a real blessing to me and to countless other men. Every week I receive stories of how Hand Up has been a blessing for the men who reside here.



— Ray Riddle,
Oklahoma Director

LETTER FROM A DONOR

Dear Joe,

This gift is given in loving memory of my husband Reverend Dr. Richard (last name omitted) and his service to those in need. Thank you for what you do and the hope you give in your service. Please use this donation for housing for those that seek your help. Thank you, too, for being there for our son.

Many thanks,
Rosemary

TESTIMONES

I was born in Galveston, Texas in 1956. I have a younger brother. My dad was a farmer, and I grew up on a farm near Paducah, Texas. I started riding horses when I was five years old, and I was breaking horses when I was 13. I quit school in eighth grade. My dad said I had to work if I wanted to eat. I saw my family doing more for my brother than they did for me, so I left home when I was 16, and I moved to McKinny, Texas. Things started going downhill from there. I got into using alcohol and drugs, and I ended up hurting someone over drugs. I got arrested, and I went to prison for six years. I met a Mexican-American woman after I left prison, and we got married. We moved to Paducah, and I started working on a ranch. I couldn't support my family on what I was making, and I got back into drugs. I broke into a building, and I went back to prison for three years. My wife divorced me, and I started working for a farmer. He introduced me to a family in

Dickens, Texas. This is when I met my victim. I got a sixteen year old girl pregnant and her uncle called child protective services. I spent 15 years in prison. I got out of prison, and I went back to Paducah. I had to register as a sex offender. My first wife asked me to come live with her and our two kids in Mangum, Oklahoma, and I got a good job working at the Mangum brick plant. I couldn't deal with living in society, and I wanted to go back to prison. I didn't register as a sex offender in Oklahoma, and I went back to prison for nine months. I failed to register again, and I was sentenced to seven years for failure to register and living too close to a school. I got out of prison in September 2022, and I came to Hand Up Ministries. I work for Hand Up now. We are remodeling trailers. I don't want to go back to my old life, nor do I want to go back to prison. I like the crew with whom I work. They don't talk about drugs or other bad stuff. They have been to prison, and I can relate to them. I have a new family at Hand Up. One of the youngsters here looks up to me, which helps me to think differently. I



previously accused God of turning His back on me, but I realized that I had turned my back on Him. I am reading the Bible now, and I can feel the changes in me. God is working in me. I am taking it one day at a time.

—Richard Mayo

I grew up in a military family, so I grew up around the world. My family always attended church. We settled in Omaha, Nebraska when I was ten years old, and I call Omaha home. When I was 14, I tried marijuana, alcohol, and cigarettes. I did this to be accepted by my friends. One day, I came home drunk. My parents didn't react negatively. Instead, they just let me suffer the hangover. However, the next day they gave me a long list of chores to do all day. Needless to say, it was difficult to accomplish everything under those

conditions. I played sports in junior high school, and I was good at it. I enjoyed the camaraderie and competition. I made more friends, and I received more attention from girls. This continued through high school. I met my future wife in high school. We dated for four years. I graduated in 1988, and we got married in 1990. I joined the United States Army the same year. I was deployed to Desert Storm and Desert Shield while my pregnant wife stayed with family. I made a promise to God that if he kept me safe I would be the best father and husband I could be. I didn't keep that promise. I was unfaithful. We had four children during our marriage. They were all deployment babies, meaning my wife became pregnant each time I deployed. I deployed to Afghanistan in 2001, and I deployed to Iraq in 2003. I didn't feel right when I came home. I was emotionally distant. I was physically present, but my mind was still at war. I engaged in high risk behaviors to feel a rush. I began drinking alcohol to forget the war. In 2003, I committed my offence. Alcohol was not involved. In 2004, I was court-martialed by the Army and sent to prison. In prison, I attended chapel service because I felt a need to become closer to God. I was diagnosed with combat related PTSD and depression. In 2012, I was transferred to the Federal Bureau of Prisons. I learned about Hand Up Ministries from my case manager. I felt overwhelmed by the support here at Hand Up. I was provided with clothes, food, hygiene, friendship, and a place to stay. I can feel God's presence here. Within two weeks, I had identification and a job. Hand Up has restored my faith and Hand Up helps felons succeed. I am sober, and I know I can make good decisions with the support of God and Hand Up. I feel my life can be restored.

—Anonymous

I am the youngest of five children, and we are all born from the same parents. I have had people tell me that my childhood must have been difficult because I rarely make friends and I didn't interact well with my siblings. I was diagnosed later in life with

autism spectrum disorder, and I have a problem with how my brain handles serotonin. My neurological disorders cause me to suffer social anxiety, and I have difficulty processing or understanding emotions and feeling empathy. As a child, I found that I liked to be alone, and I was rarely bothered with anything that happened in the world. I was raised Christian, and we regularly went to church. My father constantly taught religion to me, and he had us pray together. However, I left the Christian faith when I was a teenager. My mind couldn't accept many of the core teachings as true. I remained agnostic for many years, but I later found myself asking questions that only religion could answer. I searched many faiths, and I eventually found my calling with Buddhism. Instead of being told what is true and asked to believe on faith, I was taught to have a happy life and a steady mind through moral living. My parents were heartbroken by my change in religion. Concerning my crime, many would consider my actions to be immoral, but there are those who wouldn't see my actions as immoral. My actions weren't a crime in some states, but it was a crime in Oklahoma. My parents pleaded with me to not continue my behavior. What I did caused harm to people close to me and caused me to be ostracized by society. If not for Hand Up, it would have nearly impossible for me to have found a place to live when I left prison. My prison case manager told me I should apply to Hand Up.



I am glad I applied to Hand Up. I have been accepted at Hand Up, even though I made it clear I am a Buddhist. There is no religious prejudice here. I pray for many blessings to come upon all those at Hand Up.

—Jason McDaniel

As I remember it, I was six years old when life started and my eyes were opened. My brother and I were waiting for the school

bus, and I was playing tag with two girls. A girl was trying to tag me, and she accidentally pushed me in front of a car. I was hit and knocked unconscious. I lived. All glory and praise to God. I was in foster care when I was a teenager. I lived with a family which was really into church, and for this I am thankful. That was where I developed a strong love for Christianity. After leaving their home, I went to live with a very strict foster family. I was not the greatest kid, so I stayed in trouble. I was physically abused, but I have forgiven him for the way he mistreated me. As an adult, I have been struggling with staying out of trouble. I don't know if this was because of a lack of structure or if God had a plan for me. I lived in a small town called Perkins. I went to church on Wednesday and Sunday. God made it to where I was not far from Him. I came to know the Lord better when I was shot. I lay there praying, and, to my amazement to this day, I am still alive. I heard about Hand Up Ministries when I was in prison. There were no bed space when I was released from prison, and I ended up back in prison. My life now is a battle to do everything right, and there is no room whatsoever to mess up again. Hand Up has granted me an opportunity to be successful, honest, and drug free. Hand Up has provided a home for me. God has given me a second and third chance at life, for which I am grateful.

—Anonymous

Matthew 25:35-36 NIV

35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

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.

