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→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

David Nichols — President  
Main Office —

(405) 236-3349

# UPDATE



Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! With thanksgiving, we praise His name continually, looking forward to His glorious appearing, when He will gather His bride to the

marriage supper of the lamb.

Let me start by saying I made a huge mistake in the last newsletter. The actual cost for men to live at Hand Up is from \$475 a month to \$650 a month, not the \$2400 a month I mentioned last month. Outside sources were 42.00 a month. Residents of our park for married couples pay their own electric bill. We are far from being like the Hilton, but we offer a clean and sober, peaceful and quiet, family type atmosphere. The clients pay for themselves, allowing our small amount of donations to go toward adding new beds. We have added 18 new beds in the past 12 months. Since we didn't get enough donations to add more beds, we have over 40 men living in tents.

Since the church has written off our clients as unredeemable and unworthy of God's grace, we are about

the only gospel they ever see or hear. We do the gospel and let God do the judging. We don't turn away the sick, the unsaved, or the mentally ill from our compassion and caring love. We are a church body that accepts as many as we can, regardless of where they are at in life. We help them change as God enlightens them. Some of our clients are not yet on God's "born again" church roll, but they are important to Him and He cares for them. They are like many of our own family members who are not yet living for Christ. They all need to know we care just as God cares.

The one property we bought for our social security men did not work out. Because of state regulations, the cost of rehabbing was more than our men could afford. We had to let it go, and we are looking for something that will work for our needs within our budget. You can email me at [david@huminc.org](mailto:david@huminc.org) if you have ideas or information. In whatever manner you judge others, you will be judged in the same manner.

Our staff has managed to develop relationships with several other agencies and organizations. This is especially good for our many mentally ill clients. We obtained donations of 3000 socks and 150 pairs of underwear. I have confidence our staff will achieve many things in the future. I believe in the team we have, as well as those God may add in the future. Most businesses and organizations never attain the level of teamwork we have.

There are several projects we are

working on, and we believe we will achieve these goals.

We need \$500,000 to \$700,000 for a building for offices, a chapel, a storm shelter, a maintenance building, parking, fencing, and new gate entrances.

We need \$500,000 to \$700,000 for land and expenses to build 100 trailer pads and start aquaponics gardening.

We also need possibly \$700,000 for land and a 40 apartment building somewhere men can get work. We are waiting for a solid bid on that.

We need enough money to start a place in Arkansas, where we have 22 men who we have accepted, but they can't be paroled because they can't find a green zone in which to live. We have taken many in the past, but now they can't come here because we don't have beds.

We need enough to start a place in northeast Oklahoma where men can go to work and not be homeless.

The homeless situation is many times worse than anyone realizes, and politicians continue making it worse. What you hear or see on TV is not the whole story. We need to pray for godly leaders who are real leaders and aren't just after votes. Freedom of speech on TV may never come back, and internet sources may go away. Though our country is still religious, it may never be "Christian" again. The coming of our Lord Jesus is inevitable and near.

-David Nichols

### **EVERYDAY CHALLENGES**

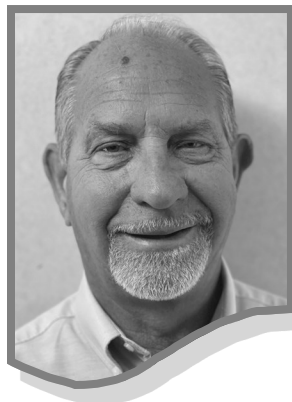
Hand Up is constantly faced with the challenges of providing enough bed space for those wanting to come to this

ministry for help. We currently have almost 250 men at the 59<sup>th</sup> street location, and 40 of those are temporarily in tents. At last count, 146 applicants have been accepted and will come here when they are released from prison. All of these are set to be released within the next year. Those are some of the constant challenges we are facing as we try to serve men coming out of prison in Oklahoma and need a place to go.

Then there are the everyday challenges facing our staff. Men who come out of prison need training in how to handle money, as well as learning responsibility and finding a job. After becoming employed, some of them don't understand how to keep a job and succeed at it. Many have not had any experience in setting goals and determining how to reach those goals. While all of this is going on, they are faced with the drive to re-unite with family and friends. They also have to decide which friends and family will be good for them as they move forward. Men coming out of prison have to re-adjust their daily thinking from a survival mode, which served them well in prison, to teamwork and networking, which are skills they need on the outside.

I am not complaining about those challenges, because this is what we signed on for. Our staff is attacking those issues with enthusiasm. Many of the things I mentioned are being addressed in an eight week to 12 week orientation handled by a couple of senior staff members. Others are being addressed in other ways as the person develops and is ready for the next challenge in their progress.

It is exciting to watch these guys develop and find their way through the maze of challenges with which they are faced. Most



of them attack it head on and appreciate the chance to discuss their journey in small groups. Some of them require more individual help, and they get this help through a mentoring program or through meeting with

staff regularly for discussions and counsel.

What a blessing it is to witness their progress, whether it is rapid or slow.

-Ray Riddle

## **TESTIMONIES**

I was born into an Air Force family in Omaha in September 1964. I was raised in many different environments. We live for one year in Omaha, Nebraska, and then we went to Fairchild Air Force Base before going overseas. My dad was stationed at an Air Force base outside of Tripoli, Libya for two years. My earliest childhood memory is after we returned to Fairchild in 1968. My dad finished his Air Force career at Edwards Air Force base in California. We moved to Templeton, California in 1976, where my parents rented a house from my aunt while they were looking for a house to buy. I started junior high school there. Like any other kid, I played games and pranks with, and on, my friends. It was never anything that could do lasting harm. We moved to Atascadero, California, where I finished high school in 1982.

I worked many odd jobs, none of them for more than a few months. I bounced from one job to another. I worked for a moving company, Carl's Jr., Thrifty, Safeway, Bob's Big Boy, a car wash, a contractor, and a landscaping company. I did roofing, drywall, asphalt, and many other jobs before I went into the tire business, where I stayed from 1992 until 1999. I got married in 1988, and we vacationed in Oklahoma later that year to visit my parents. They were living at Grand Lake at the time. We liked the area so much that we decided to get jobs there. We put our house up for sale.

My mother's dad passed away in September 1998, and my dad died a month later. We moved to Grove, Oklahoma in December 1998. I had a job replacing power poles for a couple of months, but a power pole fell on me and broke my pelvis.

I went to work for Tyson Foods after I recovered from my pelvis injury, and I worked there for nine years. I was arrested for stealing at Tyson, and I found out I had a felony warrant in California. I was extradited to California for a sex charge. I couldn't prove I didn't do it, and I did two years there. I moved to Oklahoma after I got off of parole. Six years later I was convicted of sexual battery, and I spent three years in prison.

I am now at Hand Up Ministries. I hope to turn my life around and stay away from situations that will get me into trouble again.

-Anonymous

My childhood was a little rough. I didn't have a father most of the time. He was on drugs, and he was often in trouble with the law. He went to prison. My mom kept me away from my dad for fear of putting me at risk of using drugs or worse. I was abused by my dad when I was five or six. This might be why my mom kept me from him.

When I was 12, my grandma had a little diner in the small town where we lived. My family and friends worked there. We had our ups and downs, as any family owned diner would. I was an outcast as a teen, and I didn't have many friends (maybe five). I worked, and I bought my own school supplies and clothes. I grew up fast, not really being a kid. I didn't know it would hurt me in the long run.

My father reached out to me when I was 18 years old. He had been out of prison for two years. We talked about everything, including the abuse I suffered as a child. I got married shortly after that, but the marriage only lasted six months. I moved to Wichita Falls from Abilene. Most of my family lived there, and I lived with my mom for two months. I worked all kinds of jobs. I had heart attack when I was 23.

I grew up knowing the Lord. I went to Bible study courses when I was little. I memorized the Ten Commandments, and I had a wonderful time doing it. As we

moved around during most of my childhood, it became harder to stay focused. I lived in fear of moving again and again, and I eventually stopped going to church. I started hanging out with the wrong people, and I began smoking marijuana, taking opiates, and drinking alcohol. I was working a dead end job when I was 24, and I was unhappy with my life. I woke up during that time, and I heard a voice in my head. I thought I was crazy, but I quit everything in one day. Deep down, I was tired, and I asked the Lord to take it all away. I didn't want to be that person. God answered my plea for help, and I have been grateful since then. I was blessed with a handsome little boy.

Committing my crime was the biggest mistake of my life. It changed my life forever. God had a plan for me, and going to prison was part of it. Prison got my life back on track. Prison humbled me. I am 29 now, but my mind is trying to be a teenager. This is because I didn't have a normal teenage life. Hand Up gave me a place to live as I try to become a respectful citizen.

-Anthony Evans

I was raised in a Christian home with Christian family members, but I started to stray from the Christian path in high school. This behavior continued in college, but it got worse after my first divorce. Making poor decisions in life can happen to anyone, but a lifestyle choice to drink, use drugs, and womanize can lead to more poor decisions than the average person would make. My decision to be with a woman at work one night was a poor choice, because we were seen by a minor. The girl told her mother, and her mother called the police. I was arrested and charged with a sex crime, and I was sentenced to two years of probation.

I had gotten away with many poor decisions in my life without getting caught. I thought this mistake was the beginning of the end. I was unsure of how to return to a wholesome life, but I knew it was going to take the power of God to do it. My sister told me about Hand Up Ministries, and she

sent an application to me. I was scared of change, and I lied to her and told her I had sent the application. She called David Nichols to see if I had sent the application, and she learned I had never sent it. Her next call left no doubt that it was to be Hand Up or the graveyard if I kept on my path. I prayed, and I surrendered to God. I decided I would go to Hand Up.

When I arrived at Hand Up, all of my possessions were in a duffel bag. My father dropped me off at a trailer which was under repair, and I promised God I would do whatever it took to leave my old life behind. Good things began to happen almost immediately. The men here were inviting, and the staff gave me encouragement and direction. I was sober, and my mind began to clear. Daily prayer and reflection allowed me to make short term plans and goals. A job seemed just to appear. I moved to a better trailer, and I had two roommates who were Christians. They were both employed, and they were doing well on life. I wanted what these people had. Hand Up has given me a life and a hopeful future. I see God work every day, and I listen to Him.

-Art Athens

#### Colossians 3:13-17

<sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

<sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**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.**

