



Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to.

There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.

Deuteronomy 15:10-11

We are happy to announce some very exciting news. At long, long, long, last ... the IRS finally granted *Hope in the Streets* with our requested 501(c)3 status. It took over 2 ½ years, two separate filing attempts with the IRS, dozens of phone calls, and \$2,100 in legal fees to get here.

What does this mean? It means donations we receive, and those we have received since we first filed for charitable status in 2006, will be treated as tax deductible charitable donations. It means companies providing matching donations for their employees will be able to find Hope in the Streets in the list of registered and eligible charitable foundations (we should show up in the next semi-annual update). It means we can apply for tax-exempt status in Missouri, so we don't have to pay sales tax on items we buy for our foundation's programs. It means we can officially refer to our foundation as a charitable organization.

Despite the long delay in receiving our 501(c)3 status, we have been actively moving the foundation forward over the last couple of years. We have been blessed with some new and dedicated volunteers. Michael Sommers, Ruth Lowther, and Dawn Sprague have been joining us as crew members on the weekly meal route. They have also helped with the shopping, planning, and channeling donated items that we hand out to those in need each week. Some of our neighbors, notably Treah Hutchings and Kelley Scharosch, have been a huge help in putting together Winter Warmth Kits over the last couple of years as well. Now and again, friends and neighbors have joined us on meal runs. Bob Hamilton Plumbing indicated they would do a food drive for Hope in the Streets this winter. These efforts from our friends and neighbors have been greatly appreciated.

We started Hope in the Streets just over 4 years ago, and during that time we have gained valuable insight into the homeless situation in Kansas City. We have become friends, on a first name basis, with so many of those we see week after week. We have learned that some of those on the street will continue to seek out that lifestyle, no matter what resources they are given. In other words, they will probably always be on the street. There are others who are lucky enough to break away from the street and begin a normal life again, although unfortunately this is the exception. There are others still who have a roof over their head, but the conditions they live in are really bleak. All three of these groups are at or below the "poverty line". These are the people we focus on, and we are able to cater specifically to the unique needs of each group.

Because of the hands-on experience we have gained, we were able to design and implement a brand new program this year. Sandy was the champion for this program, as it plays well to her personal strengths ... shopping and running a happy home ☺ The new program is called "Home Essentials Fresh Start Kits". This program is designed to assist those homeless individuals who are trying to break away from the street.

Here is how it works. Currently there is a U.S. government grant that provides housing vouchers to homeless individuals in the Kansas City area. Unfortunately, that program doesn't have the resources to provide any of the basic living essentials a person needs to get started after they are handed the keys. Hope in the Streets has stepped in and provides a large tub of essential house wares to these individuals to get them off to a good start in their new environment. Items in the Fresh Start Kit include: bed sheets, plates, bowls, cups, silverware, cooking pans, kitchen utensils, towels, laundry soap, shower curtain, pillow, blanket, bathroom hygiene items, non-perishable food items, etc. Our Fresh Start Program provides the necessary basics for individuals to start living on their own and to become more self-sufficient early on in the transition away from homelessness. We have handed out 16 of these Home Essentials Kits already this year, and the response has been awesome.

May God bless you, your family, and our homeless brothers and sisters.
www.HopeInTheStreets.org

Another new initiative we started is the “Small Blessings” program. As we deliver meals each week, we see individuals with small but important personal needs that they otherwise have a difficult time meeting. Examples include shoes or boots, t-shirts or sweatshirts, work pants, bug spray, baseball caps, batteries for lanterns/flashlights, a walking cane, reading glasses, gloves, jackets, and so on. We can identify important needs such as these, purchase them, and bring the items out on the next weekly meal run. We don’t advertise this service, and we don’t simply ask “anything I can get you this week?” Instead, we carefully observe those we are serving, listen to their stories, and consider what those persons might be going through. If we can identify a need, we’ll ask them if they would be open to us filling that need, and if so, we try to make it happen. The program is personal and selective, and the recipients have always been over-the-top thankful for the small blessings they receive.

The recent crisis in the economy is not only impacting everyday businesses and individuals, but it is having its effect on charitable organizations as well. One local charity that previously provided a regular weekly meal route on Monday had to cancel their program all together. In addition, we recently learned that the Salvation Army had to slash its budget for the weekly meal run. The budget was cut by more than 90%, and is putting the weekly meal route in serious jeopardy. Without additional funds, they may have to shutter the program completely.

We have been working with the Salvation Army to brainstorm ways to keep this program alive. We are working together on ways to reduce the overall cost of delivering the food each week, and are giving serious consideration to having Hope in the Streets provide funds for the food items. The Salvation Army can donate the use of their Emergency Response Vehicle (i.e., the meal truck), as well as gas, bottled water, and blankets. Hope in the Streets can provide funds for sandwiches and other food items, and together we should be able to keep this program alive.

Through our various programs, Hope in the Streets is providing outreach services to Kansas City’s homeless and extremely poor. We have a unique “individual” approach ensuring that only those who are truly in need receive benefits from our foundation. We know the difference between those in need from those who are “gaming the system”, so you can be assured that your donation to Hope in the Streets is channeled directly to those most in need. And you can also rest easy knowing there is no administrative overhead in our program ... every penny of every dollar we receive goes directly to providing much needed benefits. There are no salaries being paid, no office supplies being purchased, no third party contracts, no marketing expenses, and no office space to lease. It’s just us and our volunteers, and a desire to help those less fortunate.

If you would like to donate, please visit our website at <http://www.HopeInTheStreets.org> and click on the “Donations’ link on the left side of the page.

To those who have donated so generously to our foundation, we and the homeless we serve are very grateful. A special thanks goes to Tradebot Systems for providing matching contributions based on donations from our friends who work there. Since we are operating our foundation as a “Zero Overhead” program, our only way of attracting new donations is by word of mouth. If you like what we are doing and how we are doing it, and believe we are making a difference, please help spread the word. Feel free to forward this newsletter. Tell your friends, family, and co-workers about Hope In The Streets, and with God’s grace we can continue to serve the poor and homeless here in Kansas City.

Sincerely,

Joe & Sandy Ratterman