



'You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'
Deuteronomy 15:10-11

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Welcome to the 2014 Hope in the Streets December newsletter. I'm sitting down to write this note just after Thanksgiving, which reminds me of all the things we are thankful for. We are thankful to God for giving us the opportunity and resources to serve others through our ministry. We are thankful for the many volunteers who give their time so generously for an evening, or two or three, each month to serve on the Vittle Van. And we are thankful for the many supporters who provide us with water, food, and supplies at little to no cost to our organization.

Services Provided Summary

So far in 2014, we have delivered 5,549 meals to our friends on the streets with one more month to go before the end of the year. We have also provided other essential supplies to the homeless, including so far this year 487 pairs of socks, 196 hygiene kits, 114 blankets, plus several hats, gloves, shoes, and so on.

Winter Warmth Kit Update

The annual Winter Warmth Kit campaign was a success again this year. We built 20 kits, and have already handed them all out. We reserve these for the hardcore homeless population in Kansas City – those individuals who we know are truly living outdoors throughout the winter season. We had more demand this year than we had warmth kits, so we decided to provide sleeping bags to several people who won't get a full warmth kit this time around, and that's been 21 sleeping bags so far. We are arranging to get more sleeping bags to hand out so we can satisfy the full demand before the extreme cold begins to set in.

Schedule Change

A few months ago we were thrown for a loop, when unexpectedly another meal delivery service starting serving Thursday evenings. Normally that would be a good thing, the more the merrier. The problem was that the other service, Salvation Army's Honk & Holler program, decided to abandon their traditional Monday nights and move to Thursday nights. That created two major problems. First, Thursday nights in Kansas City was already being covered by our Vittle Van and another group from a local Methodist church. Two services a night can be good, as one can

bring dinner for that night and the other can effectively be providing lunch for the following day. Add a third meal service on the same night, and basically dollars and resources are being wasted.

The second major problem coming from Salvation Army's move to Thursdays was a gap in coverage each week when they stopped covering Mondays. We attempted to reason with Salvation Army on the problems created by their move, but they didn't seem to care. It would appear that sometimes it's more about spending donations than it is about meeting actual needs, at least in some of the larger charitable organizations. Since they were unable to change their plans back to Monday, we asked our volunteers if we could be flexible and move our Thursday night to Monday instead. Our volunteers were more than happy to move things around, and so we did. Now balance and order are back each week and the delivery of services is smoothed out once again.

The Worship Wagon is finally launched (<http://worshipwagon.org>)

I couldn't be more excited to announce the official launch of "The Worship Wagon", our newest program. The program's vision - Bringing church to the people, as opposed to bringing people to the church. You may recall this idea, under a different name, which I wrote about originally in the 2012 newsletter. I had initially planned to call the program "Worship Where You Are", and I spent the last couple of years noodling on the idea, including a couple of trips to Waco, TX to visit the "Church under the Bridge" team, but no tangible progress was made here at home over that time. That is until now ☺

On November 17th, we did a trial run at 17th & Beardsley, bringing a combination of worship music, a testimonial, and a non-denominational short message to the streets of Kansas City. We planned its time and location to overlap with when food was being delivered by both the Vittle Van and Uplift. The weather conditions certainly weren't ideal, with temperatures below 20 degrees and howling north winds. We brought a sound system and small portable propane heaters, along with a worship leader who played the guitar and a pastor from Freedom Fire Ministries (Bruce McGregor). The service was short, but we learned a lot, and things have really started moving now.

One of the big lessons we learned was that it can be really cold in Kansas City in the winter! Ok, so maybe we already knew it gets cold during winters in KC ... that wasn't actually the lesson. The lesson was that we might be able to attract more individuals to our service, especially in the winter, if we figured out how to provide some serious heat to the environment. Rather than ask people to hang around after a meal for a worship service, in the freezing cold, we could bring in some industrial grade heaters and actually make the location a desirable place to warm up, relax, and hang out for an extended time.

By the way, we aren't going it alone on this adventure. Hope in the Streets will be partnering with Freedom Fire Ministries to launch the Worship Wagon. Freedom Fire will be the primary source for pastors and worship leaders. Hope in the Streets will provide the hard goods (i.e. making the initial investment in the trailer and all its contents), "marketing", and strong existing relationships within Kansas City's homeless community. Both Freedom Fire and Hope in the Streets will also share equally in the initial sweat equity and commitment to make sure the program gets a solid and sustainable start.

So why are we calling it the Worship Wagon? Because all the resources needed to setup a mobile church service will be packed in a trailer (i.e. the *wagon*), allowing us to go wherever the need is. We are in the process of purchasing a 5' x10' covered trailer, folding chairs, one or more industrial grade portable heaters, and a large supply of bibles. A few key items are also being donated, including a portable generator and a sound board/mixer, amplifier, and speakers.

We'll host another practice service later this month, and hopefully early next year we will be able to start up regular weekly services each Monday evening at 6pm. We plan to rotate locations each week so we can reach more people over time. Check in at our website (<http://worshipwagon.org>) from time-to-time to keep tabs on our progress with this new program.

Wrapping up

We are proud to report again this year that there is no administrative overhead at Hope in the Streets ... every penny of every dollar we receive goes directly to providing much needed benefits to the poor and homeless in Kansas City. There are no salaries, no office supplies being purchased, 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 support our efforts, 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 grateful. If you like what we are doing and how we are doing it, please help spread the word. 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 Ratterman

on behalf of the Hope in the Streets family