

2019 Annual Letter to our Donors and Supporters

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Welcome to the 2019 Hope in the Streets newsletter. This year marks our 15th anniversary for Hope in the Streets. It's been a wonderful journey so far, and we are still going strong, trusting in God to guide us going forward as we faithfully live out our mission of serving the homeless in Kansas City.

When landing on the Hope in the Streets web site home page (hopeinthestreets.org) the second sentence you will read is:

Our foundation will inspire hope through volunteers who are taking the time and initiative to get to know those living on the streets personally, on a first name basis, and becoming a trusted and familiar face each week.

Over the last two months, I have asked a few of our volunteers, "Why do you serve the homeless?" and "How did you come to choose Hope in the Streets?" As you can imagine, I received a variety of answers, some of which are:

- This is something I feel I need to do (from a biblical standpoint). I received this or a similar answer from multiple volunteers.
- I have volunteered elsewhere at other times and not gotten any personal connections. I get some small amount of personal connections from a few of our clients. This answer goes back to Hope in the Streets' mission (summarizing from the web site): *build relationships with our clients.*
- I don't have the financial means to donate to worthy causes like this so I donate my time.
- I chose the Vittle Van because I would see the van out on its route as I was leaving work.
- I chose the Vittle Van because I have or had a relative or friend volunteering.
- I chose to help on the Vittle Van because I have or had a relative or friend living on the streets. I wasn't able to help them, but I can help someone else.

This past year, I have been fortunate enough to serve with each of our volunteers at least twice and most of them several times. More important than the "why" and "how" they came to serve are a couple of things worthy of this newsletter, Passion and Personal Growth.

Each of the volunteers I have worked with has a passion for serving and a desire to give back to those we serve. Hope in the Streets is blessed to have them as volunteers.

I have also noticed a personal growth in some of our volunteers. A growth beyond the reasons for serving stated above. I have seen one gentleman who volunteers on Sunday grow from a smile and a hello to a handshake, a pat on the shoulder, and more importantly, taking time to listen to how our clients answer his "How are you doing?" question. Another one of our volunteers has gotten the chance to spend more time on the Vittle Van this year. As a result, she has started learning the names of our clients. With the learning of the names comes more conversation.

It's amazing how the act of learning someone's name opens that person up to building a relationship. The other thing I have noticed is when one of our volunteers calls one of our clients by name, quite often that volunteer will get a smile from the person they are talking to. "What's in a name?", you might be wondering. Homelessness takes away humanity. Calling someone by name, gives that humanity back. It acknowledges that that person exists and are worthy of being a person and being acknowledged. It's incredibly powerful especially when trying to build a relationship.

By the numbers – a summary of services provided this year

Year to date in 2019, we have served over 6,000 meals to our friends on the streets. That is over 6,000 opportunities to inspire hope, to learn a name, to offer a smile and to become a trusted and familiar face each week. In addition, we have provided: 272 pairs of socks, 59 hygiene kits, 83 packets of hand warmers, 62 blankets, 44 hats, and 67 pairs of gloves.

The Answered Prayers Grant

2019 was year three of our "Answered Prayers Grant" program, which is available to help those looking to take the next step in turning their lives around. From our website:

As individuals transition away from homelessness towards a sustainable lifestyle off the streets, there can be small financial obstacles that threaten their efforts and potential success. Hope in the Streets board members, volunteers, and select partnering organizations, can submit grant applications on behalf of individuals such as these in an effort to help them continue on the road to success. Grants can be requested for individuals only once in their lifetime and are not meant to help with regular or recurring expenses. Examples of approved grants include one-time utility payments, rent down payments, tax obligations, and so on. Grants will be reviewed for requests up to \$1,000, and if approved will be paid directly toward

specific expenses (not given in cash). All grants require the approval of the Hope in the Streets board of directors on a case-by-case basis.

We received one request for a grant this year for a security deposit. Our grant was to help a single employed female with recent custody of her two-year old grandson transition from an apartment (she needed to vacate due to mold and plumbing issues) to a house. She was able to make monthly rent but just needed help with the initial security deposit.

Worship Wagon Services

We are celebrating our 5th continuous year of Worship Wagon's weekly Monday night church services this year. God has provided shelter, and for the most part, pretty good weather for us to hold our services each week. It does get super cold in the deep winter months between December and March. It can also get really hot in the summer months, but we feel blessed to have a location under a bridge in downtown Kansas City that has sheltered us through all the seasons.

We switched from topical themes last year to Bible character themes this year. We've covered 16 different biblical characters this year, starting with Jacob and Joseph, working our way through Jesus, John, and Paul. We covered one character each month with four or five messages during the month on each character, except for July, when we covered a new character each week of that month. It was awesome exploring the different perspectives on the characters and I think we learned a lot by focusing on each character from many different angles.

Our weekly participation fluctuates seasonally, with higher numbers in the spring, summer, and fall, and then things get a little more intimate as our numbers drop off when the weather gets a bit hard to handle in the winter. We still see a full crowd during the high times with attendance between 60 and 100+ folks, and during the cold days in winter we might have 20 to 50 brave souls coming out.

"Santa Mike" stepped up his engagement over the last year and was everybody's favorite volunteer on the cold nights. He has been packing his large SUV with an array of portable propane heaters so that nearly everyone who attends our service can warm themselves next to one of the heaters. We appreciate all the volunteers that come out week after week and really help us create and maintain a strong community under the bridge.

We are still contemplating starting up a second church service during the week, but we haven't found the large volunteer base we need to pull that off. If you want to pray for us, then please pray that God would guide us towards any expansion that he desires for us and that He would provide us with all the resources needed to branch out when the time is right.

Wrapping up

Again, the second sentence of our web sites home page states:

Our foundation will inspire hope through volunteers who are taking the time and initiative to get to know those living on the streets personally, on a first name basis, and becoming a trusted and familiar face each week.

This past year I have witnessed our volunteers living out this sentence by giving of their time, by learning the names of our homeless, by offering them a smile and treating them as a person, not a "homeless person". By our volunteers living this out, they are "inspiring hope" to those we serve on a weekly basis. None of this would be possible without the generosity of our donors. Our donor's generosity makes life on the streets of Kansas City tolerable for our clients and provides a chance for personal growth for our volunteers.

Hope in the Streets and those we serve thank you for that generosity. If you like what we are doing and how we are doing it, please help spread the word to your family, friends, and co-workers. With God's grace we can continue to serve the poor and those experiencing homelessness here in Kansas City.

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. It is just us, our volunteers, and a passion to help those less fortunate.

If you would like to support our efforts, please visit our [donations](#) page.

Signing off, I hope this newsletter finds you healthy, ready for the holiday's, and most important to Hope in the Streets, eager to continue supporting Hope in the Streets.

Sincerely,

Gene Lowther

on behalf of the Hope in the Streets family