

NEWS

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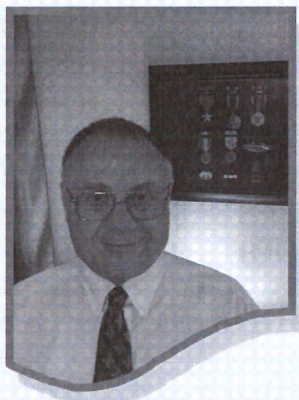
→ MINISTRY UPDATE ←

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UPDATE



Glory, praise, and honor to the King of Kings. This is the same king who suffered for our freedom from this world and totally understands our suffering because of it. He endured it only because of you and me, not because he had to. His suffering was not only the mental and emotional abuse, but the worst physical abuse also. Any abuse hurts a lot and has to be forgiven, or it will destroy the spirit. I hope to continue to be able to forgive my transgressors so God will forgive my transgressions. Jesus forgave His even as they were doing it. He understood they were under the influence of the evil one and could later become part of His family if they ever acknowledge the truth of who he was. It's a struggle sometimes, but may God help me keep that same attitude.

We shared before how the city was destroying our help for the guys having to live in tents at Hand Up because of lack of beds, but who were working, paying all of their bills, and keeping all of the rules. Because it has become a city ordinance rather than a state law, the lawyers say

they cannot stop them. Only the City Council can change the destruction of hundreds of lives. They don't think this is likely, so we ask you who understand God's grace to pray for these men who will now not have a job anymore, and will lose all hope in this life. For the vast majority of them, Hand Up was their last hope. Until we get buildings for beds, that hope is gone. If there was even one reason other than hate, it would be less hurtful. The really bad hurt is for all of the mentally ill and physically ill who can't take care of themselves. To know the churches are not willing to take a biblical stand against such actions really hurts, because I represent the real church that does the word and don't just talk about it. The world sees the actions of the churches as "The Church," or as God's care for them. Many don't even try to accept any religious help because of what they have experienced as "God's love." Please church, let us show God's love and not what the devil wants them to believe! We are able to add to God's family weekly at Hand Up because we are doing the word. Please join us.

We now have seven men at the farm of Love Foundation, our other corporation. We have seven greenhouses starting to produce crops. We have been able to put some of our disabled men there and hope to be able to put many more. We are working hard to make it a real place of refuge. We are always open for volunteers, even if you don't have skills at anything.

The Hand Up Website, huminc.org, is now complete, and Debra is working on Love Foundation's website. That will put us in a

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position to obtain grants help more people. Below you will read about her more fully.

-David Nichols

Hi everyone! My name is Debra McCullough, and I am excited to be working alongside the mission of Hand Up Ministries assisting with organization development and fundraising. I am a 1991 graduate of the University of Oklahoma, and my education and background are in technology, education, ministry, and non-profit leadership. I've been busy working with the leadership on updating the website, preparing for grant submissions, and gaining an understanding of Hand Up and of what is needed. I believe that despite the many obstacles and challenges we have faced, Hand Up will continue to push through and continue to create better opportunities for more people to receive the support they need to succeed. I spent 15 years in corporate America in system management and design. I founded a non-profit for at-risk youth and adults, and I spent 20 years as leader of this organization. Through the years I've seen many lives changed because people had hope again for a better future. Hand Up Ministries wants to restore hope and dignity to those who may have lost it or never had it, and that is something I passionately believe in. In fact, my nickname at Hope Academy was "the Hope Lady."

I believe I was led here because Hand Up Ministries aligns perfectly with my values and life purpose. If you allow God to take your life experiences (the good, the bad, and the ugly), your gifts (God given talents), and your core values (passions), you will discover true purpose. My purpose is to fulfil the Great Commandment and spread the message that God loves you and he has a plan for your life. No matter

what your history is, Jesus has redeemed us from destruction, and we have value and purpose. Only believe! Faith, hope, and love are powerful forces and something we must have to transform us into who we were created to be. We are not here accidentally, but purposefully. The tragic truth is that we live in a fallen world till Jesus comes back, and many have lost faith and hope, and/or never felt truly loved by people who were supposed to love them. How can we find this transforming faith, hope, and love? We choose. We choose to have faith in God. We choose to have hope that things can and will change. We choose love above every thing else. We have a choice to believe that God can truly redeem anyone willing to believe. He did that for me, and He will do that for you. What can you do? Get involved, or more involved, and help make Hand Up a model for facilitating newly released felons' reentry into society. Take ownership of where you are, and get a vision for where you want to go. Ask for help. I always told my students at Hope Academy to "just do the next right thing you know to do, and you won't



recognize your life a year from now." Whether you are a resident or other community stakeholder, working together we can make a positive impact on our community and the world around us.

-Debra McCullough

Testimonies

My parents were Catholic, but they didn't go to church when I was very young. When I was nine, my parents made me start attending church. When I got a little older, my parents let me decide whether or not I wanted to attend church. When I was in my early teens, I learned that my mother's side of the family was Jewish. This made me Jewish. When I was 17, I dedicated myself to the study of Orthodox Judaism, and I read the

Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible). I found the culture and history to be fascinating, so I decided to practice Judaism. I practiced more out of respect for culture than for God. I was proud of my heritage, and I believed I was doing the right thing by following traditions.

I joined the United States Air Force in 2002, and I put aside Judaism to focus on my training and new career. I met my girlfriend in 2003, and we got married four months later. My wife and her family were Jewish, so I started practicing Judaism again. I was always angry when I was growing up, and I got angrier as I got older. The Air Force boosted my ego to the point that I cared only for what I wanted in life. I didn't care about what others needed or wanted. I began speaking to other women online, and this led to one night stands with two other women. My wife filed for separation in 2005, and we were divorced in 2006.

My mother was an alcoholic who had an addictive personality. She lost her nursing license due to stealing medications she would consume. She would end up having seizures. This happened while I was in the Air Force. She would often call me when she was drunk and I was at work. She would slur her words, and we would argue and fight. The last time we did this was in June of 2006. I broke down. I was infuriated and anxious, and I drove to my girlfriend's house in Norman after work. I sat outside and smoked a cigarette. Her mother came by to visit, and she quickly started yelling and cursing at me, telling me to get off the property. This only fueled my anger, and, instead of arguing back, I decided to hurt my girlfriend by yelling at her daughter while exposing myself. I left, and I have had no contact with them since that time.

I was arrested in California in 2008, and I was sent back to Oklahoma to serve prison time for my crime. While in prison, I met many good, spiritual people, and I regularly attended church. As the years went on, I found peace within myself. I read the entire Old Testament, and, one night while lying on my bunk, I decided it was time to start reading the New Testament. My

eyes were suddenly opened. I realized that nothing was new at all and that God had been with me since the beginning. I became a believer in Christ, and I converted to Messianic Judaism. I started to understand that the legalism to which I had so firmly held kept me in bondage.

A friend told me about Hand Up Ministries. I took a chance and sent an application to Hand Up, hoping that I might receive a little mercy. I was accepted in the program in late 2014, and I arrived at Hand Up in November, 2014. I am still here eight years later, and I am now the acting Park Manager. Having nowhere else to go, and seeing there was a man (David Nichols) who had it in his heart to create such a program, instilled in me the belief that there are good people who desire to do God's work on earth. All of this could only be achieved by the grace and mercy of God. Without God, I would cease to be. Now, with Hand Up and my personal relationship with God, I have more understanding, and I want to offer what help I can to the next person in the program.

-Joseph Costa

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 McKenny, 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 a 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 was born in Oklahoma City in 1973. My step-father was an abusive alcoholic. I have one sister. I was fatherless my entire life. My childhood was a fiasco. We were poor. My only toys were a model police car, some dominoes, and some playing cards. I had to use my imagination to play. I also went over to the neighbors' house to play with my friend's toys. Once, I stole two action figures, but my friend asked me if I stole his toys. I returned the toys, and I never did that again.

My mother left my step-dad when she got tired of the abuse and drinking, and we moved into a small garage apartment owned by my mother's parents. We lived there until

my mother married another man. He was my second step-father, but he also an alcoholic and abusive. When I was 12 years old, I called my grandparents and told them I had gotten into another fight, so they took me in, and I lived with them during my teen years. I went to church with my grandparents, which helped me. I played sports in high school.

I got married, and I have a son. My wife was an alcoholic, and we split up in 2002. I was living a life without any boundaries, so committing a crime was easy. I went to prison in 2004. I heard about the Lord in prison, but I didn't really meet God until 2020. When I was in prison, my case worker told me about a place called Hand Up Ministries. She said it was a place where I could live after I discharged from prison, and it was a place where felons could have a life and a future. Hand Up has chaplains and counseling. Hand Up provides food and transportation for residents, and they help residents find jobs. I thought my life would never get better, but now my life is getting better. It took ten years to find a decent job.

I couldn't do anything without God. God is big enough for all who have problems. Many of our problems come from our wrong choices. I have good health, and I live in a good community. My needs are met, and I have faith that my life will get better.

-Anonymous

[Matthew 7:7-8](#)

7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!
To Give Online: www.huminc.org/give

or
Mail donations to:
Hand Up Ministries Inc.
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