



A HELPING HAND

Greensboro Urban Ministry Newsletter



Dear Friends and Supporters,

One of my favorite passages in the Scriptures is the parable of the Loaves and Fishes and Jesus' miraculous ability to feed five thousand hungry men, women, and children with little resources in sight. After having them sit in small groups, he blesses the five loaves and two fishes. Instead of running out of food, the food continues to grow as it is distributed. So much so that "they all ate as much as they wanted, and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftovers!"

I often reflect on this story because our mission mirrors this event. Day in and day out we provide food, housing, and support to our neighbors in need. Their lives are overwhelming at times, but like the 5,000 in the story, each year more than 25,000 in our community trust us to provide help.

The simplicity of our mission— a filling meal for an empty stomach, a safe place to lay your head, and a listening ear instead of a callous response—reflect the teachings of the many faith traditions that support our mission.

Each April we have a food drive at local grocery stores to insure we have enough food to meet the needs of families with children at home for the summer. But we face a huge challenge this April! We received notification from a major participant that their corporate owner will no longer allow food drives at their stores. In 2023, our volunteers at those stores collected 28,000 pounds of food—that's equates to 90,000 cans of tuna fish or 37,000 jars of peanut butter! We will need to pay more than \$100,000 to purchase that much food wholesale.

Which takes me back to the story of the Loaves and Fishes. Yes, Jesus certainly could have turned five loaves and two fish into a feast for five thousand people. I don't doubt that one bit. But what if Jesus really meant what he said to his disciples, "You feed them." What if the miracle is that those who came to see and follow Jesus believed by faith they actually had more to share in their possession than they could actually see. What if mothers dug deep into their daypacks for snacks, fathers bartered possessions for food, and children felt full enough so they could share with their peers.

We will likely need a miracle on the scale of the Loaves and Fishes to meet our challenge in the days ahead. Much like this story, I can tell you many crowds are still coming to us hungry for healing, hope, and yes food. But I trust that you and the many thousands that are called by their faith values to help our neighbors in need will help us meet this unexpected challenge.

Thank you for being in this story of faithful giving with us. You are a part of the miracle of lives being changed one meal at a time.



Gratefully,

Brian

Jason's Journey: "Never Give Up, Never Settle."

As Jason shared his journey from homelessness to stable living, you can sense a feeling of confidence and peace. You see, Jason's life has not always been that way. Jason had a promising life before him, graduated from Leon's Beauty School, worked at various salons, and eventually owning his own salon specializing in men's hair styling. Life was good; he was married, became a father, and even owned farms with cows and sheep. Then, Jason faced a very difficult divorce and devastating financial hardships that cost him almost everything, except his children and the ability to spend time with them.

Jason was left with two trash bags full of belongings and was now homeless. Jason spent nights sleeping in store fronts, the bushes nearby the bus station, and other places that provided a temporary make-shift shelter. He had no guarantee of food sources and taught his body how to go without food for days, eating from packages of honey and jelly to help provide some nutrients to his body. Jason's children were aware of his homelessness and even made him care kits to provide some basic necessities.



During the three-year struggle with homelessness, Jason came to Greensboro Urban Ministry and stayed briefly at the Weaver House Shelter. His stay was during the pandemic, so he quietly sheltered himself behind a mask, toboggan, and sunglasses as a shell to hide behind and not allow himself to open up to others. Jason left the shelter and was once again homeless. Jason's life hit a new low when he was found lying on the street and close to death. He is thankful that someone "chose to help save his life" and came to realize there was still hope. One night in the pouring rain, he finally reached a point where he decided it was time to lean on his faith, and said "Lord, I'll give you my full trust, just put me on the right path you want me to be on." He was remembering his grandmother's advice and that she was the most important woman in his life.

Jason eventually came back to the Weaver House Shelter and there he encountered chaplains, volunteer speakers, and staff each day and soon became aware they were there to provide him with the support, encouragement, and hope he needed. Jason started to emerge out of his shell, one layer at a time; letting himself be comfortable around others and talk. The shelter staff provided him resources, and he found a common interest in household plants with shelter staff member Sherry. She saw this as an opportunity to give Jay a sense of belonging, letting him water and care for the plants in the shelter. Sherry said, "He started peeling away the layers of his outer shell and eventually we could see the person he really was. It was wonderful to see this happen."

With time and support, Jason was able to gain access to housing, start a job, transportation in the form of a bicycle, and eventually was able to upgrade to a scooter and then a down payment on a vehicle. Everything in life seemed to come full circle. Jason eventually went to work as a freelance stylist, secured long-term housing, and was able to spend more time with his children. As he talked about the impact his children have on his life, Jason commented, "through all of my daily struggles, the thought of my children kept me fighting through every day and every struggle."

Angel Baptist, Weaver House Shelter Director, described Jason's journey as "Denial is where the journey begins, and acceptance is found along the way." The journey was long and difficult for Jason. He wants to share his story to help provide hope to others in our community experiencing homelessness. Jason's message to others experiencing homelessness is "Never give up, never settle. Always know you are worth it and keep fighting for and working for what you want."

The process from homelessness to starting over, and to gaining stability and self-sufficiency takes time, for many it may take years. With the help of staff, volunteers, and resources at Greensboro Urban Ministry, we are helping our neighbors experiencing homelessness to access shelter and services, while regaining stability and hope.

Volunteer Spotlight

Dr. Caldwell Powell

Dr. Powell is a medical volunteer in our Weaver House Shelter Health Clinic. The clinic operates one half day per week with volunteer doctors and nurses from Cone Health providing health care to our residents. This year, the clinic volunteers have cared for approximately 500 guests at clinic visits. We appreciate the care Dr. Powell provides to our clients.



2024 UPCOMING EVENTS - SAVE THE DATES!

DINE IN. TAKE OUT. HELP LOCALLY.



Tuesday, May 7, 2024

FEAST OF CARING

Join us for a simple meal of soups and breads, and a choice of hand-crafted pottery or holiday honor cards



Thursday, November 21, 2024

Greater Greensboro CROP Hunger Walk

WALK WITH US

and join the effort to end hunger and food insecurity locally and globally.

NEW LOCATION!
BARBER PARK

SUNDAY
OCTOBER 6, 2024

More details coming soon!



SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER
21



For more information on our upcoming events and how you can participate, please visit our website's event page at <https://www.GreensboroUrbanMinistry.org/events>

Make a planned gift to GUM today! Contact Chip Berry, Development Director at Berry@guministry.org



Greensboro Urban Ministry
305 W. Gate City Blvd.
Greensboro, NC 27406

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Help restock the
food pantry for the busy
summer months ahead!



Friday, April 12
&
Saturday, April 13

