



The Center of Hope, Inc. is a homelessness prevention program and 100% of your contribution is used in direct service to the poor.

The Gift of Christmas

George Dinkel, Executive Director

Christmas Season is a time of great joy. It is also a special time to grow spiritually, to bring us to a higher level of holiness and consciousness. It is a time of gift giving. When I think of the nativity scene, I often feel warmth in my heart, which is a natural response to the gift of love Jesus brought. But the nativity also brings a certain sorrow as it points to the life of suffering Jesus came to live, which began when He chose to be born on a cold winter evening in a manger. In a certain way, His suffering is a guide and inspiration to the suffering we endure in our lives. I truly believe that when our suffering is united with Jesus, it becomes a sacrificial suffering and is a tremendous source of grace.

At the Center of Hope these past eleven years, I have witnessed many families suffering in many different ways. Some suffer physically from illness or a sudden accident. Some suffer mentally from loss of loved ones, abuse, domestic violence, or just the stress of not being able to provide for their families. Many have a strong faith, but some suffer spiritually and have given up on God.

Recently I helped provide rent assistance to a family with eight children. The dad is undocumented but has lived and worked here for many years. He supports his family by working for a roofing company. The mom stays home with the children who range in age from one year old to seventeen years old. The dad recently fell twenty three feet from a roof and severely injured his back. The mom told me the foreman on the job did not immediately take him to the emergency room since he was undocumented and they were busy at the time trying to finish the roof. He fell off the roof at 5pm but wasn't taken to the emergency room until 11pm. He is receiving workman comp benefits of \$1200 per month which nearly meets their monthly expenses, but these benefits will end next month. His wife was in tears as she is dealing with the thought of no income coming in. The doctor said he will not be able to return to his job and due to the nature of the injury was very close to never being able to walk again. The mom went on to

tell me, still in tears, that just six months prior to her husband's accident, she was driving and had been hit by another car which resulted in the death of her three year old child. The sorrow in her heart is so great.

When St Joseph's time on earth came to an end, he must have felt a great sorrow in his heart at the thought of not being able to continue to protect and care for Jesus and Mary. He would not be around for the suffering Jesus and Mary would have to endure. I believe these are the same feelings this dad is struggling with, the stress of a future with no, or limited income and eight children. How will he provide for them?

Jesus spent a lot of time teaching, healing the sick and finally suffering greatly on the cross. What gifts will we bring when we join Jesus in Heaven? When we approach heaven will we be empty handed like the 10 virgins that ran out of oil for their lamps? Or will we bring the good works that we have performed throughout our life; the times we have helped others in need; the sufferings we have patiently and silently endured; our prayers and our sacrifices?

The greatest threat to those we see suffering is to despair—to lose hope. To give up. To not trust in God's plan for them. To turn away from faith, or maybe even from God. God often uses us to bring hope to those in need. Simon helped Jesus carry His Cross. Can we not help Jesus who comes to us in the poor help carry their cross? *I pray that we may all practice the true meaning of Christmas—to be a gift to each other.*

May God's blessings and peace be with you!!!

Merry Christmas!!!!

Please keep us in your prayers!!!!

A Christmas Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We rejoice in celebrating the birth

Of our savior, Jesus Christ,

As we reflect upon the Holy Family's

Journey into Bethlehem, we pray that

We would be compassionate enough

To welcome them into our homes.

Thank you for the gift of the Messiah.

May we serve Him well. Amen.



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George Dinkel

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www.centerofhopeinc.org

Benefit Christmas Concert - Dec. 19

The Damm Music Center has graciously agreed to host the fourth annual Christmas Concert at Gracepoint Church, 9035 W Central Ave, for the benefit of the Center of Hope. The concert is free and will be performed by the music instructors, relatives, students and employees of Damm Music. The music and showmanship are excellent and very entertaining. The concert will be held on Friday Dec. 19, 2014 and starts at 8 p.m. There is no charge for the concert, but a free will offering will be made for the Center of Hope. What better way is there to spend a Friday evening than to help those in most need in our community and enjoy an evening filled with the Christmas Musical Spirit?



PROJECT DESERVE

The Center of Hope has recently taken on the administration of *Project Deserve*. This is an excellent program which has been in operation in Kansas for the past 30 years. The program provides up to \$200 of utility assistance to residents of the 51 counties in Kansas who receive utility service from Westar. To be eligible for this assistance, the household must be low income or a member of the household must be over 65 years old or permanently disabled. The *Project Deserve* Applications are available

at Center of Hope, from Westar, or can be obtained on line at centerofhopeinc.org. This program is a great extension of our existing program of homeless prevention and will provide much needed utility assistance to those families struggling to keep their electricity on. This is becoming a much larger burden as we see a continuing aging of rental units which often lack sufficient insulation and have dated heating and cooling systems. We have noted a significant increase in the utility assistance provided by the Center of Hope over the past several years, both in the number needing assistance and the amount of assistance needed. We are very happy to be able to provide this service and ask for your prayers for its success.



Below are listed the items that we most often supply to our clients and our inventory is quickly depleted each week.

- ✓ Diapers (mainly size 4 & 5)
- ✓ Deodorant for men and women
- ✓ Gift certificates (Dillons, Walmart, Target, etc.)
- ✓ Bath soap
- ✓ Shampoo
- ✓ Dish soap
- ✓ Kleenex
- ✓ Paper towels
- ✓ Toilet tissue
- ✓ Toothpaste
- ✓ Toothbrushes
- ✓ Laundry soap
- ✓ Cleaning supplies
- ✓ Canned food, peanut butter, non-perishables...
- ✓ Contributions to the Center of Hope, Inc. to pay rent to prevent families from being evicted (100% of your donation goes directly to rent and utility payments)

A Volunteer's Observation

By Mary Jobe-Waddill

When I first became aware of Center of Hope in its early days, one of the Sisters said that their prayer was that one day there would be no need for this ministry. I think she said that she wanted to be out of a job. As the years have progressed through the country's economic ups and downs, we volunteers and staff get a snapshot of what's happening in the community. As a friend says, "It's not a pretty picture."

By far the reason the majority of clients come to COH is that the breadwinner for the family is without work. Most often it is because that person is no longer employed. It may be health issues are keeping the person from working, but most often the job was either eliminated because the business wasn't doing well and had to downsize or it was being reorganized. Some of our clients were terminated because of poor job performance, but that is not the usual case.

To make this picture even more distressing is that too often when the client was working, the employee wasn't making a livable wage. It was difficult enough to support one's self on the minimum or barely-more-than-minimum wage, but to support a family was a difficult balancing act. So often we hear that a child needed expensive medicine so the rent couldn't be paid or that the power had to be kept on so a diabetes drug could be refrigerated and other utilities were put on a back burner.

According to the Social Security Administration and several think tanks,

it takes \$50,000 a year to maintain a middle class lifestyle for a family of four. In the years that I've volunteered at COH, I've seldom seen a family of four in which the monthly income was more than \$2,000 or \$24,000 a year.

It seems that roughly 75% of our clients are single women with children. For whatever reason...death, medical issues, desertion...the father is no longer in the picture. Finding child care so the mother can work, and finding a job that pays enough for the worker to afford adequate child care, is a struggle.

When I first started working at COH, a person could survive on minimum wage. Today, with only one minimum-

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wage job, that isn't possible. The increase in utilities rates, food, clothing, everything makes it so difficult to keep up. Eliminating the sales tax on food items would be a tremendous help to our community's poor. And thankfully, there are special programs like the Project Deserve that Center of Hope administers for Westar Energy (see article this issue) to help with utility bills.



So often a client will say that Center of Hope has been a life-saver for them, truly their last hope. Other agencies could not help them because they were out of funds or they didn't fit the guidelines. It's so good to see a picture-perfect smile on clients' faces as they leave after talking with George or Marsha.

A few weeks ago when interviewing a client, I asked him to speak a little louder because I was hearing-impaired. His eyes welled up with tears as he said he'd never had to ask for help before and he was so nervous. Then he relaxed and said that his son was also hearing-impaired and in a special needs class. He was thankful that his son was getting the attention he needed for this issue. And Center of Hope was able to help this single father keep his home while he waited for his new job to start within a few weeks of his visit.

I'm so thankful that Center of Hope exists and that it offers an opportunity for its volunteers to help others. By bringing our Mission Statement ...*Offering hope for tomorrow through assistance today*...to clients, we are making a difference in people's lives. It's good to see relief on the faces of clients as they leave and that is a pretty picture.

Johnston's Half Marathon



We are very pleased to announce that the Center of Hope received a donation of \$8,000 from the Johnston's Charitable Foundation. These funds were raised from the half marathon that Johnston's hosted on Sunday Sept. 14, 2014. The Center of Hope was excited to be named one of the beneficiaries of the event. The race wound through the streets of Wichita in the Riverside Park area on a perfect cool and sunny morning. The event was very entertaining and a great family affair

which included food, music, really nice shirts for participants, and a professionally certified course. We are very thankful for JV and Veronica Johnston for all their hard work, for sponsoring this event and choosing the Center of Hope as one of the recipients of the proceeds. They are already planning for an event next year on Sept. 13, 2015. Hope to see you there.

Center of Hope Recognition Gifts

In Honor of

Rev. Ken VanHaverbeke

In Memory of

Robert Brent

Charles Hromas

Jane Means

Center of Hope, Inc.

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“Life is a gift that God gives to the universe and to humanity.” Acts of the Adorers’ 18th General Assembly

CENTER OF HOPE, INC. MISSION STATEMENT

The Center of Hope listens to the cries of the poor with compassion and love, and without judgment, seeing all who present themselves as Children of God. A loving presence to those in need and advocates for the powerless, we offer hope to families, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or gender, as they deal with life’s daily challenges. We help them with emergency financial support for rent and utilities, provide case management toward resolutions of on-going difficulties, and assure the dignity and self-respect of each individual.

VISION STATEMENT

Offering hope for tomorrow
through assistance today

CENTER OF HOPE, INC.

Celebrating 31 years of service to
the Wichita community

Editor, George Dinkel
Coordinator, Mary Jobe-Waddill

Because You Cared

For the past 3 months, the Center of Hope prevented 940 families from having to experience homelessness. Included in those families were 2,670 persons. \$314,775 was dispersed for rent, utilities and emergency needs.

In addition to the financial assistance paid to landlords and utility companies, families were given food

and other personal care products from our storeroom, provided budgeting assistance, and counseled for special needs.

Many thanks go out to all the parishes, business, and individuals who brought blankets, canned and boxed food, paper products and personal and home cleaning products. Most recently St Cecilia Parish, St Peter the Apostle Parish and School, Lewis Bacher, Jim & Lois Daniels, United Way, Kyle Jacobs, Marcia Moralez, and Blessed Sacrament Parish have blessed us with 371 bags of food and supplies.



Thank You!