

# NEWS

MAY 2024

## → MINISTRY UPDATE ←

David Nichols — President  
Main Office — (405) 236-3349

## UPDATE



Glory to our God of the heavens and the earth and all that is therein. The earth is filled with His marvelous power and love. He is Lord over the small and the great regardless of whether they

acknowledge Him or not. He gave it all for each of them. Those who reject His word will meet Him face to face on judgement day, and they will be judged as they have judged others. They will be stricken with grief at their choices and beg for mercy, but a day too late.

Let me share with you from Philippians 3, where Paul says, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering." When I was 23, I earnestly prayed those same words, not totally understanding them. I thought I knew Him, and I knew some of His power. I certainly had not suffered much, but God heard that prayer and held me to it. Over time, God prepared me for what was ahead. I now know Him more. I've experienced more of His power, and I have had the privilege of taking a small part in the fellowship of His sufferings. I



Ray@huminc.org

now feel the grief when religious servants of Satan commit ungodly actions against human beings, usually in the name of righteousness. I'm not 100% free of anger, but I grieve for their souls. I can forgive them and pray for them. It is not human nature to forgive some of the people I have forgiven, but God has made it possible for me to do so. They will be judged as they have judged, and that is not a price we would want anyone to pay. I also pray for other victims of their hate and ignorance that God will help them through unfair treatment. Sometimes, unrighteous people use the law to hurt people. When a person who represents law and order doesn't do what is right, it hurts all of us, and their own judgment will be serious. Let us not let our judgement cause us to bring harsher judgement on ourselves. God forgive them and help us all come to the truth.

The farm is well under way. One aquaponics greenhouse is now producing food. Another is all strawberries. Soon, we will be providing a lot of healthy food for a lot of people. It will take a little longer, but the fish will be a healthy meal. We will keep expanding until we are using at least 24 greenhouses.

Thanks to Debra McCullough, our website is changing to help a lot more people. Debra is also going to be our grant writer. She is a great asset to Hand Up and has a brother in our program. We can't thank her enough. We also thank Dondino Melchorrie for his work on the loans. If you have a special skill to offer, give me a call. We are just getting started. I am still looking for a good bulldozer that will dig a pond. It

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has to be in good shape at the right price, but nothing is impossible for God. With building and gardening, we can use a lot of different things. So if you have anything that will save us money, give me a call.

We give thanks to God that he has sent us a few good carpenters. Considering our task ahead, we could use a few more. Since there is nothing like this in the world, we know God is sending us the right people. While it has taken us 28 years, and a lot of suffering, to get to this point, we believe we will more than double in the next eight years. We plan to start permanent housing as we begin phase four of our program. Over 95% of the work is being done by our clientele. Most people thought it couldn't be done. A good number of people tried to make sure it didn't get done, but you can't stop God's love and His plans to help people, especially the mentally ill and those nobody will help. Man's answer has always been "out of sight, out of mind," but God has the sight and mind to help those who want it.

Man always has problems. God always has the answer. If you want to be a part of God's answer, you can. If you don't want to be a part, sit back and see what He does. If God needs to, He will bless a small amount and multiply it to meet the need, with some left over. He can do anything, but He definitely wants us to be a part.

-David Nichols

### Room for Improvement

It has been a pleasure being a part of the staff and ministry of Hand Up Ministries and Love Foundation, which serves Chandler and Wewoka. From the very beginning, for me it was the idea of serving men who were previously

incarcerated, and helping them navigate their way back into society in a positive and productive way. Hand Up Ministries has been doing that long before I came into the ministry, but, as in all ministries, there is room for improvement. Recently, I feel like we have made significant improvements, especially in our handling of troubling cases. These are cases where a resident needs more care or supervision than we can give them, or cases in which a person's drug addiction was beyond what our program could accommodate. In times past, we had to remove those individuals from our program, and we provided little or no help for them after they left. Because of the networking we have done, Hand Up is, more often than not, able to provide a softer handoff into another program when a resident must be removed from our program. Many times those residents are allowed to return after they have received treatment or stabilization through some other program equipped to handle their special needs.

Overall, Hand Up is providing a more thorough ministry to all of its residents with rarely having just to turn someone out onto the streets with no resources. I am very proud of our staff and management for seeking out the resources and establishing relationships with other types of programs that serve the same clientele we serve. We have improved our skills and secured resources to better serve previously incarcerated men. Hand Up is consistently providing a hand up while refusing to just give a handout.

-Ray Riddle

### Testimonies

I grew up in a broken home. My father was incarcerated when I was very young, and he died in 1968, but I didn't know about his death until 1973. I don't remember my dad. I had a horrible time with one of my mother's boyfriends. I was present when he raped her. This caused her to become pregnant with my sister. My step-dad molested my sister. I went to live with my grandparents much of the time. When my mother tried to get away to make things better she would fail because of her

health problems. It wasn't her fault. Things were hard and no one would help.

I think some of it was my fault, so I spent a lot of time on the farm with my grandparents. They were very good to me, and I have nothing bad to say about them or the way they raised me. My grandmother was a very strict member of the Church of Christ, and she made me go to church every Sunday. If I had stayed on the farm and kept going to church, would things have turned out better? I got into some minor trouble when I lived with my mom, and I joined the military when I was 17.

Things went okay for a while, but I started drinking and using drugs. I had two failed marriages. I got away from the values I had previously held. I got away from God. I believe God sent a minister to me when I was in jail, but I didn't listen to him. I was still doing whatever I wanted, no matter who it hurt. I lost my family, my home and everything else. I was sentenced to 60 years in prison.

My mom and my step-dad stuck by me until they passed away. I had a lot of time to reflect on my past while I was in prison, and I started going to church and serving the community. I became a minister, and I visited the sick and infirm. I took communion to them, and I visited the men who couldn't go to church. I grew as a Christian by serving others. I became sick, and I knew how the men felt when no one came to see me when I was sick. I was sick when I discharged from prison. I had no place to go, but I contacted Hand Up Ministries, and they gave me a home.

I was still very sick when I arrived at Hand Up, and I spent a week in the hospital. Hand Up staff took me to the hospital and checked on me while I was in the hospital. I can't thank Hand Up enough. Hand Up saved my life. I thank God for Hand Up. Hand Up gave me a job when I ran out of money, and later they gave a more important job. I hope in the near future I can find proper employment and help Hand Up. I am grateful for all of the help I have been given. God bless Hand Up Ministries!

-Norman Cooley

My personal walk with God began when I was 11 years old. I was in a near fatal boating accident. After this experience, I began a closer walk with God, and I had a yearning to understand who He was and what I could learn from Him. I accepted Christ when I was 12. This happened during an Easter service in 1973. All was going well for many years, but I was like a lot of other Christians, riding a roller coaster of emotions and situations. I noticed that I was really backsliding when I was in my mid 20's. I was having wrong relationships with girls, living and sleeping with them. I was into social drinking, and I was basically "playing Christian."

I really understood how God continued to be in my life when I went through some very painful events. Three family members died in September and October of 1996. The first death was that of my closest cousin. My grandmother died the following week, and my mother died the week after that. I became very angry with God, and I decided to live my life my way. God revealed to me what the problem was. It was simply me. I had accepted Christ into my life for salvation and guidance, but I had never made Him Lord of my life. Once I allowed Christ to be my total Lord and Savior, things began to happen. Through Christ, I had a place to stay, a job, and what I needed to survive, but, as it turned out, where I was going to live and work was not an acceptable location.

Through Christ's hand, I was accepted at Hand Up Ministries without any notification or application process. Rev. Nichols' love and compassion for helping men was manifested by him accepting me without delay. Being here at Hand Up has been a total blessing for me. The people at Hand Up have a great passion for helping men reach higher goals in life.

Hand Up has allowed me to grow into a much better person and be more confident in sharing the Gospel with others. Not only has Christ given me a stronger yearning, but Rev. Nichols' compassion has given me my own compassion for others. I made a decision to help others because there was a great need. I believe that

because of this, God opened a floodgate of doors for me.

I obtained a master's degree in Psychology-Christian Counseling and will be working on my doctorate in the same field. I have been put in charge of the worship music at the church services here at Hand Up, and I became a Genesis-One group leader. As a Genesis-One leader, I help other men in a relaxed atmosphere in a small group setting.

If one can learn to truly trust God and be obedient, He has *PROMISED* more blessings than our storehouse can hold. I believe that is what is happening to me. By Christ's grace and mercy, I have been given another opportunity to serve Him here at Hand Up Ministries. Christ tells us that if we are faithful in a little, He will give us a chance to be faithful in a lot. God has a certain plan for all of us, which He will reveal in small bits over time.

I am thankful that I finally took the steps, one at a time, to be faithful and obedient. God works in ways we cannot understand, but if we will trust Him and listen, He will reveal what His will is for our lives. I am so thankful that Christ has used Rev. Nichols, Hand Up Ministries, and those who are involved with this ministry, to bless my life. God has put me in this position so that I can share His love with others and, hopefully, be a blessing to them. My prayer for those reading is simply this: may you bless others a little so that God may bless you a lot.

-Mike Lower

I was born in Manhattan, Kansas on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1981. I have one older brother, one older sister, and three younger sisters, all of whom currently reside in Arkansas. I grew up in Hot Springs, Arkansas, and I graduated from Lake Hamilton High School in 2000. I had a pretty good time throughout my school years, and I had no academic or behavioral problems. I still have a good relationship with all of my siblings. Growing up in a big family presented challenges, but I overcame all of them. Overall, we loved each other and got along well.

I joined the United States Navy in

2001. I went to A School after boot camp, and then I was stationed on the USS Nimitz, an aircraft carrier whose home port was San Diego. The Navy was a new and challenging experience in my life, and it left a positive and lasting impact on me. I came to know the Lord when I was in the Navy. The ship's chaplain was a good friend, and he set me on the path of a good Christian man. I went astray from the Lord after I was discharged from the Navy.

I moved back to Arkansas in 2012, and I reunited with my family and rebuilt my relationship with them. I started drinking alcohol and going down the wrong path. I fell in love with a woman, and we got married. She had a twelve year old daughter, and I exposed myself to her in a sexual manner. I served six years in prison. I learned about Hand Up Ministries when I was in prison. I had been granted parole, but I had to have a place to go before they would release me. Hand Up accepted me, and I was granted an interstate compact so I could serve my parole in Oklahoma.

My life has improved since I came to Hand Up. Hand Up has given me an opportunity at freedom and has provided me with a place to stay. I have met some very nice people here. They are genuinely concerned for me. I thank God for all of it. He has given me an opportunity for a new life.

-Jeremy Morrison

#### Matthew 6:2-4 -

So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

We appreciate all our partners and donors. It is your support that enables us to assist individuals back into society as new brothers and sisters in Christ.

