

NEWS

August 2025

→ MINISTRY UPDATE ←

David Nichols —
Main Office —

President
(405) 236-3349



UPDATE

Wow! What a mighty God we serve. Nothing interferes with His plan set forth for his people. Things can get cruel and nasty in the kingdom of this world, but neither the devil nor man can alter God's plan for those who love Him. He takes every single thing that happens and works it for the good of those who love Him.



The carnal mind cannot understand God's will and ways. Man's wisdom is based on man's knowledge, and not on what God says.

Twenty-one years ago, God told me to do something man said was impossible to do. Because I had seen the power of God in my lifetime, I decided to try. I began seeing God do things man couldn't do. I kept following God's voice while more and more kept happening. At the same time, I saw many try to do the same thing man's way and with man's understanding, and none succeeded.

We only help homeless men and women who have a felony, people for whom the world says there is no hope. Amazingly, we have a 95% PLUS success rate for all those who remain under our influence. The failures are nearly all those who decide to go back to drugs or alcohol. We have zero tolerance for that.

CAUTION

Our world is changing faster than we can comprehend what is happening. The greatest influence is the driving force of artificial intelligence. It will change the way we see everything. It is already affecting education and the workforce. Both are changing fast. This also means greater opportunities for criminals. We pray we can handle all of the changes.

Here is how it has helped us now. My director of Hand Up, Ray Riddle, developed a talent for poetry. He came to Hand Up as a client years ago, and he moved up gradually. I kept trying for a long time to get him to write a Hand Up theme song. About a month ago, he woke up one Sunday morning, and the lyrics came to him. He took the song lyrics to Danny Haggy, our IT guy.

Danny came to Hand Up in 2004 as an uneducated young red headed client. He had a knack for learning computer technology, so I put him to work in the office. He also got a job working with an electrician. He built his training hours and started college night classes. In 2015, he got his license as a journeyman, but he still worked for Hand Up. He then developed a program we call "tracking" that took all of our developing programs and made them all work together with only entering the information one time. Danny still handles all of our server information.

Now for the amazing stuff. Ray took the lyrics to Danny, and the two of them used artificial intelligence to compose the music and add a singer. What they developed still blows my mind. We will soon be putting the song on the new website that is being

NEWS

developed. I am hopeful that will be done by September 1st. I will update you in our next newsletter. STAY TUNED!

-David Nichols

Grateful for a Second Chance



Life doesn't always offer second chances, but for former felons, reentry programs that provide support and guidance can make all the difference. These programs do more than help people survive; they help

them thrive. By offering housing, employment, transportation, and mentorship, they become a launch pad for transformation.

For many coming out of incarceration, the future looks uncertain. The stigma of a criminal record, a lack of resources, and broken relationships can leave a person feeling hopeless, but programs that believe in restoration and redemption bring light into that darkness. They say, "You still matter. Your life isn't over. You have worth."

Gratefulness grows in that soil. When someone is trusted with a job, given a safe place to stay, or mentored by someone who genuinely cares, it restores a sense of dignity.

One program participant said, "I was at my lowest, but someone gave me a hand up, not a handout. They believed in me when I didn't believe in myself."

That kind of second chance is more than just an opportunity---it's a gift. With it comes deep gratitude. Gratitude that drives early mornings, long hours, honest paychecks, and the slow rebuilding of

a life once lost.

In that grateful spirit, many go on to help others, proving that redemption is real. A second chance isn't just about avoiding the past ---it's about building a better future.

-Ray Riddle

Testimonies

I born In El Reno in 1994. I have two brothers and a sister, and I had both of my parents. We went to church almost every Sunday. I played football, basketball, and baseball in school, and I also threw discus and shotput in track. I also ran the 200 meter race. I didn't drink or do drugs in high school. I got engaged my senior year, but we broke up because she was cheating on me. I bought a car a few months later. After I graduated high school in 2013, I worked various jobs, including Sonic and construction.

I met a girl from Jay, and I went to see her every weekend. It was around that time that I started drinking. We got engaged nine months later, but two months before our wedding date I got a job that took me out of state a lot. It was private security for a rich guy. I started to fall away from church and I strayed from everything I believed. I found a different job in 2016, and I went back to church. I never married that girl. I have been engaged multiple times, but I have never gotten married.

In February of 2017, my dad had a catastrophic accident that opened my eyes on life. I stopped drinking and I started going back to church and I got a better job in Oklahoma City. I got arrested in 2018. I started working on my mental health and pled guilty in 2020. I was sentenced to three years of incarceration and seven years of probation. I was released in 2021, and I moved in with my grandma in Blaine County. I worked in her yard and I helped take care of her and her dog. I started working for an old friend in 2022. I helped him move from Geary to Enid. I got arrested in Blaine County in 2022.

I went back to prison in 2022. I got back into faith while I was in prison and I started reading the Bible. I took Bible courses and I got certifications for all of them. I got baptized in

2024, before I was released. I heard about Hand Up Ministries when I was in prison. I applied and was accepted in January 2024. I learned Hand Up had a bed for me in September of that year. Hand Up has helped me with finding a employment, helped me apply for food stamps and provided me with a place to live. I love it at Hand Up.

-Dalton Sontag

I grew up in Fort Gibson and Muskogee. I have one older brother and two younger brothers. My parents divorced when I was two and that is when my father left. My mother had to raise my older brother and me, by herself. My two younger half-brothers were raised by my father. My mother gave my brother and me a good Christian life. She worked at the Post Office. She made sure we were at every service, and she made sure we had everything we needed.

When I turned 14, we moved to Okmulgee to be closer to our church. Life was good until my father came back into my life and introduced me to drugs and a drug dealer lifestyle. I lost my way for a while. I was trying to gain his approval, which was something I never got. I was 20 when I met my wife, while I working at Braum's and I cleaned up my life. We had three amazing daughters. I also have a fourth daughter with another woman. I was clean for seven years, until we separated. We were both at fault.

I went back into the drug scene until I was sent to prison in 2018. My life changed in prison. I dealt with my issues and faced my demons with the help of God. I came out of prison the best version of myself I have ever been. I am now at Hand Up Ministries, and I am very thankful for Hand Up. Hand Up is truly a blessing, and it has been instrumental in producing the finished product. I now have a great job, and I have re-established a relationship with my kids, my grandkids, and my family.

I, now, look forward to my future. I have never felt as free and happy as I do now. I just want to thank God and Hand Up for playing very important roles in this miracle I call my life.

-Troy Clark

I was born in Fort Hood, Texas on December 14, 1949. My father was an Army soldier who was preparing to deploy for the Korean conflict. While he was in Korea, my mother took my 2 siblings and I to live with her parents in upstate New York. When my father returned, we moved to various military bases. The Army was the only life I knew while I was growing up. We moved to upstate New York when my father retired, and all three of us completed high school there. I did have two very close friends with whom I still keep in touch.

I liked school and I was a good student. I wanted to go to college, but I was drafted before that could happen. I was able to use G.I. Bill to achieve a bachelor's degree. I also earned a fellowship that allowed me to achieve a Masters of Arts degree. After college, I took a position with the National Park Service. I eventually moved to Houston, where I worked at three different Park Service units. In 2008, I left the Islands to take a supervisor position at the Oklahoma City National Memorial. I retired in 2014.

I had a Catholic mother and a Presbyterian father. My parents decided their children would choose their own religion when they were old enough to choose. Their responsibility was to teach their children right from wrong. We were taught not to be judgmental of others and to be decent human beings. We were encouraged to attend a variety of church services and synagogue services with our friends. We learned that every religion worships the same God in different ways. While in Hawaii, I went to a Dharma Center where I was introduced to the Buddhist religion. I liked the Buddhists I met, and I went to many of their services. I never "converted" to the religion, but I became very attached to the principles.

In 2019, I strayed off course and responded to a personal ad on Craigslist. The person told me they were 14 years old. Instead of deleting the conversation, we decided to meet. I was arrested, and I spent the next seven and a half years doing a lot of thinking about my terrible lapse of judgement. I can only blame myself. It was my fault.

After my release from prison, my parole officer told me about Hand Up Ministries. Finding a place to live is challenging for a registered sex offender, but

the folks at Hand Up have been very friendly and kind. Now that I have a place to live, I am very content. I thank God for helping me find a home.

-Harry Wheeler

My early childhood was not very pleasant. I moved from one home to another for years. I moved from Tulsa to Dallas to Kansas City, to name a few. I was adopted by a married couple when I was sixteen, and they are the people I call my mom and my dad. I was hateful from the age of 16 to the age of 18. I had a hard time making friends, and I was a closed off person. I went to church when I was 16, but I just wasn't into the way that church taught Christianity. It was about shoving it down your throat, and they said you are going to hell if you don't believe. I wanted to steer clear of church, but I went to church for the sake of my parents.

I committed a crime when I was 18. I spent six months in jail, and I spent 18 months in prison. I had three cellmates during that time, and all three of them were Christians who were good people. It was my last cellmate who told me about Hand Up Ministries. He was a lifer, and he was just trying to help me. My life now is fun. I have a fulltime job, and I have a few friends. I have a cool Genesis One leader.

Hand Up helped me get my job, and they helped me set up my finances so I can pay what I need to pay and do it on time. I also like when we watch the live church services on Sunday. I might not be a proper Christian, but the pastor we watch helps me find my way.

God protected me when I was in prison, and He introduced me to good Christians who talked to me about God. They spoke to me about asking God for forgiveness and following His teaching so I could be saved. It is only recently that I have come to accept that, and I am grateful for it.

-John Hibbert

I was born into a typical middle class family. Dad worked all of the time. My parents divorced when I was young. The lack of

adult supervision led to me running with the wrong crowd. Bad decisions led to prison in young adulthood, but I didn't learn my lesson the first time. I received a 12 year sentence when I was 24 years old, and during that time I found God and a better meaning to life.

My relationship with God grew during my years in prison. I finally realized everything would be okay, even though things would never be the same. I didn't have much of an idea about where to find work after I left prison, so I came to Hand Up Ministries. I found a job the day after I arrived at Hand Up, and I have been employed for over a year. Hand Up finds employers who hire felons. I am now looking to take the next step and find my own place to live. This way I can make an opportunity for the next person who needs it.

-Billy Dilbeck

John 8:34-36

34 Jesus answered them, I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, whoever commits and practices sin is the slave of sin.

35 Now a slave does not remain in a household permanently: the son does remain forever.

36 So if the son set you free, then you are free indeed.

Lets remember the men and women that have given there life, so that we may be free.

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

or
Mail donations to:
Hand Up Ministries Inc.
PO Box 2896
OKC, OK 73101

