

SPOTLIGHT

➔

NONPROFIT

REAL LIFE CENTER

REAL LIFE CENTER,
A HANDUP VERSUS A
HANDOUT

Photos by BONNIE HELANDER



Center volunteers.

She never thought she
would have to ask for help

Monica, a single mom from NC, was raised by her grandparents. From a young age she knew she wanted to be a success. When her grandparents passed away, Monica had been to 5 high schools and always managed to stay on the honor roll. Through perseverance, she put herself through school and graduated with her Bachelor's Degree.

IT WAS A LONG JOURNEY, BUT I WAS SO PROUD TO BE THE FIRST COLLEGE GRADUATE IN MY FAMILY.

In subsequent years, Monica married and welcomed a son and a daughter. Then the unexpected happened. Her third child, Leshaye, was born with cerebral palsy, and everything changed. "I suddenly felt a lot of fear," Monica recalls. "Doctors encouraged me to move to a place where better medical care was available." She quit her job and moved to Georgia. "I was terrified," Monica recalls, "leaving the security of my job and starting all over was such a daunting task."

"Somehow we think that hard

"WHEN I FOUND THE REAL LIFE CENTER, IT CHANGED EVERYTHING FOR ME! I WAS ASKED GENUINE QUESTIONS, AND PEOPLE TALKED TO ME ABOUT PLANNING FOR TOMORROW."

times are never going to happen to us," shares Cathy Berggren, Executive Director at the Real Life Center, "but it only takes one thing to completely knock us off our feet."

One day Monica was given a resource card. "It contained the information for the Real Life Center," Monica recalls. She made her first appointment.

She had hope! "Through the encouragement and resources of the Real Life Center, I slowly got back onto my feet. It was a life saver!" "Our planning process renews our families," Berggren adds. "They start believing things CAN change!" Monica's story is only one of many encountered at the Real Life Center. The names and faces may change, but the circumstances are very similar. The Real Life Center's mission is to guide those struggling families back to a solid foundation by using a number of innovative strategies to create long-term change. "When families get to stay in their homes

and kids in their schools, family relationships remain strong. That kind of stability leads to healthier families, and healthier families lead to healthier communities," Cathy Berggren concludes. By harnessing the power of our local community, we all have an opportunity to make a difference in the life of a neighbor!



The orchard.



The bread room.

Real Life
Center Offers
Career Classes

In 2016, close to 60% of client families sought help at the Real Life Center due to job loss or underemployment. To address this need, the Real Life Center is implementing a new series of four career classes in February 2017. "Our career classes are designed to help equip our families during their job search," shares Rosemarie Gossett, Marketing Director. "It is a great way to learn new skills, build confidence and feel empowered at a time when life is challenging." The classes will address maximizing your job preparedness, creating a stellar resume, acing the job interview and achieving income from home.

"OUR CAREER CLASSES ARE DESIGNED TO HELP EQUIP OUR FAMILIES DURING THEIR JOB SEARCH"

ROSEMARIE GOSSETT,
MARKETING DIRECTOR.

During a pilot program in 2016, the Real Life Center worked with Angel who came to the Real Life Center during a season of life with many challenges. She recognized it was time to be intentional about change. She graduated from a series of three classes where she learned how to update her resume, determine her next career step, apply for positions and interview for jobs. She worked with a Career Mentor who assisted her with implementing each of these steps during her job search. For the last 10 months, Angel has been gainfully employed in a professional role at a local international company.

A SERVANT'S HEART

➔ NANCY WELCH

"We can all choose to live our lives intentionally and influence the lives of others". Nancy Welch made that decision a few years ago, when she signed up to serve on the Peach Team at the Harvest for Real Life Orchard which exists to provide nutritional produce to the families of the Real Life Center. "Our orchard teaches people to have a heart for serving," Nancy shares, "and serving one person who in turn learns to help someone else leads to a stronger community." Nancy has set an exceptional example of volunteering "joyfully" which has inspired many others to follow.



WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

➔ REAL LIFE CENTER

The model of the Real Life Center, a local non-profit for struggling families, is both revolutionary and innovative. Staff and volunteers "walk alongside" each family for a full year to help them achieve long-term change emotionally, spiritually, relationally and financially. Families are held accountable for their own progress but are guided through a three, six, nine and 12 month follow-up process. During their year, they have access to food programs, educational classes, financial

budgeting and career assistance. "We seek to offer a hand-up versus a hand-out," shares Cathy Berggren, Executive Director. To be good stewards of what has been given to us, we operate two upscale thrift stores in Fayetteville and Tyrone. Our Orchard and Garden Project provide much needed nutritional produce to our families. In 2016, we assisted 4,107 families, distributed over 487,600 pounds of food and offered 47 classes. For more information visit www.RealLifeCenter.org.

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