

# REAL LIFE CENTER

Annual Newsletter

December 2018

## We Are Incredibly Grateful For You!

### Dear Friends,

This year I have watched lives change from being totally hopeless to finding courage. I've had the privilege of seeing families become stable and strong. I have seen God provide in ways I couldn't possibly have on my own. I have witnessed our team of staff and volunteers walk alongside those hurting, reminding them that they are not alone. Neighbor helping neighbor, what a beautiful gift to see play out each day throughout the story of the Real Life Center. I am privileged to have a front row seat! To each of you who have played a role in our story and the stories of those we serve, words cannot begin to express how grateful I am for you!

God Bless You,

Cathy Berggren  
Executive Director



REAL LIFE CENTER  
Real help. Real hope.

### Opportunities to Serve

#### *Real Life Center*

Help families shop, sort incoming donations, hold a food drive or fundraiser, donate your expertise, teach a class.

#### *Real Life Stores*

Assist shoppers, create store displays, sort incoming donations or gift gently used clothing, home décor and furniture.

#### *Real Life Orchard and Garden*

Be a part of a produce team (i.e. Peach team) where you are directly responsible for planting, nurturing and harvesting nutritional produce for our families.

#### *Harvest for Hope Gala*

There are corporate sponsorships or underwriting opportunities, visit [www.HarvestForHopeGala.org](http://www.HarvestForHopeGala.org).

#### *Make a financial donation*

Return the enclosed donation card with your gift or visit our website to donate. You can also contribute by shopping at AmazonSmile or by purchasing groceries through the Kroger Rewards program at no cost to you.

For more information, visit [www.RealLifeCenter.com/Get-Involved](http://www.RealLifeCenter.com/Get-Involved).

*"This gift of food took away that internal struggle of how my granddaughter and I were going to make it over the next five days, how I was going to stretch my last \$50."*

## Rachel's Story

Rachel and her husband, Paul, were known to their friends as the couple who helped others. They were active in their church and had a stable source of income through their jobs. All of this changed one afternoon when Rachel and Paul were involved in a terrible car accident which took Paul's life. Although Rachel survived, she was critically injured and experienced years in a wheel chair followed by physical therapy before beginning to walk again. Years later, she found herself in another unexpected situation as she had to make the decision to take custody of her granddaughter. Her daughter had become involved with drugs, eventually becoming incarcerated. Raising Olivia for almost six years on fixed Social Security disability, Rachel found her cabinets nearly empty. The dilemma she faced of either paying for groceries or paying for her light bill led Rachel to the RLC. Rachel has benefited from monthly visits to the Food Pantry and weekly visits to the Bread Pantry where she receives groceries for Olivia and herself. "This gift of food took away that internal struggle of how my granddaughter and I were going to make it over the next five days, how I was going to stretch my last \$50."

*"The people at the Real Life Center make you feel comfortable."*



"It is very embarrassing to go to somebody and ask for help." Rachel discloses. "The people at the Real Life Center make you feel comfortable. I don't feel like I am going to a place of business where I have to humble myself and ask, Can you help me get through Christmas, can you help me with a meal?" Rachel feels as if those at the RLC are more like friends. "It is like I am going to my next-door neighbor and borrowing a cup of sugar." Rachel states that there is one difference. "Unlike going to my neighbors, at the Real Life Center I am not borrowing, I don't have to pay it back. I don't owe a payment there because we received food or clothes or because we got a backpack or an Easter basket. My mind is clear, my whole being is relaxed. I don't have to worry about how I will have to take care of the bill or if I have imposed on someone else."

While clothing and school supplies help meet a families needs, this hope and peace of mind for the parents or caregivers that Rachel describes is the most priceless and impactful gift a family receives from the Real Life Center. Rachel's story is one of many we hear at the Real Life Center. The names and faces change, but the circumstances are similar. We serve real people experiencing real life. With each other's help, we have an opportunity to make a difference in the life of a neighbor!

All client names have been changed for confidentiality.

## Real Help, Real Hope. Our Innovative Approach to Real Change

Since 1998, the Real Life Center has provided help to families and individuals who have fallen on the unexpected hard times of life.

- Our focus is to provide a safe place to build relationships.
- Our goal is to get our families to self-sustainability and to be a catalyst for long-term change.
- We care for the whole person; understanding that the physical, emotional, relational, financial and spiritual are all interrelated.
- We assist the individual with developing an action plan, setting goals, and connecting him/her to resources within the Real Life Center and the community.
- We invest in the individual for a year period and provide accountability and encouragement along the way. A large part of making an impact is reminding the families of their value and worth.

"Much like skipping a rock in the water and seeing the ripple effect, when we have the opportunity to invest in the life of a family, it not only affects that family, but the generations that will follow."

Cathy Berggren

Hope

# Look at What You Helped Us Achieve

October 2018 Year-to-Date



**1,078**

Active families served representing 5471 visits.



**40**

Classes offered regarding finances, spiritual, physical and emotional health

**458,234**



Pounds of food given to our families



**15,658**

Pounds of produce distributed from our Orchard and Garden



**8,972**

Clothing items offered to our families



Hours served by volunteers

**15,445**

## Volunteer Spotlight

David Fournier is an example of not waiting until he is older to make a difference. For some time, David had heard about the Real Life Center and the work it was doing in the community. In 2011, David used volunteer days that the company he works for, LexisNexis Risk Solutions, provided to serve at the Real Life Center. He has been a Food Pantry Volunteer Thursday nights ever since and has been an invaluable volunteer with the Gala. David says that being a Real Life Center Volunteer has had a great impact on his life. "Serving here shows me how to continuously love others," shares David. "Sometimes it is the simple things like holding a door or saying 'thank you'. Other times it is walking with the families who we serve through their difficult times."

*"The families we serve....are serving me as much as I am serving them."*



"The first night I volunteered, I left floored by how people in my community were hurting and in need of things I take for granted. We have clients that are here due to losing jobs, health issues, and family relationship struggles. I just want to be someone who will love on them and serve them, not only with food from the pantry, but also with a smile and maybe a few minutes of laughter, a prayer or just an ear to listen. The families we serve reinforce that during the valleys, we need to keep faith. They are serving me as much as I am serving them."

Cathy Berggren sees David as a role model for those who are waiting for the "right time" to serve. "The Real Life Center has been incredibly blessed by having David offer his time and talents," shares Cathy. "Not only has he been instrumental in making a difference, he has also been an inspiration to the younger generation to live intentionally and find the time to serve in the midst of their busy lives." When asked why he serves so faithfully, David, a busy husband and father of three children says "I am just a man who gave my heart to Jesus and found a passion to serve and love those I come in contact with daily." We appreciate David and all our volunteers at the Center, Stores, and Orchard for helping us change lives in our community!



## Exciting News for 2019! We are moving!

Ground was broken on September 9th in dedication of the new building that the Real Life Center will call home expectantly in April 2019. "When the Real Life Center started, we wanted to do something a little bit differently. It wasn't just about meeting needs, but it was really about how do we share Christ and love people to be able to change hearts and to change lives," shared Cathy Berggren during the Ground Breaking Ceremony. "We have had the privilege to be able to do that by building a safe place, building relationships and investing in the lives of the people we get to serve. One of the ways we help people is by creating community. What I am most excited about with our new building is having the space to do that even better." Cathy continues, "When you experience a hard time, what we do as people naturally is isolate ourselves. To be able to have the room to build community is going to be an incredible gift." We are thankful to Midwest Food Bank for leasing us space for so many years and we are very excited to see what God has in store for us in our new building which will be located in Tyrone off of Highway 74 on the property of Dogwood Church.

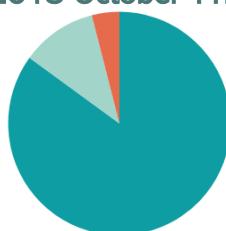
## Thank you to our Supporters. YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

**Real Life Center Income Sources  
2018 October YTD**



■ In-Kind (58.61%) ■ Real Life Stores (16.51%)  
■ Donations/Gifts (13.25%) ■ Dogwood Church (6.53%)  
■ Harvest for Hope Gala (4.45%) ■ Grants (0.62%)  
■ Other (0.04%)

**Real Life Center Expenses  
2018 October YTD**



■ Programs (85%) ■ Fundraising (11%)  
■ Administration (4%)



## Contact Us

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**Sign up for our eNewsletter at [www.reallifecenter.org](http://www.reallifecenter.org)**

## Our Programs

- ◆ Assessment Counseling
- ◆ Financial Assistance
- ◆ Financial Counseling
- ◆ Educational Classes
- ◆ Food Pantry
- ◆ Bread and Fresh Produce
- ◆ Clothing Closet
- ◆ Extensive Network and Referral
- ◆ Mobile Food Pantry
- ◆ Senior Programs
- ◆ Life Coaching
- ◆ Resume Assistance

*Real Life Center is an integrated auxiliary of Dogwood Church.*