

Ministries

a newsletter from Hope Network Ministries

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Giving Hope, Enriching Lives

He was just 4 years old

when his parents were advised by their family doctor to institutionalize him. Instead of the warmth and comfort of his mother's arms, he was put in restraints; instead of the warmth of his mother's cozy kitchen, a cold and regimented institution became his dwelling for the next 50 years. Nathan had a roof over his head, but he lacked meaningful connections, for the day he arrived at that institution was the last day he saw his mother's face or felt the touch of her hands. He received harsh reprimands to keep him in check, was isolated to keep others safe; but there were no hugs; no affirmations and no hope.



When Nathan came to Hope Network, he was distrustful and his vocabulary consisted mostly of obscene four letter words. His verbal repertoire reflected what he had learned during his most impressionable years. Then he met Hope Network staff who saw the man trapped within the hard exterior shell, and who treated him with compassion and dignity. Slowly, the walls he had put up began to come down.

The path has been challenging but today Nathan is thriving. He lives in a six person group home where he is making meaningful connections to God, to people and to a variety of services that are enriching his life and giving him the power to achieve his highest potential.

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After a recent pastoral visit to his group home, Nathan offered a smile and a complement, “nice.” This is part of his emerging vocabulary. God’s love and expert care is transforming Nathan and making him all he can be.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. — Romans 12:2

This Christmas, Nathan was one of nearly 500 individuals who received a special Christmas gift through Hope Network’s Gift of Hope

Program. As far as we can tell, this was his first gift in 55 years. Hope in Christ delivered in big or small packages changes the lives of those we serve.

Thank you for your support of the Gift of Hope Program. It is bringing joy to both givers and recipients. Jack VanOverloop, a manager at Hope Network, emailed his team to say: “If the large smile and giggles from Julie is any indication, you can all feel good about bringing a little joy to 28 of the people we serve. Thank you all for helping to make this program a success!”

Our Gift of Hope Journey

Rush Creek Bible Church and Hope Network’s Oak Lodge Program



This article, written Rev. Gene Pearson (pictured) with contributions from Louise Honderd, Cindy DeCook & John Nasby, is both personal and reflective of the experiences of several members of the church.

John Nasby and his family began attending Rush Creek Bible Church in the fall of 2000. John worked at RBC Ministries and heard about Hope Network’s Oak Lodge, where he began to minister to the residents in a Bible study setting every other Tuesday. John had a passion for ministering to individuals with special needs and loved to bring joy to the residents along with the Word of God.

John’s excitement about Oak Lodge was infectious. He loved the transparency and

openness of the residents as they met together. One day John asked if I would attend the Tuesday Bible study with him. I met John there and we sat around the dining room table with the residents to study the Bible together. After that, I went to Oak Lodge as often as my schedule permitted. In 2005, John and his family moved to Florida. Prior to their departure, I went with John and assured the Oak Lodge residents that I would continue to meet with them on the same schedule. They were excited to learn that someone would continue to meet with them and study God’s Word.

Six years ago, Rush Creek Bible Church (RCBC) was asked to participate in the Gift of Hope program, where individuals would collaborate to purchase and deliver gifts for the residents. The Nasbys had encouraged

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Our Gift of Hope Journey, continued from page 2

the church to form a class for individuals with special needs where they could worship in a very meaningful way. This class meets during the worship service and is called “Thru the Roof” (the idea for this name is taken from Luke 5:18-20). Teachers from this class and their families took a “wish list” that was provided by the Oak Lodge manager and purchased gifts for the residents.

A special party night at Oak Lodge was arranged where the gifts would be given to the residents. Adults and children from RCBC had lots of fun as they met together with the residents, who provided cookies and drinks for their visitors. Some of the children acted as “Santa” and passed out the gifts. The residents were very hospitable and enjoyed giving the visitors a tour of their home.

This special time of gift-giving continues to be a highlight for residents and members of RCBC alike. Over the past couple of years, we have gone from purchasing gifts to giving Meijer gift cards. The residents were so excited when we started doing this because they would be able to go to Meijer together and purchase their own gifts! Louise Honderd and Cindy DeCook, two of the original teachers in Thru the Roof, remember the very special and beautiful handwritten thank you notes that residents have written after the parties. This ministry truly is a blessing and we are happy to continue the Gift of Hope program again this year.

Rev. Gene Pearson, is the Pastor of Care and Counseling at Rush Creek Bible Church. He has served the church since 1995. He states, “I continue to go to Oak Lodge every other Tuesday and greatly enjoy these times with the residents.”

Unity High School Shares Their Gift

The Unity High School orchestra paid a visit to Hope Network’s 44th Street home during the holiday season. Together they sang, decorated Christmas trees, and exchanged gifts.



M i n i S

Thank you 2011 Gift of Hope sponsors and coordinators

Joan & Gary Badalucco • Brookside CRC (*Jill Ellens /Gloria Van Andel*) • Calvary Church (*Rev. Lee Content/Marvin Snedeker/Becky Vannest*) • Central Reformed Church (*Todd Eckstein*) • Church of the Resurrection (*Karen Dudley*) • Bob & Maxine Cohrs • Lance Davis Family • Karen Dudley • Eastminster Presbyterian (*Martha Chalmers*) • James & Antonietta Eliassen • Eternal Word Church (*Bernadette Smith*) • Faith United Methodist Church (*Rev. Mark Thompson*) • First Cutlerville CRC (*Rev. Dan Gritter/Bonnie Hofmann*) • Forest Hills Presbyterian Church (*Lynn Saxsma*) • Hope Network – Coldwater Staff (*Ashley Milks*) • Hope Network – RS (*Anna Elzinga*) • Hope Network Foundation (*Lisa Vanderwerff*) • Hope Network HR Dept. (*Lisa Stevens*) • Hope Network – IT Dept. (*Jason Todd/Jack Overloop*) • Hope Network – New Passages (*Gerri Poage/Nancy McKittrick*) • Hope Network Revenue Mgmt. (*Jonell Williams*) • Immanuel Lutheran Church (*Burt and Lois Uecker*) • Immanuel Reformed Church (*Rev. Brian Smilde*) • Kentwood Community Church (*Ruth Bandstra*) • Julie & Kevin Knoll • Ken & Jan Leatherman • Lifestream Free Methodist (*Carmen Greene*) • Simone & John McInerney • Nancy McKittrick • Rev. Darryl & Shari Miller • Hannah Olthoff • Onondaga Community (*Rev. Bill Muller*) • Mike & Claudia Elzinga • Pioneer CRC (*Paul Merriman*) • Rush Creek Bible Church (*Rev. Gene Pearson*) • S. Ensley United Methodist (*Shari Miller*) • Sand Lake United Methodist (*Shari Miller*) • Searchlight CRC (*Rev. Stan Drenth*) • Spring Lake CRC (*Rev. Drew Sweetman/Al Wiseman*) • St. Ambrose Catholic Church (*Marilyn Thornburgh*) • St. Andrews Episcopal Church (*Rev. Mike Fedewa*) • St. Mark's Episcopal Coldwater (*Rev. Steve Bartlett*) • Heather & Chris Strooboscher • Sunset Park Church of God (*Rev. Paul and Colette Myers*) • The Chemist Shoppe (*Lori McDiarmid*) • Third CRC of Kalamazoo (*Jim Howarth*) • Third Reformed Church (*Keith Boeve*) • Thornapple Community Church (*Rev. Tim Diffenbach*) • Van Ess Building & Repair (*Margie Van Ess*) • Bill Weaver • Phil & Mary Ann Weaver • Woodland Drive-in Church (*Rev. Verlyn Verbrugge*) • Zion Lutheran Church (*Julie Stephens*)

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Ministry

From the Director...

Dear Friend,

Emily Dickinson is quoted as saying, *“Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul, and sings the tunes without the words, and never stops at all.”*

Hope Network empowers individuals to achieve their highest level of independence. Through seamless, holistic service delivery, Hope Network provides hope, self-esteem and self sufficiency to people who live with disabilities, mental illness and disadvantages.

Everything you do makes God’s purposes come alive in the people we serve.

We connect those we serve to residential, clinical, transportation and employment services. Through the Ministries Department, Hope Network connects individuals to God, to self and to others. We’ve come a long way and yet there is

still so much work to be done. Our hope is that you will join us. We need you.

The Holy Spirit catalyses us daily reminding us to “go into the entire world and preach the good news to all creation” (*Matthew 16:15*). We do this through serving others in Jesus’ name and with help from willing partners who live in the communities in which we serve. Without the many organizations, churches and individuals who give of their time, talent and finances, this work would not be possible.

Everything you do makes God’s purposes come alive in the lives of the people we serve.

Looking back on 2011

With God’s help and your faithful support, we established the Short Term Experience in Ministry (STEM) program as a replicable model for training future



Our 2011 STEM graduates

ministers to effectively walk alongside those who live with disabilities and mental illness and have graduated six students in the first year. Lives on both sides of the aisle are being transformed and we praise God for it.

We implemented Building Hope Community, an internal endeavor developed to strengthen inter-department communications, promote collaboration across Hope Network, and reignite our passion and advocacy for the people we serve.

We recruited five new church partners to provide ministry and spiritual support to those we serve and expanded existing partnerships, bringing our church partnership total to 55.

We also established a bereavement support program for Hope Network employees with relevant literature and bereavement support for a full year, thus “mourning with those who mourn” as noted in scripture (*Romans 12:15*).

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Looking forward to 2012

Hope Network Ministries will enhance the quality of ministry services we offer to those we serve by increasing opportunities for worship at Hope Network. We will also intensify our awareness raising and collaboration efforts with local churches by introducing a Ministry Forum where local ministers, Christians, and people who live with disabilities and mental illness can come together to dialogue, learn from one another

and support each other. Our hope is that you will make time to join us in doing God's work on earth, as it is done in heaven. Pray for us, as we pray for you.

Have a blessed New Year.

Sincerely,



Joan Cornelison (Rev.)

Upcoming Events

Ministry and Disability Forum

Tuesday, February 21, 2012
8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Hope Network Education Center
775 36th Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49548

Circle of Friends Breakfast



Tuesday, April 24, 2012
8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

Hope Network Education Center
775 36th Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49548
www.hopenetwork.org/circle

Ministry and Mental Illness Forum

Tuesday, June 19, 2012
8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Hope Network Education Center
775 36th Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49548

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

Tuesday, September 25, 2012
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Hope Network Education Center
775 36th Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49548

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www.hopenetwork.org/ministries

