

TOPEKA RESCUE MISSION MONTHLY REPORT DECEMBER 2020

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CHRISTMAS: THE GREATER VALUE



CHRISTMAS: THE GREATER VALUE

Photo Credit: Benjamin Zack/Standard-Examiner

When we think of Christmas, we often think in terms of its traditional values: presents, time with friends and family, decorating the tree together, watching the lights go up, and listening to the carols play. But for many in our community, Christmas is a time of deep loneliness and increased isolation, especially for those who struggle with poverty, hunger, addiction, joblessness, or loss of housing. For these neighbors, Christmas serves as yet another reminder of the pain and grief they experience on a daily basis.

This holiday season, we encountered two new volunteers at TRM, James, and Sandy. James is a TRM guest who needed volunteer credits to apply toward a housing voucher, and Sandy, a community volunteer who was required to perform volunteer service hours. James is an Army veteran who lost hearing in his left ear during his service to our country. Since his discharge in the early 80's, he has struggled to cope with his tragic experiences, turning

to alcohol for many years. He has since become clean, but in the meantime became homeless. For years, Sandy has battled addiction and has recently faced a serious health diagnosis. Realizing the loss of her health and now in chronic pain, Sandy has struggled to even face getting up in the morning. For both individuals, hopelessness and despair have pervaded their lives for many years. For a very long time, James and Sandy have felt that they have

no value, that they do not matter, and they have no purpose in the world. Both have felt forgotten by a society that passes them by every day, unwilling to see and hear them and unwilling to empathize with their pain. Both, for different reasons, began to volunteer with Operation Food Secure at the Topeka Rescue Mission this holiday season, helping staff and volunteers load food boxes into trucks, vans, and cars to deliver to neighbors in need across seven counties in Northeast Kansas.

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When they first began volunteering, James and Sandy stood far away from everyone else. Feeling like outsiders, they waited for someone to come up and tell them what to do. But day by day, as staff and volunteers took the time to get to know them, encourage them, and make them welcome in the TRM family, they began to feel like they were part of something bigger than themselves. For the first time in years, Sandy and James were **seen, heard, and valued**—a part of a greater effort to serve the hopeless and hurting in our community. Over the coming weeks, both Sandy and James became a vital part of the Operation Food Secure team, helping load thousands of food boxes into vehicles headed to neighborhoods across Topeka and beyond. Sandy quickly became known as “the math whiz”, able to eye empty trucks and pallets of food boxes and know exactly how to pack the load to maximize the capacity and cut down on time and labor. James developed friendships with other TRM guests, staff, and

volunteers and began to feel like he had found new friends in his temporary home, encouraging him as he works to secure permanent housing. Through working together, alongside people who are kind to them and care about them, both James and Sandy have been shown that they have extraordinary value and purpose they did not previously recognize.

This story plays out daily throughout TRM and its ministries. Every day we work to help people understand their unique value and how worthy they are of love and kindness. For many people, “Christmas” comes every day at TRM - for someone who is cold, hungry, or feeling worthless, giving them warmth and shelter, food and kindness feels like Christmas morning!

This Christmas will be very different for many of us, and for many celebrating Christmas during a pandemic, social distancing and spending time apart from our friends or families won't feel like celebrating at all. But it's in times like these that we have the opportunity to

reflect on the greater value of Christmas and all the things that make the holiday season what it truly should be.

This year, wherever you are and whatever your situation, whether you're safe at home, or at your desk, or living under a bridge; whether your life is full of light and family or you're weighed down with pain and loneliness, we invite you to reflect on the greater value of Christmas. The value that transcends the lights, trees, and presents - the value of God sending His only child to remind us of His wonderful love, hope, and healing for each of us. This Christmas we want to let everyone reading this know how valuable you are to us. Through your prayers, support, and donations, you are the reason we get to do what we do at TRM. You are the reason we are able to comfort and love the lost, the broken, and the suffering, and come alongside them in their darkest moments. Thank you for helping us share the light of God's love to people like James and Sandy and to show them how incredibly valuable they are to God and all of us! †



Seen • Heard • Valued



Merry Christmas

from:

TRM TOPEKA
MINISTRIES RESCUE MISSION
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hope to the many who are in need in our community.

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