The Ultimate Gift

Last July, I shared with you that Greensboro Urban Ministry was taking stock and looking ahead as we turn 50. A seven-month strategic planning project started soon after. What we’ve created to guide our work comes with input from many of you, community partners, our staff and Board. We appreciate your support and perspectives.

What did we find out? You can get a great overview inside this issue. We’ve included results and our new mission, vision and values statements. We have also outlined the strategic priorities that we will be concentrating on in the coming year.

You’ll find several wonderful stories in this issue of how strategic direction can transform lives. A.M., Angel and Darrell found help on very different timelines. Their stories all seem to center around one humble value statement that captures the reality of the work we do: We understand that sometimes hope is the ultimate gift.

Hope comes in through the darkness and catches people’s attention. Your donations help us offer food, shelter and solutions, which allow hope to take root. Your volunteerism puts a face on hope that tells our guests, “You are not alone.”

The hope you share helped Angel Baptist (above) beat an addiction, return to school and graduate from college this spring. It gave A.M. and her daughter a safe respite at Pathways Center. And it allowed Darrell to come back to Weaver House more than once to discover recovery and solutions.

Today, all have stable lives again.

Our job at Urban Ministry is to be here to help people catch hold of hope again and find help – on the timeline they need. Sure, we’d like for everyone to lay hold of self-sufficiency again on day 1, and watch homelessness fade quickly in their rearview mirrors as they drive to their new home. That’s the TV version. What we see here is different most days. It’s a longer distance, and we are grateful that you are with us on this journey. Thank you!
Mother and Daughter Rebuilding

Under the tall glass windows of her corporate lunch room, A.M. recounted the roller-coaster turns of her life that left her homeless. The young professional, single mom had taken a leave from her 8-year job with a national corporation to help care for a family member. While she was away from work, policies changed – and her leave was denied. A.M. lost her job.

To support herself and her elementary-age daughter, A.M. became a ride-share driver. To help stretch her tight budget, she took out a title loan on her car. Then, she got caught in a few curves that pushed her family over the edge. Her car broke down. The title loan was called; the car was lost. Her apartment was next. The trip down was fast and frightening. A.M. doubled up with a friend and her daughter. She scoured the job market and secured a new position with a different financial corporation. Three weeks into the job, she found she could not stay with the friend any longer. A.M. turned to Pathways Center for help.

“I didn’t feel good about having to be in a shelter. It was hard losing everything and being a mom.”

A.M. arrived with her daughter and found a studio apartment with all the essentials, plus a school backpack full of supplies and a teddy bear. But more than a welcoming place to temporarily call home, A.M. found support and a sense of belonging. “When you’re homeless, you don’t feel like you belong. But the people at Pathways have beautiful spirits. No one made me feel bad because of my situation.”

Her case manager, Tonya Morehead, listened. But she also spoke about a lot of things A.M. said she needed to hear: about budgeting, planning and meeting priorities. And, importantly, how decisions can move you forward, or hold you back.

In about two months, A.M. found an apartment. Staying at Pathways allowed her to save money for a deposit. Greensboro Urban Ministry paid her first month’s rent and provided a referral to Barnabas Network for furniture.

A.M. still faces challenges. She takes 7 buses to and from work each day. It will take time for her to find another car. Every week, she checks in with her case manager at Pathways. They talk about A.M.’s plan and getting closer to the life she wants for her family.

“At Pathways, they saw what I was trying to do and my goals – and what I like best – they were so encouraging. When you haven’t had a lot of help in life and then you get it – it’s WOW,” she says emphatically. “They put as much time and energy in as I did. To feel loved and cared for gives you that extra push.”

More online

Darrell Campbell was an executive chef in Greensboro’s growing restaurant scene before addiction led him down a dark path to homelessness. Susan Phillips, a retired lawyer, volunteered at Greensboro Urban Ministry after her daughter encouraged her to give it a try. Hear more about their stories and how they intersected in our new video on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8Q-Zrfsefw

While you’re there, please subscribe to our page to be the first to learn about new stories and videos!
Supporter Spotlight: Michael Hitt

Michael Hitt's learning about giving took root working beside his grandfather in a 1-acre garden behind his house.

His grandfather had a 9-to-5 job. But early in the morning and late in the evening, Michael would find him in his Greenville, S.C., garden, growing and harvesting tomatoes, squash and a host of fruits and other vegetables. “I can’t tell you the number of hours I spent with him there. Most of his harvest he gave away to underserved communities,” Michael recalls. “He had a generous heart. He never talked about it or promoted it.

“He was really the first person who helped me realize how giving enriches everybody.”

Michael’s mother, a teacher, showed her son the value of volunteering. She was active in mission work through their church. When she retired, she became the volunteer chaplain for the Fire Department.

Philanthropy, he learned growing up, is more than a donation. “It’s giving of yourself, not just a monetary thing.”

Today, Michael is a generous supporter of Greensboro Urban Ministry, bringing those lessons from his childhood into Potter’s House Community Kitchen and the food pantry. “I’m drawn to helping locally first,” he says, and that’s part of what he likes about Urban Ministry. “You see the faces of this ministry and know that your work is impactful.”

He volunteers several times a year through his company’s corporate volunteering program. He also is a Monthly Sustainer and has connected with his company’s matching gift program to increase the power of his giving.

“I don’t think giving should come out of obligation – it should be from a full, giving heart,” Michael says. He finds at Urban Ministry a place where volunteers and staff serve without judgment, he says, and accept people who need help regardless of the circumstances.

“I experience firsthand what a difference Greensboro Urban Ministry can make literally in people’s daily lives, for those who would not have eaten today, who would have had to sleep in an unsafe location, or would not have had heat or lights,” Michael says.

It takes him back to his grandfather and many bags and boxes of produce, hand-delivered to those in need. “I heard about what he was doing, but it’s hard to connect as an 11- or 12-year-old. Now I realize they were getting their meals. What they needed. Just like people coming to Greensboro Urban Ministry.”

Tornado relief
Greensboro Urban Ministry has received donations of more than $30,000 to help people affected by the April 15 tornado. We have also set aside $20,000 from April’s Blue Jean Ball for storm relief.

There are several levels of possible assistance, from federal, state, local and agency sources. We are at the table with these partners in the Storm Recovery Alliance. Each resource has requirements and guidelines. We see our role at Greensboro Urban Ministry as helping to fill in where gaps occur, so people don’t inadvertently fall through the safety net.

We have rent, utility and food assistance, as well as gift cards for gas and Walmart. Every storm relief case is different. We want to have as many tools as we can to meet the need. Thank you for making this possible through your donations.
Save the Date!

The 38th Annual Greater Greensboro CROP Hunger Walk will be on Sunday, October 14. This year’s walk will have a new site location due to ongoing and future construction downtown. The walk will be held at the Greensboro Coliseum, beginning and ending in the parking lot, with the route traveling through the nearby neighborhood. Registration and entertainment begin at 1:30 p.m., and the walk begins at 2:30 p.m. This year’s theme is “Step Up to Stomp Out Hunger!”

Team Captains are invited to drop-in to pick up materials and register their teams online at one of the following Kick-Off events: Tuesday, August 28, from 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. or Wednesday, August 29, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Both events will be held in the Greensboro Urban Ministry boardroom, 305 W. Gate City Blvd., Greensboro.

For more information concerning the walk and route, T-shirt sales, and more, visit http://new.greatergreensborocropwalk.org. Individuals and teams can also register online at https://www.cropwalk.org/greensboronc/. Be sure to like us on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/GreensboroCROPHungerWalk/

Congratulations to four of our teams who made the list of the 2017 Top 100 Cream of the CROP Teams in the United States for most money raised last year:

- St. Pius X Catholic Church
- West Market St. UMC
- First Presbyterian Church
- Friends Home West

We appreciate the support of all our teams and look forward to seeing you at the walk!

Please visit our website for a listing of all upcoming events and come join us to support the work of Greensboro Urban Ministry.

Please like our Facebook page and find us on Twitter and Instagram (@gsourbanmin) to get the latest updates on the work that you make possible through your support of GUM.