

2025 Annual Report



WateredGardens

Ministries



In a recent interaction with “Debra,” a 67-year-old homeless woman, I found myself with no words. We sat against a brick wall surrounded by plastic sacks filled with her life belongings as she perseverated about the loss of her child, the loss of her husband, and the breakdown of other family relationships. She was disheveled, her long gray hair unkempt and matted to her brow from sweat, but it was what and how she spoke that revealed she was more than homeless. She was heartbroken. I could only pray and as I did, she leaned her head into my arms and wept. I did, too. The brokenness of her life is so distant from one that flourishes.

What does it mean to flourish?
Leaders across the nation are asking this question more frequently. More so, people are interested in how to attain it. Even universities are now studying it. Harvard just released the results of its Global Flourishing Study in April of 2025. They looked at character and virtue, meaning and purpose, life satisfaction and financial stability, among others.

We just need to look at the Bible. Our founding passage, Isaiah 58:11, is a picture of flourishing: *The LORD will always lead you, satisfy you in a parched land, and strengthen your bones. You will be like a watered garden and like a spring whose waters never run dry.* More than just a picture of a flourishing life, it's a promise. But, reading the handful of verses before it reveals that it's a promise contingent on how we help the poor.

How are we helping the poor?

It's an important question if a flourishing society is tied to its answer. When I ask myself that question, there is one primary response that comes to mind: as distinct, unrepeatable individuals uniquely created in the image of God.

This priceless value of the individual compels us to extend our lives...

This perspective is held by the entire team at Watered Gardens and it immediately vaults every person who comes through our doors far above an object of charity, but rather a subject with agency, autonomy, and capacity to contribute. This priceless value of the individual compels us to extend our lives to the poor sacrificially and with great hope for a flourishing future.

This is fleshed out in the various programs you'll read about in this report and I hope you're inspired by some of the outcomes that are shared.

How the poor are helped matters. And as recent policy changes will increase the pressure for the unsheltered homeless to find shelter, the demands will increase on our mission. Be assured we won't lose sight of the “how.” Debra and every other person we'll encounter this next year has immeasurable value, worthy of Jesus' sacrifice, and as we join Him in it, we'll remind each one that God intends for them to flourish, too.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Whitford".

James Whitford, Co-Founder & Executive Director

A front-line ministry to those needing food, clothing, and a place to lay their heads, the Outreach Center provides over 50 beds for men and women, including a respite shelter for those needing additional time to recover after leaving one of our local hospitals.



"Finding Watered Gardens was the best thing that could have happened to me. When I was dropped off, I'd never been homeless before, and only knew what I'd seen on TV. I was scared and thought I wouldn't be able to sleep at all. But that very first night, I felt such an overwhelming sense of security and safety that I had the best night of sleep in a long time. I didn't even think there was a God, but now I know that peace was from Him. I found Jesus there at Watered Gardens—got saved and baptized and became an avid Bible reader. I also made some really good friends who I still talk to almost every day." - Danalee, Former Mission Guest

126
GUESTS
HELPED OUT OF
HOMELESSNESS

178
EMPLOYED
WHEN THEY LEFT
SHELTER

31
FAITH
DECISIONS
FOR CHRIST





Project Worth leverages the power of business to lift people out of poverty. We implement the principle of exchange, which affirms human dignity in our clients who learn work skills while generating revenue for the ministry through goods made and sold.



"I drank so much that I had a stroke in my 30s. And then I got kicked out of a recovery program for relapsing—but that's when God opened a door for me at Watered Gardens. They've helped me find faith in God, and Dan, the kitchen manager, has become like a brother. Even when I was drinking, I always worked, but Dan's helped me see it's not just work; it's service. His attitude's really rubbed off on me and made going to work each day so much more meaningful."

Josh Alley, Former Mission Guest and Project Worth Partner

28,212

BASIC NEEDS
EARNED
(81%)

\$67,114

REVENUE
GENERATED AT
THE WORTH SHOP

\$105,479

REVENUE
GENERATED AT THE
WG MARKETPLACE



A long-term residential recovery program, Forge Center for Virtue & Work welcomes men coming from poverty, addiction, and incarceration into a 16-month focus on character development and work readiness. Graduates are full-time employed, independently housed, off of all government assistance, and active in a local church.



"I don't wish my bad times on anyone, but I do wish everyone could have my same experience in The Forge—to put everything else on pause until you settle what matters most. When it finally clicks that God truly is a Father to you, and Jesus gave Himself for you, and the Holy Spirit is actually there in you, you stop trying to live for God and let Him live in you. Let that sink in—God living His life in us. That's what the Forge is all about: getting renewed, not by following rules, but by Christ alive in us."

Jason Hafer, Forge Graduate



15
STUDENTS
ENROLLED
FOR THE YEAR

7
STUDENTS
GRADUATED
FOR THE YEAR

56
STUDENTS
EMPLOYED SINCE
PROGRAM START

A 5-year-old campus designed to keep children with their mothers in times of crisis or chronic homelessness, Washington Family Hope Center currently provides 15 family units, each able to house a mom and up to four children, while the family re-stabilizes and sets a new course for holistic flourishing.



"I've had a life-changing experience moving into Washington Family Hope Center. The amount of love and care we get from the other girls and the employees there are unmatched! We are family! Very blessed to be here and start this new journey, with our best feet forward."

- Von'e, Former Guest



8

MOMS SECURED
EMPLOYMENT

76

INDIVIDUALS
SERVED
(26 Moms, 50 Kids)

5

FAMILIES MOVED
TO INDEPENDENT
HOUSING

3

MOMS ENROLLED IN
POST-SECONDARY
EDUCATION



Care Coordination

Serving all campuses and neighbors in need, the Care Coordination staff and volunteers meet regularly with guests and friends in the community to set and achieve goals toward health, wellness, and self-sufficiency.



"When you come in here, everyone is so friendly. The Care Coordination team sits down, talks with you, and finds out what you need. Then they put a plan together with you to do what needs to be done. Even just being able to speak with someone in person and be heard matters a lot. When you talk, they actually listen."

Randall, Former Mission Guest



544

HEALTHCARE
GOALS SET

192

HEALTHCARE
GOALS MET
(44% INCREASE)

18

FAMILY
CONNECTIONS
REESTABLISHED



Volunteer Update

With a ministry designed to serve the Church in its mission to help the poor, Watered Gardens only has 24 full-time employees across all ministries, relying on the church to provide volunteers who love Jesus and are ever-growing in their understanding and administration of effective charity.



"I had been part of a lot of 'feel-good' charity over the years—doing some act of service for people, but having no relationship or connection with them. At Watered Gardens, I've learned that true charity can't be distant or impersonal. It requires coming alongside someone and getting to know their story. That takes daily prayer and patience because it's a journey, not an instant fix. That doesn't always feel good—but it IS good."

- Martha, Volunteer



100
NEW
VOLUNTEERS

98%
VOLUNTEER
RETENTION

11,904
VOLUNTEER SHIFTS
COMPLETED

299
TOTAL
VOLUNTEERS

51
GROUPS FROM
SIX STATES

Advancement Update

As a 100% privately funded organization, Watered Gardens has never received a government dollar and relies solely on the generosity of individuals, churches, businesses, and private foundations.



\$2,825,788

TOTAL GIVEN, 8% SHORT OF THE BUDGETED NEED

1726

TOTAL
DONORS

368

NEW
DONORS

7

NEW CHURCH
FINANCIAL PARTNERS

65%

DONOR
RETENTION

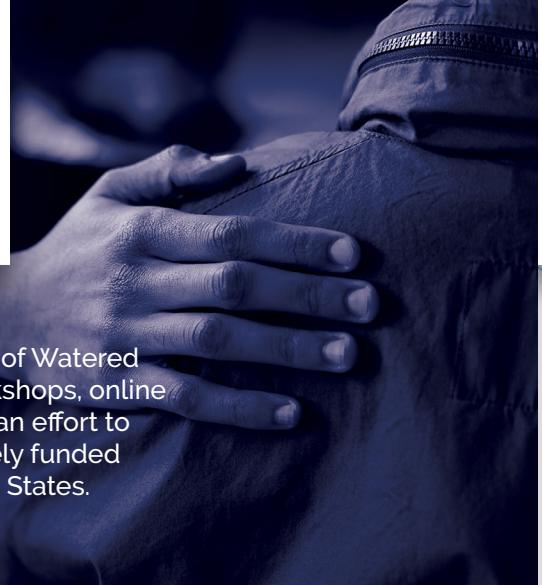
\$224,877

IN-KIND
DONATIONS



1623
ONE NIGHT MONTHLY
PARTNERS (66% of the Need)

The national educational subsidiary of Watered Gardens, True Charity provides workshops, online resources, and educational tools in an effort to make local, outcome-driven, privately funded charity the norm again in the United States.



"What I love most of being a part of the Network is relationship building. The tools that [True Charity] has, we don't need to reinvent. It's already there. We just have to use it and apply it."

—Lyndon Azcuna, LifePlan, Niles, Michigan



Trainings

14 Live Community Events

Teaching the fundamentals of True Charity to 627 leaders in 13 cities

8 Real Results Webinars

With 423 in attendance

29 True Charity

Ambassadors

Active in 17 states

Summit

268 In Attendance

From 121 organizations

30 States

Represented at our first event outside of Missouri

97% of Respondents

Expect to apply something they learned





The True Charity Network is a national coalition of churches and nonprofits that serve people in poverty. We provide our members with extensive practical resources to operate their programs with excellence, connect with like-minded peers, and influence their communities. Visit truecharity.us/join to learn more.

250

*Network Members
in 34 States*

7

*Member Orgs
Added Per Month*

938K

*Clients Served
by Members*

20

*Step-By-Step
Digital Guides
for Program
Improvement*

62%

*Members Made
Program Changes
Toward True Charity
Effectiveness*

1,325

*Individuals with
Access to Member
Portal Resources
(52K Total Views)*

A close-up photograph of a person's hand, with fingers slightly curled, dropping a single water droplet from the tip of their index finger onto a small, green, seedling sprout growing out of dark brown soil. The background is blurred green foliage.

Let's do more than alleviate poverty.

Let's resolve it.