

flourish.

a quarterly publication from watered gardens ministries

S U M M E R 2 0 2 1

Two Ways to #GiveBetter (and three examples of why you should)

We're at the midpoint of our 2021 public awareness campaign that encourages the Joplin area to **#GiveBetter** in response to panhandling.

Recognizing that true poverty is a lack of relationships, not resources, we're encouraging everyone to do two things:

First, give some good direction. Send folks on the street corner to a ministry you trust to invest in their long-term well-being—a ministry that will get to know them, learn their deeper needs, and stir up their God-given capacity to contribute to their own success.

Second, give yourself. As you are able to carve out the time you typically don't have when driving up to a stoplight, volunteer at the same ministry to which you are sending people. That way, you'll become part of the relationship resource so desperately needed to transform lives...

...like *Marcelle*, who stayed at our Washington Family Hope Center (WFHC) for a year and is now back in college while

serving as our campus overnight resident assistant.

...or like *Dan*, a former gang member who completed the Forge program, then earned a degree at Bible college, and is now back serving full-time with Forge—helping men follow a new way of life just as he has.

...or like *Butch*, who came in off the streets and stayed at the Outreach Center for several months while he found and worked a full-time job and saved enough money to move into his place.

These are just a few of the many lives and families being put on a new life trajectory of hope. And we hope you continue to view Watered Gardens as a ministry you can trust to build relationships with those in need and be a conduit for you to do the same as a volunteer.

The more lives we see transformed through real relationships, the more we'll all want to #GiveBetter, **and our community will be better for it.**



Marcelle, now serving as our overnight RA at WFHC and pursuing a healthcare degree



Dan, a Forge and Bible school grad who's come back to serve



Congress asked if the nation could feed itself without SNAP. Here's my answer.

By James Whitford, Executive Director

Time ran out before I could answer an important question at a recent U.S. Congressional hearing, *The Future of Snap: Moving Past the Pandemic*, before the Nutrition, Oversight, and Department Operations subcommittee.

Vice-chair Adams asked, "Do you believe that private charities and nonprofits could immediately and effectively provide for the 42 million Americans who are currently supported by SNAP?"

What follows is an abridged version of the written response I submitted after the hearing:

While I have no doubt of the private sector's capacity to feed the hungry in America, I certainly assert that "immediately" and "effectively" are mutually exclusive. We could do so "immediately and chaotically," but a thoughtful and effective plan would require time. That said, I am hopeful we can all agree that one American or forty-two million Americans "supported by SNAP" is not optimal and that our common ground upon which to rally together is to see as few people as possible supported by the government.

When one of my favorite Presidents, Democrat Grover Cleveland, vetoed the

Texas Seed Bill of 1887, he wrote, "...the lesson should be constantly enforced that, though the people support the Government, the Government should not support the people." In further justifying his dissent, he pointed to the great strength of American charity, demonstrating his remarkable and beautiful faith in the generosity and neighborliness of American citizens. He also commented on the risk "federal aid" poses to the bonds between people.

"The friendliness and charity of our countrymen can always be relied upon to relieve their fellow-citizens in misfortune... Federal aid in such cases encourages the expectation of paternal care on the part of the government and weakens the sturdiness of our national character, while it prevents the indulgence among our people of that kindly sentiment and conduct which strengthens the bonds of a common brotherhood."

I echo President Cleveland in arguing that "support" from the Federal Government has a myriad of disruptive effects that adversely impact the natural affiliations within family and community.

To continue examining private sector capacity, I am not able to estimate the reduction of SNAP enrollees if effective

and empowering charity took over. Certainly, without the current and easy path to liquidate and abuse the benefit, not to mention the attrition of able-bodied adults who take advantage of the program unnecessarily, there would be a significant reduction representing a more accurate and true need for food.

One church in my city partnered with an organization called the Pack Shack which facilitates "funnel parties." The entire church assembled on a Sunday and instead of a sermon, they packed 40,000 dry-stored, nutritious (and even good-tasting) meals during their normal two service times. I know it's a drop in the bucket, but it was one church on one Sunday. There are approximately 380,000 churches in the United States. If half of them did the same just twice per year, it would provide a meal to each of those 42 million people every day.

Even my small mission provides more than 60,000 hot meals each year and nearly that in additional pounds of food for families in need. Our mission is just one of more than 300 in the Citygate Network of missions that prepare and serve more than 50 million meals annually.

I'm sure you're grateful for the hard work of these amazing, compassionate



Community Development: Curbing Poverty Starting At Your Own Curb

by Avery West, Director of True Charity Community Initiatives

The term "community development" brings up images of everything from trash pickups to block parties. So, what does it really mean for you and your organization?

At its simplest, community development

is a local effort to fight poverty through prevention. People within the community band together to promote conditions that make it easier for people to flourish and less likely to fall into material need or social isolation.

Because employment, healthy lifestyles,

strong families, and good schools are radically interdependent, community development requires a cooperative and holistic approach. Often, this begins at the most local level, the neighborhood—right at one's own curb.

Successful organizations like Community Renewal International (CRI) in Shreveport, LA, or Love the LOU in St. Louis, MO, have different models,

soldiers fighting for social justice. I also imagine you would love to see people fed and cared for by their neighbors, local churches, and communities. If so, then you would naturally hope SNAP to be merely “supplemental” to what’s being provided by those more meaningful sources. Unfortunately, it’s not. Yesterday, an unemployed homeless man showed me a letter sent to him from our state’s DSS office regarding his SNAP benefits. It reads, “The amount of benefits you will continue to receive are: \$234.00 thru 05/2022.” Certainly, you’d agree this amount is more than “supplemental” for a man who is being fed by the mission where he currently resides. Certainly, this indicates the number 42 million is woefully inflated compared to real need.

We also have to remember that, no matter how large, the number of people subscribing to something doesn’t justify it. Otherwise communism could be justified by the number of communists or mob-rule by the quantity of the mob.

Finally, it’s not so much that I argue for diminishing government as it is that I desire to magnify people. However, the more power the government holds, the less the people are empowered. Empowerment does not come by the simple transfer of wealth, but at the moment people realize they can create it for themselves. So, the more the government grows in its unmerited transfer of wealth to the poor, the less the poor person will find the flourishing life and freedom for which he or she was created. Certainly, none of us should



Our Mission Market, one among thousands of private charities ready to step up in place of SNAP

embrace such a perversion of justice.

I am not asking you to close the SNAP program tomorrow. I only hope you’ll consider that the involvement of the Federal Government in helping people in my community has also brought its share of hurt. At least, I ask you to consider the following:

- Do not expand the program as our economy regains its footing.
- Require work from able-bodied adults without dependents.
- Seriously consider how the program could be turned over to the States.

Lastly, please remember that the excellence of our nation stems in great

part from its establishment as a republic. We were never intended to, nor should we be a nation ruled by mob nor by an elite aristocracy, but by the people. In his letter to John Taylor in 1816, Thomas Jefferson wrote:

“The further the departure from direct and constant control by the citizens, the less has the government of the ingredient of republicanism.”

Thank you for working with me to realize a grander America in which we have rightfully returned to the citizenry’s direct and constant control that which it does best: love and care for neighbors in need.

**To read James’s full reply to Vice-chair Adams, visit truecharity.us/articles.*

but both began within neighborhoods. They focused on building relationships of trust, after which neighbors felt more comfortable sharing not only their fears and needs, but also their strengths and gifts that could combat community problems.

In their book *When Helping Hurts*, Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert emphasize that Asset-based Community Development (ABCD) begins not by asking what’s going wrong, but what’s going right. This focus on assets is essential to building an internally strong community, instead of one that relies on resources from outside.

The most essential part of community development is simply to recognize that communities have within themselves gifts, resources, and institutions that are vital for their own flourishing. The job of the community developer, then, is simply to help people tap into their gifts and be supportive in authentic friendship for the long haul.

For three practical ways to begin, check out Avery’s article “What Is Community Development And How Do I Start?” at truecharity.us/articles.



A volunteer with our Neighbor Connect program, clearing scrap from a yard. Visit NeighborConnect.us to learn more.



RECENT EVENTS

Blooms of Hope

our Washington Family Hope Center. We and the moms are deeply grateful.

What a blooming success! We sold out early and raised over \$5,800 thanks to everyone who shopped onsite or ordered online to support



At our True Charity Summit in May, we gathered over 120 nonprofit leaders and volunteers, church staff, and policy leaders from 16 states to explore the foundations of effective charity. With classroom pre- and post-tests measuring a 49% increase in learning and 90% of attendees agreeing that they plan to put their learning into practice, we'd say the event was a roaring success. Thanks for your support and keep an eye out for next year's Summit!



Business Boom for the Forge Fireworks Stand

The fifth annual Forge fireworks sale was our best yet. Sales took off and climbed 37% over the previous year. We netted \$9,865.41 between our portion of the proceeds and additional donations. Thanks to Military Fireworks for continuing to be such a great partner!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Forge Graduation

Friday, Sep. 24, 7 PM | 531 Kentucky Ave in Joplin

You're welcome to attend this quarterly ceremony where Forge students advance to the next phase of the program or complete it entirely. It's a great time to encourage these men as they transition from some incredibly hard pasts into new lives of virtue and productivity.



EVENING OF HOPE

Saturday, Nov. 6 | Joplin Family Worship Center

Joy to the world: our annual holiday fundraiser will be back in person this year! Mark your calendars for a festive evening that's sure to get you into the Christmas spirit. Mark your calendars!

EMPTY Bowls

**Thursday, Nov. 18
Empire Market, Joplin**

A steaming bowl of soup may turn your stomach in the summer heat, but trust us, it'll hit the spot come November. As in years past, we'll be raising funds for local food ministries. Presales of handcrafted bowls will begin at Joplin Greenhouse on October 1. Save the date!

KEY VOLUNTEER NEEDS *Visit wateredgardens.org/volunteer to get in involved.*

- Overnight Resident Assistants (Outreach Center)
- Hosts and Kitchen Assistants (Outreach Center)
- Breakfast & Dinner Meal Crews (Outreach Center)
- Daily Assistants (Worth Shop)