



Have A Great 2013

January 2013

A Ray of Hope News Letter

From The Desk of Peggy

Abandoned Women with Children and Pregnant Women—Where Do They Go?

Once again this season of giving has been kind to A Ray of Hope as we have met all expenses of the ministry and have sufficient funds to make a one year payment on the main shelter. The savings are growing towards getting the new women's shelter built. My prayer is that with fundraising projects, we can accomplish this goal. We have many skilled people who are donating their time in this process. This is exciting to me, for as a young girl I observed my community come together to build needed homes for families who had lost theirs to fire.

Since working at the Christian Center to opening the doors of A Ray of Hope, board members Connie Kirby, Tom Dalton and I have worked to help save babies in the womb by giving hope to mothers who come to A Ray of Hope. We tell them that they are not alone and that there is a choice. We are so grateful to be part of seeing children receive life because we were able to give them a hand up in making the best choice for the unborn.

One Christmas season, I opened the door at night to find a fearful, lonely young woman hugging a big blanket around her baby. She had given birth only three days earlier and found herself on the streets, having been turned away from other doors. I told her all I had left was a mat on the floor in our office but that she would be safe. She accepted gratefully. The next morning while sitting at my desk watching this young, sleeping Mom with her arm around the dresser drawer we had made into a bed for her baby, my heart was so filled with gratitude that we were able to tuck she and her baby in from the cold. For me that was one of the best Christmases at A Ray of Hope. That young woman went on to do great things for herself and her baby. Now she is in a wonderful Christian marriage raising her children in the hope and truth of the gospel. All she needed was a hand up.

1. We work alongside others to have open adoption in Montana. This gives the Mother and Father a say in who is adopting their precious child. They have gained the wisdom to know that they are not ready to be Mothers and Fathers.
2. In Bigfork, Connie Kirby, along with her church, is helping women who decide to give life. She supplies them with clothing, blankets, diapers, baby bottles and hope through her caring.

3. When a young pregnant girl has no safe place to live, or when someone offers her a home for the sole purpose of her giving the baby to them, I have witnessed and heard their heartbreak that one more time they are being used for what their bodies can give. This is totally different from an open adoption where a young girl is given the time, respect, and sensitivity in deciding what is best for her baby.

4. So many times we have seen Dads walk away from a family. Or because the home is in his name, they can call the police and have the Mother removed from the home at his whim. Because she has no safe place to keep her children, the Mother leaves them in the home, and this is later used against her as abandoning her children. If they show up to A Ray of Hope, we can help get them into a motel, until the mother can get a job and save enough money to rent a place she can afford that is safe for her Children. (We also have helped fathers when the mother walks away taking all the funds from the bank account, leaving no funds to keep his children safe.)

5. The new shelter will give us more resources to help all of these situations. The shelter will be for women and children to tuck into. The fathers can stay in the men's shelter, and their children can tuck into the women and children's shelter until he can regroup in funding to find a home for his family.

Please pray for A Ray of Hope and this new shelter. Pray that the hearts of the people in this community will be moved to help us build it. Your generosity has been helping us keep a man named Russ at A Ray of Hope as a guest. A young man named Micah and his family have been able to stay in a motel until they can find a rental that they can afford. We are helping Dan, a man who came to our doors to be in a place that helps him in recovery. These three gentlemen work daily tearing down the old house. (not just talking the talk but walking the walk). When I told Russ "thank you for your hard work", he said "***No, thank you and A Ray of Hope, as I know that the work I am doing is going to give a safe place for women and children until the Lord comes again.***"

Please call the office if there is something that is laid on your heart that can help us acquire supplies to build this home in a timely fashion.

Thank You! Happy New Year to You and All Your Loved Ones!

The Testimony of Lacy Arend—Executive Director of Fundraising for A Ray of Hope

I first came to A Ray of Hope in January of 2010. In July of 2009, my ex-husband had left me and my two year old son in a very bad house. Because I was raising our son, I was unemployed. I struggled to earn money—mowing yards and shoveling sidewalks with him in the Kelty on my back to pay my rent, gas, electric, and water, which totaled about \$1,100 monthly.

I was broken, hurt, sad, and felt abandoned by everyone...including God. Things were so hard. Why me?

Come January, I couldn't make my rent. I applied for assistance through Community Action Partnership's program to help people stay in their homes. I was denied "because I didn't have a job." They said "if we help you one month, what happens the next? So it would be pointless to help you."

Then an angel told me about A Ray of Hope.

I exhaustedly stumbled through their door upon which a note was tacked that read "***Our Door Is Open To All.***" I looked up with tears in my eyes, my son on my hip, and a heart sagging to my ankles, to the beautiful smiles of Peggy Christensen and Teresa Eaves.

At this point, I had less than 24 hours left in my house with no electricity and no heat. My car had broken down. I had no diapers, no phone, and no hope. My son and I had been eating boiled pinto beans since a week before Christmas, as it was the only thing we had left. We hate beans, so needless to say, we were very hungry. My son had a breathing problem that required him to nebulize every 2 hours, so it was challenging going across the street to the 24 hour gas station to do this.

Peggy didn't hesitate to hear me, help me, and pray with me to regain the hope and understanding that Christ had never left me. She helped me be able to take care of my needs, and gain employment through an employee training program.

I was able to keep my house until my lease ended and later move in with my grandparents to help me save for a suitable, affordable home that was safe for my son, unborn daughter and I.

It is now 2012, and I still work at the same place. I've gained the wisdom and knowledge of professional mental and financial counseling, and have finally been able to put to rest the things that hurt me, move beyond the reasons I was in the situation I was in, and take forward steps for my kids.

I played the single mom of 2 role for over two years, worked two jobs, and bettered my life and my situation because of my counselor, my family, and my family at A Ray of Hope.

Three years later, I have kept the same job, acquired a reliable vehicle, and found the man of my dreams.

It is solely because of A Ray of Hope, God's glory, my family, and my determination that I am where I am today.

At the leading of Peggy, my goal is to start my own LLC in February, doing a job that I love. The faith she has in me is amazing, and so trustworthy that she blessed me with the title of Executive Director of Fundraising. She put me through college to become certified at what I do best. She has made it possible for me to love myself again, and I will never stop fighting and working hard to help give others 'a hand up, not a hand out' the way she did for me.

Our Lord is using me in amazing ways, and every day I am blessed with more and more.

Thank you Grandpa, Grandma, Mom, Eddy, Julie, Jason, Peggy, Bob, Teresa, Jeffrey, and RJ, for believing, trusting, and helping me become the daughter of God that I am today. I dearly love you all, and I am so honored to have you in my life. You will never know the extent of my gratitude.

Letters

From Ginger:

Empty, hopeless, depressed, lost. This is how I felt for as long as I can remember. I looked for peace, happiness and acceptance everywhere—in my appearance, my weight, my friends, money, alcohol, and eventually drugs.

I had hit the low of all lows at the age of 21. My pursuit of happiness always left me wanting more or something bigger and better. In desperation I went to my parents for help. They did the only thing they hadn't tried before. They took me to church. When we got there, I got to the doors of the church, but I could not go in. I ran from the building back to the truck in tears, feeling even more hopeless than ever before. But two loving, Christ-filled people came after me, one of which was Peggy Christensen. She prayed for me in the parking lot and invited me to her home.

She led me through a few Bible studies and she led me to Christ. I did not feel anything amazing or a dramatic change. I was still entangled in a reckless lifestyle, and I stopped going to the Bible studies. But Peggy had allowed God to work through her, and little did I know His Seed was planted in me and it was beginning to grow. The next 6 years, although I did not see it at the time, God began working in me and breaking me down so He could build me back up in Christ.

There were many trials, but God finally brought me to a place where He became Lord of my life. It has now been 11 years since I accepted Christ. God freed me from drugs and alcohol. He blessed me with a beautiful daughter. He healed my marriage, and He brought my husband, daughter, and step-son to Him. God's unconditional love has filled that place that nothing else could fill. I am secure, accepted, and significant in Christ alone.

Thank You to all:

At one point or another in our lives most of us will face an emergency we are not prepared for.

Such an incident recently happened to me. My name is Michael. I was down to just four days to wait until all the problems I was facing could be solved. Those four days I anticipated camping out in a river bottom somewhere, going hungry, and no showers. I am a veteran, and this reminded me of days in the service—sleeping in some river bottoms.

As I was pedaling my bike up the street, the clouds of gloominess forming overhead, A Ray of Hope burst through.

I saw this ray of hope through two very special people as I stopped and checked out this place. Their names are Peggy and Teresa. I would like to thank them, and the people behind them that help support and finance this place. IT IS AWESOME!

Thank you and may God Bless you and those who make this place possible!

Sincerely, Michael

There has never been a person in history with the same combination of appearance, personality, natural talents and spiritual gifts as you—and there never will be!! This should be the basis for the positive self assurance of every person in the world—that you are unique and that God has a unique purpose for each of us. Each of us are fully pleasing because when you accept the Lord as your Savior and ask forgiveness of ALL your sins, He imparts great value to you as you now are—deeply loved, fully pleasing, accepted and complete in Christ.