



Community at First

There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

—1 Corinthians 12:5

First United's Community Ministry outreaches celebrate the great diversity of gifts, callings, and talents in the congregation. Some people follow their passion and serve in ways that energize them. Unique ministries, such as computer refurbishing, bicycle clubs and community gardens, reflect member interests. Others may put aside their natural likes and dislikes and serve outside their comfort zone. Prison ministry teams and disaster response teams often go into difficult circumstances to let people know God's unfailing love in hard places.

God calls others to launch new ministries. First United's growing involvement on many levels in the Eugene Field neighbor-

hood started with a single ministry, the First Friends volunteers, over fifteen years ago. Eugene Field Big Bucks Store and birthday parties for students are two of the follow-up ministries. Ongoing ministries, such as the flower ministry delivering sanctuary flowers to shut-ins, give witness to faithfulness year after year.

Outreach and service projects are often a catalyst for Sunday school classes to bond and grow together. It's been said that healthy classes pray together, play together, study together, and serve together. The reverse is also true, when classes pray together, play together, study together, and serve together, they often become healthier, stronger classes.

Community Ministry opportunities take different shapes, but one thing is true for all ministry; it is never a solo performance. Jesus said, "By myself I can do nothing; ... for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me" (John 5:30). God never gives an assignment that doesn't require increasing trust and reliance on him.

The next few pages highlight a few of the ministries that impact our community and bless our hearts.

For more information on how to get involved in Community Ministries, contact Dr. Connie Cole Jeske or Carol McCoy at 587-9481, or go to the website at fumtulsa.org/serve, click on Community Impact to find a list of Community Ministries.

CLOSING THE GAP

SUNDAYS AT THE DAY CENTER FOR THE HOMELESS

In many ways, this is just like any other church in Tulsa. There's a guy up front with a guitar. People sing along modestly; participating, but careful not to sing too loudly. The obligatory two or three seats are left empty between strangers. The front row is entirely vacant (with the exception of the speaker's wife). Latecomers slip in throughout the message. The room is clearly repurposed for this event each Sunday morning. Throughout the week it seems to be a sort of children's play area. Books, dollhouses, and child-sized tables and chairs have been put away and pushed back to make room for the worship service. It's an inviting room, in spite of florescent lights and warmer-than-comfortable temperatures.

This is Tulsa's Day Center for the Homeless. Each day, an average of 400 people seek shelter and services at the Day Center. Originally founded in 1986, the

Day Center seeks to provide a safe, healthy environment for people who are homeless and to offer opportunities and encouragement to help them achieve self-sufficiency.

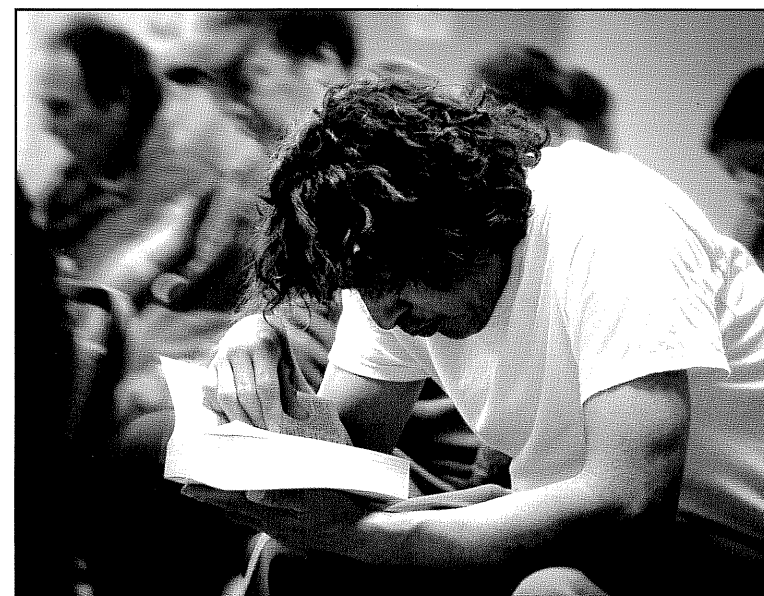
Arguably the most significant of these opportunities is a space on Sunday to worship and learn about Jesus Christ. Each week various volunteers, representing various churches throughout Tulsa, provide worship music and a message. Many volunteers come and go, but a few are quite regular. Bill and Cherie Towner, Jim and Elizabeth Stanton, Chuck and Julie Watson, Anita Hall, Valerie Deatheridge, and Ben Ferrell come often. Janice Young is here every week. She says, "People need consistency. Plus, I like it here!" A member at First United, Janice has been volunteering at the Day Center for nine years.

Relatively recently, she's taken on the responsibility of organizing each service, making sure someone is there to lead worship

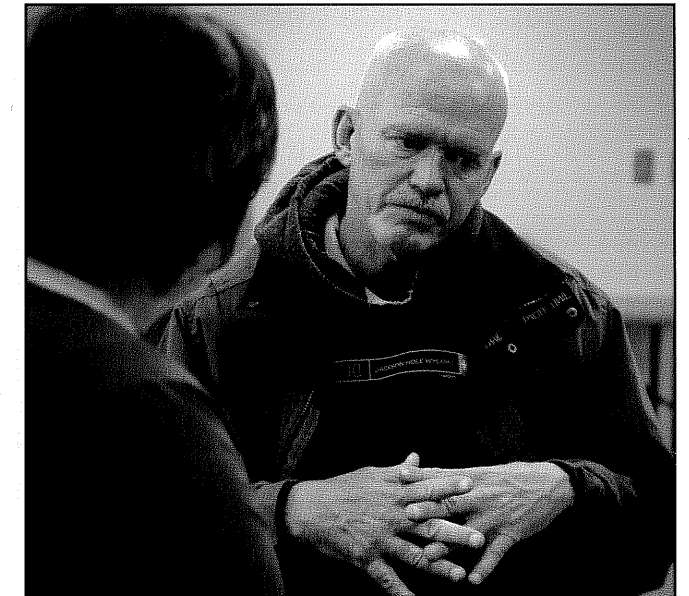
and to deliver the message. But it doesn't always go according to plan. "Recently, one of our worship leaders was unable to come at the last minute, so God raised up a wonderful trio from among the volunteers and Day Center friends. One man played a guitar that was literally held together by duct tape! We all agreed that praise and worship was especially sweet that day.

"And yesterday! I didn't have anyone to lead worship. Out of the blue, Jon sends me a message asking if I need volunteers at the Day Center. I said 'Yeah, and bring your guitar.' That's how the Holy Spirit works with this place."

Jon and his guitar led the congregation of about twenty in familiar songs such as "How Great Is Our God" and "You Are My All in All." Then he cedes the podium to Jim Stanton. Admitting his nervousness, Jim begins with a prayer, saying, "Father, I just pray that you would bless this time and



Don Kreutzweiser, photographer



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high school in the same year! We had actually been classmates. I looked him up in my yearbook and sure enough, there he was.”

Tulsa’s Day Center for the Homeless is located at 415 West Archer, literally the

other side of the tracks from First United. The walk from the front door to the room where the service takes place can be intimidating. There are metal detectors, tattoos, dirty clothes, trash bags full of belong-

ings and menacing sounding coughs. But several things are certain, these people are just people, and God is already there. He is looking to close the gap. And his people are accomplishing his purpose.

HOME IMPROVEMENT

REBUILDING TOGETHER TULSA

Josephine (Jo) Cohen has been in the hospital for nine days when a crowd of people arrive at her house. First, they are greeted by her two dogs, Piper and Ollie (Corgi and Dachshund mixes she adopted from the pound). Not far behind the dogs is her husband Dale. Dale and Jo have lived in this house for over forty years. They’ve raised their two children here. Various granddaughters and pets have come to stay at times too. For a while, their backyard was home to a goat and a goose.

This house is definitely a home. But Dale’s age and Jo’s poor health have kept them from being able to keep it up the way they’d like to. Enter the crowd of (mostly) amateur handymen and -women who’ve

answered First United’s call to service.

Brian Thomas and Brad Burkhalter are leading the charge. They arrived long before anyone else to set up supplies and snacks. But their work really began weeks ago.

Brian and Brad are managing this project for Rebuilding Together Tulsa. They’ve been a part of this project since it was still in the application stages. Brian says applicants “tell their story in the application. We are looking for a family that is doing their best, with the right attitude, that just doesn’t have the resources.”

Dale Cohen, Brian says, is like many others he works with. “He’s out here shoveling with us; 95 percent of the homeowners are engaged and want to share

their stories.” At the Cohen home the roof has been replaced to repair leaks. When this project is complete, volunteers will have stained the front and back porches, replaced a window, repaired damage from an old remodel, provided landscaping and refreshed paint on the outside of the house.

Although this project is wrapping up, this isn’t the end for First United and Rebuilding Together Tulsa. Brian Thomas recalls a God-sighting of his own.

“I have been trying for four years to connect First United with Rebuilding Together Tulsa. But we haven’t been able to find homes in the Eugene Field district that meet the criteria [applicants have to own their homes].

Left: David Dismuke replaces wood trim on upstairs windows. Center: Chuck Watson (orange shirt) enjoys working with other members of First to help the Cohen family. David McKinney’s (yellow shirt) family’s mission trip to Nicaragua had to be cancelled, so he was glad to be able to build in Tulsa instead. Right: Wade Paschal says it’s a lot of fun being together and working together.



Brian had heard about some homes just a few miles from Eugene Field in the Clinton school district. He was getting closer, but still didn’t feel like he could pitch the project to the church without being closer to Eugene Field.

He never expected that “the very next Sunday Wade would announce that [First United] was expanding its ministry into Clinton.”

Rebuilding Together Tulsa was included in the Fall 2010 Day of Sharing. Donations from the Christmas offering at First United were enough to cover the work on the Cohen home. And the support garnered from the Wish Lemons Run was more than just money. Brian says, “Now there is a

combination of funding and talent level. Interest went from ten to fifteen people up to fifty-one people who expressed interest in this project. Today I thought ten or twenty volunteers would actually come, but everyone showed up.”

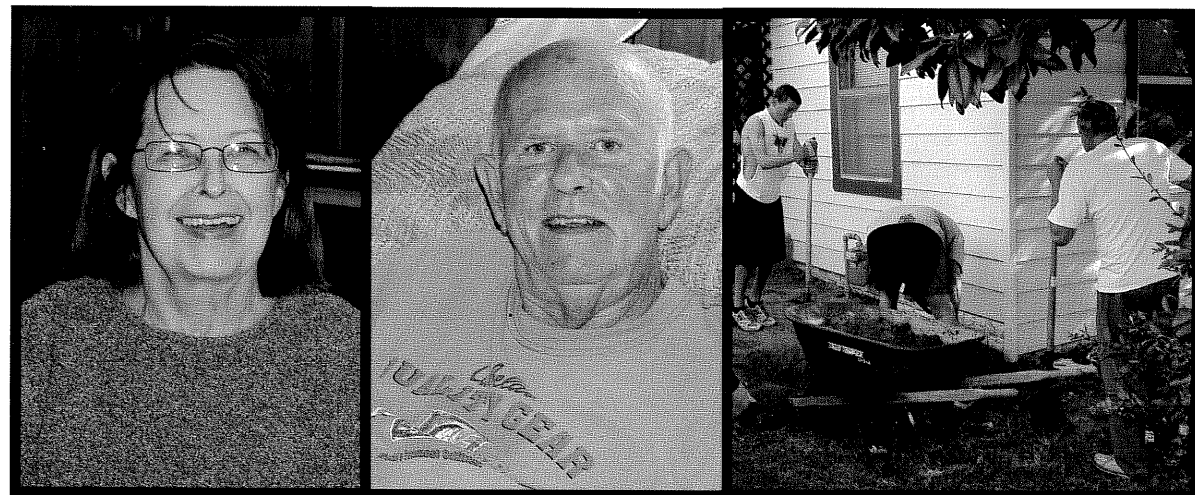
The momentum is exciting for Brian. And the work on today’s projects is exciting for Dale. He’s calling Jo to check in and telling her all about the work that’s been done.

Brian says, First United member “Chad Roney is going to donate landscaping. Rebuilding Together Tulsa doesn’t usually do that because they have enough on their plate. But I learned that Mrs. Cohen used to have beautiful flower beds and

hasn’t been able to do that because of her health problems. When I mentioned the landscaping to her, her face lit up.”

The day’s volunteers were all ages, from all Sunday school classes, and of almost all skill levels. But there was plenty to be done and each person found work they could do and got busy. Wood was primed, painted and stained. Weeds were pulled. Windows were caulked. Linoleum floors were laid.

Looking forward to another weekend of volunteers, Brian liked the progress. So he wasn’t just referring to the Cohen home when he summed up the day’s work. Smiling, he said, “We are not done yet.”



Left: Josephine Cohen was in the hospital when the First United crew swarmed her home. She returned to find everything she asked for done. Center: Dale Cohen is a retired bank security guard. Right: Dale, Jr. helps dig a new garden. The Cohens were especially excited to have new landscaping donated.



Left: Linda and Destiny Hrcir participated in order to give back. They were helped in a similar way several years ago. Center: Lauren Burkhalter and Hannah Walsh love to volunteer and help people. Right: Six volunteers repair water damage and turn a purple room white.