

Ashley's Gift

How one person's gift to Hope Clinic yielded hundreds of extra dollars in donated goods and services

How does one tell the story of a gift?

One can follow the money: whom it came from, what it paid for, how it helped someone. But that doesn't tell the complete story.

The story of a gift is the story of an idea—an idea shared with a giver, an idea sent by that giver to an unknown beneficiary, an unknown community.

This is a story about one gift. It is about faith, hope and love: the greatest and "the least of these."

It is a story of a woman named Ashley Wolfe, a youth pastor at Living Waters Fellowship in Lafayette. After Hope Clinic director, Jenny Dittes, spoke at a Macon County Ministerial Association meeting, Ashley invites Jenny over to her house and hands her five \$100 bills.

"I had just been blessed," Ashley remembers. "I wanted to be obedient to what God told me to do. I was astonished to see how God used it!"

The story doesn't end there. Jenny returns to the clinic and calls the kidney specialist. "We've been given a donation, and we would like to use it to cover a visit for an uninsured patient," she says. A visit here may cost up to several hundred dollars.

"That won't be necessary," they tell her. "We'll provide the visit free of charge."

Gina Donofrio, patient advocate, knows the gift's story from **Ashley's**
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Cumberland District Superintendent, Rev. Tom Halliburton shares with clinic patients Phyllis and James Snow after the November 29 service. Halliburton preached at the first three services.

Clinic begins Sunday-evening service focused on Spiritual Healing

Healing happens in many ways at Hope Clinic—since its founding, it has used diagnostics, treatments such as medication or physical therapy, counseling, compassion, and even prayer. Now there is fellowship.

Hope Fellowship, a Sunday-evening religious service for clinic patients, staff, and supporters opened November 15. In the three weeks since, twenty to forty worshippers have met in the clinic's Counseling Center each week for music, friendship, communion and the spoken word.

"As long as the clinic has been here, I've dreamed of starting

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Photos from Hope Fellowship Service



Hope Fellowship

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a service,” Jenny Dittes, Hope Clinic co-founder, said at the first meeting. “Spiritual healing is such a vital part of healing as a whole.”

Assisted by Reverend Tom Halliburton, District Superintendent for the Cumberland District of the United Methodist Church, the services feature music from local church groups as well as spoken thoughts from invited ministers.

“We were looking for a

place to go,” said clinic patient Phyllis Snow. “It’s very positive here, very uplifting. You feel better when you leave than you did when you came in.”

The service grew out of a desire to meet patients’ spiritual needs, Jenny says. Studies have found that up to 50% of medical visits originate with spiritual or emotional needs, not medical ones.

“I felt that there was something deeper,” Dittes says. “Hope Fellowship grew out of a desire to address the physical, the emotional, *and* the spiritual.”

TOP: Mike Hilton and Doug Mounts share some melodies after a recent song service. *BOTTOM:* John Hill and Tommy Flood, pastors at Bethpage and Mount Olive UM churches, respectively, demonstrate the weekly communion service.

Gift (continued)

here. She calls Hometown Respiratory to order a wheelchair for another needy patient. “We’ve been given a gift,” she tells them.” The wheelchair should cost \$305.

They give her the wheelchair for free.

Gina grins. “It’s God’s math,” she says. “He keeps multiplying the money.”

Christ told a parable about a wealthy man who left his home, entrusting talents with his servants to invest. When he returned, the faithful servants had doubled his gift (Matthew 25:14–22).

Can Hope Clinic *give* any of the money away? They can. They do.

One couple receives \$15. This provides gas to come to the Hope Clinic worship service. Another patient, a single mom with three kids, needs to move into a new home but faces a huge deposit to get electricity turned on. She gets \$275 and moves in three days later.

Ashley’s Gift has gained more than \$600 worth of donations for Hope Clinic, a return of 120%. There is still more to give away, much more to be gained.

In the Parable of the Talents, the Master returns and says, “Well done, good and faithful

servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” (verse 23).

All credit belongs to the Master, Ashley says. “Thanking me isn’t what should be done. We should be thankful to God, because He told me to do it and without Him we’d be nothing. I was just willing to be used by Him and He allowed me the honor.”

This is the story of one gift—a gift that gives and gives and keeps on giving.

PATIENT PROFILE

R.B. Gregory found a path out of homelessness at Hope Clinic

By Melanie Lowe, RN-APN

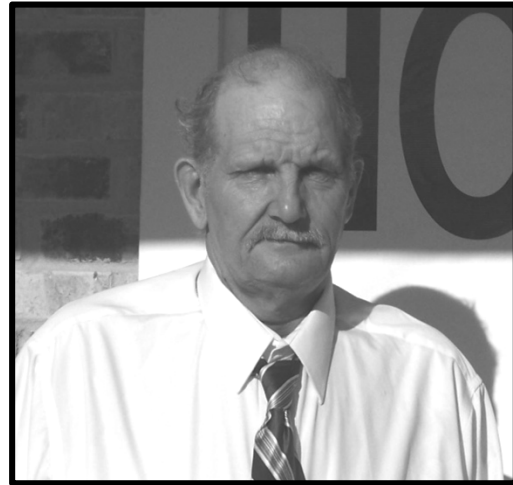
It had been years since RB had a primary care provider. Unfortunately, due to lack of insurance and an income of only \$110/month, his physical, emotional, and spiritual health had suffered. Having lost faith in God, people, healthcare professionals, and also in himself, RB decided to give one last chance to the HOPE clinic.

Unable to make eye contact, RB built a relationship with me over the next three months and trusted that although he could not pay for any office visits or labs, he was valued and respected. He even began to stop by the clinic unannounced for a blood pressure check or just to be sure he was taking his medications correctly.

As Christmas approached, RB explained that he was depressed over the death of six close family members during the last 18 months including his wife, mom, sister and older brother. In addition, he felt ashamed that he couldn't find a job and "make a living." Although he had been actively searching for work, he was unable to find gainful employment as a result of being illiterate. Being unable to fill out simple job applications and read road signs or maps, RB found himself continually turned down for the only career he had known.

With further discussion, RB revealed he was sleeping in his truck. As a result, he had no way to bathe or cook unless his family allowed him to use their stove and shower. Once again, this led to feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness.

Through the graciousness of donors, RB was immediately set up with a counselor to assist with grief counseling. He began to work through the emotional baggage and get help dealing with survivor guilt. We began to meet RB's physical needs through contact with Westmoreland First Baptist Church, which provided him with access to a food bank and shower facilities. The Portland Lion's Club granted



Hope Clinic marshaled a number of local groups to help R. B. Gregory to battle financial and emotional stresses. "The clinic stood by me through some really dark days," he says.

him a free ophthalmic exam and prescription glasses. In addition, the Sumner County Adult Learning Program set up testing and tutoring.

After six monthly visits, RB still struggled with his homelessness. Hope Clinic began the process for gaining disability. On subsequent office visits, RB allowed me to pray with him. Within three months, through the grace of God, RB was granted his disability claim, a situation that rarely happens so quickly.

At his most recent appointment, RB looked me in the eye and told me that his faith had been restored. "No one has ever done things for me just because," he said. "The clinic stood by me through some really dark days." He is actively looking for an apartment and reliable transportation, and the counselor was helping him with a household budget. "I've also started going back to church," he said with a smile (something I had not seen before).

As an employee of Hope Family Health Services, I see lives changed on a daily basis. The needs of our patients are tremendous. However, miracles are happening! Tomorrow there will be more RBs in our waiting room, searching for lost hope. Because of your continued support, we will hopefully renew their faith.

HORIZONS:

Counseling, Rural Health Clinic Status expected in 2010

The new year promises to be a busy one as Hope Clinic grows in 2010.

Hope Counseling Center will expand its services in Spring 2010, adding three clinical days of services for both individual and group sessions. **Gina Donofrio**, the clinic's current patient advocate, will graduate in December with an MA in Counseling from Lindsey Wilson College, making the expansion possible.

Deb Smith, a professional coach and spiritual counselor, will begin providing **counseling support for Hope Clinic staff**, thanks to a grant from the Memorial Foundation. Balancing the demands of the clinic with family and personal responsibilities is often a challenge for Hope employees, and the high-stress nature of the job can lead to burnout. Smith will be available at least one day a week for one-on-one sessions with Hope employees, if needed, to help them achieve balance and reach their goals.

In November Hope Clinic began the process of seeking **recognition as a Rural Health Clinic**. Working with consultant **Betti Wilson**, the staff are working to get policies in line with federal benchmarks. Once the federal status is reached, it will qualify Hope Clinic for higher rates of reimbursement from Medicare and Medicaid. Staff hopes to receive Rural Health Clinic status by summer 2010.

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