

Bishop Sullivan Center

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AN UNUSUAL FUNERAL

By Tom Turner, Director



Archie and volunteer, PJ O'Connor, help get trays ready for the evening meal for those in need.

At the end of Archie Williams' funeral, all 200 plus people who came gave him a long-lasting standing ovation. What made this unusual were the makeup of the 200 people and the makeup of Archie himself. Let's start with the makeup of Archie.

Archie, by most societal measures was a failure. He first came to our attention years ago when he started coming for a hot meal at our community kitchen on Troost. After a few nights, a staff person chatted with him during a meal and asked, "Where do you live?"

Archie pointed to an unenclosed porch on a vacant building next door and said, "I live on that porch." Archie was homeless. He was in his 60s at the time and had some health issues.

This staff person took an interest in him and eventually helped Archie get into an apartment. Archie asked if he could repay us for the meals he had been coming for and was soon enlisted as a daily volunteer, both in the pantry and the kitchen. Archie knew the neighborhood and he understood the people who came for that evening meal. He soon became an invaluable volunteer.

Archie admitted his failures in life. He had used drugs, spent time in prison, and had not been the father that he wished he could have been. As I said, by most societal measures, he was a failure.

Fortunately, people who come to the community kitchen have a different measuring stick. They measure people by their genuineness and by their ability to understand hardship.

On this scale, Archie was a huge success. A broad smile always at the ready, Archie accepted everyone who came to that evening meal regardless of where they were in life. Archie knew how to connect.

Now, back to the makeup of the 200 people who came to the funeral. In addition to his family, it was a very diverse group of black and white, rich and poor. The "haves" who were there were volunteers at the community kitchen whom Archie had befriended. The "have-nots" were those who would have come for the meal.

It was joyful celebration. At the end, the presider asked for a round of applause for Archie and everyone, as if on cue, rose for a standing ovation. They applauded a man, who though once homeless, on drugs and in prison, was their friend. They took in the full measure of the man and saw someone, who through his acceptance and understanding of others, had succeeded.



Archie always had a smile on his face. It was a reflection of his kind soul.

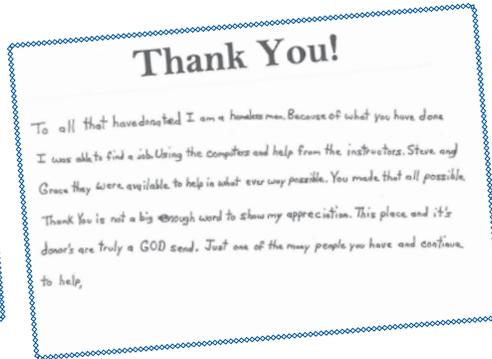
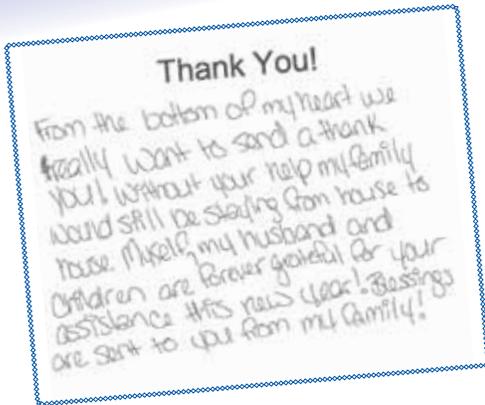
“PUT A THUMB ON THE SCALE”

By Tom Turner, Director

JD Vance writes about his experience growing up in a poor and abusive home in his book, *Hillbilly Elegy*. Now an attorney, Vance says he is often asked by others what can be done to help such families. His metaphorical advice is “Put a thumb on the scale for people living on the margins.” What he means is that *seemingly small forms of help matter*.

Much of what you help us do here for families burdened by poverty is “put a thumb on the scale” to help them. Giving people a hot meal, free clothing for their children, help toward a utility bill, or a few sacks of groceries might be considered a “Band-Aid,” but a Band-Aid helps when you are bleeding.

Seemingly small forms of help matter, as these thank you notes indicate.



LOST BOY NEEDS A JOB

Wal is one of the Lost Boys of Sudan. During Sudan’s Civil War in the early 2000s, at the age of 18, he fled out of fear for his life. His mother and brother were killed; his father had gone missing. He eventually took refuge in Kenya and later was accepted into the US as a refugee. He has been in the US for several years mainly working in warehouse jobs. He is now 35 years old and we are helping him find work.

He is a very soft-spoken man and says it is his faith in God that helps him make sense of his tragic life. When he came to our employment program, he was wearing a black jacket with the word “America” across the back. We are hoping to help him find his “American Dream.”



Steve Haney, staff, helps Wal look through a binder of job leads.

Wal, wearing his “America” jacket, in our employment resource room where he can use a computer to job hunt.



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