

Bishop Sullivan Center

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Toothaches, Flat Tires, & COVID

When people ask for financial assistance from Bishop Sullivan Center, typically for rent or a utility bill, they fill out an application. One question on the application asks, “What happened that you now need help?” Here is what a woman wrote:

“I had an abscessed tooth that cost over \$1000 for the root canal and crown, since I am missing most of my other molars I needed to keep this one for chewing. I have receipts for the root canal and crown work.”

Each day we receive between 15 and 20 such requests for help. Currently, most people who apply need help due to the impact of Covid, typically the loss of a job or the loss of work hours. For example, one wrote, “Due to COVID my job was furloughed until further notice.”

Several wrote that they needed help due to paying for a car repair or replacing a flat tire: “I have had over \$800 in car repairs in the last 2 months, needed to replace the CV shaft and starter.”

The common denominator of all these applications is that people who make minimal pay are simply unable to create a “rainy day fund” as all their income goes toward necessities. So, when the “rain” comes, they can’t plug the leak.

One wrote on her application, “I have no support system.” That is probably true of most of those people who come to us. Their extended family is either in the same financial boat as them and therefore are unable to help, or, their family is broken or non-existent.

Bishop Sullivan Center plays the role of “middle-man” between people who are in need and you who are sympathetic and generous to help. Thanks to you the woman with the root canal had her electric bill paid, the one whose job was affected by COVID received help with her rent, and the one with the car repair received help with a water bill.



Paying for needed dental work can put clients behind in paying their bills.

Food for the Journey



Volunteers put bags of food together that will be handed out on Friday nights at One City Cafe.

There’s a story in the Old Testament where the prophet Elijah is stressed to the point of praying that God would take his life. Instead of taking his life, God sends an angel to give him words of encouragement and some food. The angel tells him that he will need the food to give him strength for his journey. And it did.

A group of “angels” have been gathering lately to put together 150 packages of food that are handed out every Friday night when people come for a hot meal from our community kitchen, “One City Café.” In addition to the hot meal, they are given this extra bag of food: sandwiches, protein bars, bottled water and fruit for their “journey” over the weekend.

The angel in the Old Testament remains anonymous as do these modern angels.



A volunteer hands man a bag of food along with his hot meal.

Anything Helps

By Hannah Clemens, Summer Intern

During the summer, the Catherin Merrill Foundation gives us a grant to hire around 20 college students who work at one of 10 non-profit agencies in Kansas City. Part of the students' internship is to write a weekly reflection on some experience they had and how it connects to their faith. Here is one such reflection.

There is a traffic light that I get stuck at every morning on my way to work, and on that corner there is usually someone holding a sign, always in different words but saying the same simple message, "Anything Helps."

I have interned the past two summers at Hope Faith Ministries, a social service agency that provides services to homeless people. If my time at Hope Faith has taught me anything, it is the power of listening to someone who often gets ignored. So when I am stopped at that traffic light on the way to work and see someone with their cardboard sign, I realize that it is really important to say, "Hello," even if I have no money to give.

I like listening to people who are experiencing homelessness, too. The guests at Hope Faith Ministries always have wonderful things to tell me. I get to hear about their successes and their failures, and although I do not usually have any advice to give or wisdom to share on the problems they are facing, I think there is a benefit for both of us to hear the trials of homelessness said out loud.

When I find myself drawing away from God, uncomfortable with prayer, and feeling that it is useless, I remind myself that I can see in my own life how much reflection can help people solve problems and understand their lives and actions more deeply. I wonder if sometimes God wants me to pray as a gift to myself rather than as an adherence to him. He listens, but He listens for me. When I think of it that way it makes sense why God wants us to tell him what we are going through even though He is supposed to be all-knowing. God knows what we need, and He knows the best way to guide us there without giving us all the answers.



Intern Hannah Clemens listens to the stories of people who are homeless.

Usually I do not have money or food to give to the people on the corner, but I always roll down my window to smile or say, "Hello" and listen if I have a minute before the light changes. It is not a big action, and it does not take any effort, but you can never guess how much a person just needs to feel a little bit of humanity that day, especially when they are denied it constantly. I think what I am trying to say is that when their signs say, "Anything Helps," they really do mean anything.

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