

The current The Giving Tree Board Members, Staff and Volunteers would like you to know that The Giving Tree is not perfect. Our hope is to see our vision and mission blend together with our new policies and procedures. We will continue to improve and make necessary changes. We will move forward to ensure that our programs continue to help homeless and needy children, families, elderly and disabled.

We think it is important that you and your readers know what and who the Giving Tree is, because your front-page article on Sunday, June 5<sup>th</sup> failed to discuss the positive effects Giving Tree has in this community.

In May, 2010, alone:

We served 212 employment program attendees. (See below)

We served 5980 meals, including sack lunches for children who normally get free breakfast and lunch at school.

We provided housing for 107 children and adults, on average, per night.

The Giving Tree improves the quality of life for disadvantaged and underserved children, families, elderly and disabled individuals. We will continue with our commitment to break the cycle of poverty with a hand up and not just a hand out. We invite the community to join us in any of our outreach services where they can see the difference we make in the community.

The Giving Tree has grown exponentially to help homeless and needy children, families, elderly and disabled. From one home for homeless and needy children 14 years ago to twelve homes and transitional units, a Church and Multi Purpose Center, Administration Offices and Classrooms, Counseling Center, and two Stores and a large piece of commercial property on which we hope to build a large "One Stop" facility for the homeless and needy in our community, surely reflects our expansion.

When Rob O'Dell of the Arizona Daily Star called us to state his intention to print another story about The Giving Tree, we agreed to speak to him in an attempt to dispel allegations. The two hour meeting took place in our office two days prior to the story running. Present were the Director, three of the current board members, along with the director of the Jobs Program and our Director of Operations. Everyone in attendance openly offered honest answers to all of Mr. O'Dell's questions. In addition, Mr. O'Dell interviewed some of our clients, yet his article made no reference to any of the comments they offered, and failed to discuss our mission or the services we provide.

Our answers were not addressed in the Arizona Daily Star, nor was there mention of any of the strides made over the last few months to address financial procedures. Additionally, no mention was made of the accounting policies and procedures that have been carried out routinely since recommendations were made earlier this year.

Despite the fact that Mr. O'Dell chose to print neither our candid responses nor those offered by current board members and clients he interviewed, we are pleased that Mr. O'Dell has agreed to visit our homes and the Jobs Program, as well, to speak with more of our clients. Hopefully, he will be able to see clearly how The Giving Tree seeks to serve God by serving others, and the positive impact that this has on the underprivileged of our community.

We are grateful for the ways in which the previous Board Members contributed to the Giving Tree over the past years. We worked diligently under their direction to address changes recommended to improve the operation of the organization. It is unfortunate that we were unable to make all of the modifications requested immediately. We do hope to accomplish all the recommended changes under the direction of our current Board and leadership.

Craig Littlefield has contributed a great deal to The Giving Tree and for that we are thankful. In an official capacity as a board member for the first few months of 2010, he felt our top priority was to change how we operated, addressing those issues specifically noted in the first Star articles. While this was important, and we worked hard at it under his direction, our true number one priority remains as always our service to our clients. We worked very hard, often coming in on Saturdays to accomplish the many tasks before us. We wish him all the best and hope he will continue his efforts to make the community a better place.

As we anticipate Craig Littlefield's return of Giving Tree's confidential information currently in his possession, we moved quickly to replace the 2 out of 4 Board Members who resigned. Our desire to continue our operations has not diminished from these recent articles. As several stated in the article, there is a great need for the services of The Giving Tree in our community. We will continue to press forward and overcome current challenges. We have many loyal supporters who will lend a hand us continue helping thousands of homeless and needy people weekly.

We face a monumental challenge with a minimal budget. The Giving Tree volunteers and staff put in many hours to make sure the job does get done—fewer families are living on the streets and going to bed on empty stomachs because of this organization. There is no question that God uses the Giving Tree to meet the needs of people in our community who would otherwise fall through the cracks unnoticed.

We are grateful to those who have continuously, wholeheartedly donated their time and resources. We trust that God will continue to fill the gaps through the kindness of our future donors and volunteers. As the economy continues to have a negative impact on many of us, especially the working poor, we need the community more than ever, so please continue to support our efforts to serve the disadvantaged.

In the past, our CPAs donated their valuable time, since our monetary resources are limited. They were licensed to practice and in good standing with the State Board. We are grateful to have retained the services of a new accountant and an attorney who are both willing to guide us. They will help to ensure that we have more

extensive knowledge and implement policies and procedures which will make our organization better and stronger than ever before.

One of our developmental opportunities is finding the unique volunteers for the right vacancy. While we rely on many well qualified volunteers to perform a variety of duties, our Director of Operations, who is responsible for standard accounting practices and principles in our office, is compensated. To clarify, this person is not a client, does not live in or on Giving Tree property, and qualifies as a 1099 employee under IRS statutes. He has been working hard over the last months to ensure that receipts for all expenditures are properly coded and entered into our QuickBooks for Nonprofits system, that all donations are logged and properly entered for accounting purposes, and that our newly developed accounting practices are followed.

Our Jobs Program is nationally recognized because we are successful in placing people into paying jobs with extreme obstacles such as lack of education, unstable prior living arrangements, domestic violence victims, physical and mental health issues. One essential component of that program is to give them education and experience by allowing our clients to participate in our on the job training programs.

In 2009, our GEAR [Gaining Employment And Respect] Program Director and her team saw 6756 clients. They provided employment skills, resume services, case management services and procured required documents along with clothing vouchers, housing and compassion. 55-60% of our jobs clients obtain employment through this program which is well documented with case files,

We thank you and your readers for their support, as we continue this mission to support the poor, the disadvantaged and the homeless of our community.

The Board of the Giving Tree