

Christmas

A NEW APPROACH FOR HOPE

So this is the year of finding new ways to do almost everything, right? It's been challenging to stay close to loved ones – from a distance – and to Zoom with our health care provider and attend church online. We've become hunters and gatherers constantly looking for paper products and hand sanitizer! Who would have thought?

Like your family, our Adult and Teen Challenge family has had to adapt, regroup and reimagine much of our everyday lives. Now with Christmas coming, celebrating the birth of Jesus with our men and their families will also be different than any other year. Instead of gathering in one place for an evening of good food, Christmas carols and reunited families, our "gathering" may be a drive-thru with hot cocoa and cookies. But it will be warm and welcoming! We are determined to bring joy, hope, love and some gifts to our men and their precious families. We WILL put smiles on the faces of their children!

As we dream up a plan to do so I want to say thank you for the support you provide all year long and for any help you can offer to brighten Christmas for those the Lord has entrusted to us.

Margo Ely
Program Supervisor



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PRAYER REQUESTS?

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"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace." -Eccl. 3:1-8

And there is a time for 2020 to be gone. What a year it has been. But this newsletter is about hope, love, and victories for our ministry this year. Our prayer for you and your family is that your Thanksgiving and Christmas will be wonderful! We all have so much to be thankful for. We also pray 2021 will bring healing to our land and joy in our hearts.

Rick Souza
Executive Director & C.E.O.



Alex Harden

George Boone

From 2012 to 2016 I traveled the world employed as an acrobat for a major cruise line. It was a fantastically amazing life – truly the opportunity of a lifetime! Of course, attached to that “opportunity” was a non-stop party lifestyle, a culture of new people, new places and excitement completely captured me.

I thought when I left the job I could leave the party lifestyle but I couldn’t shut it off. I had become a full blown alcoholic and chasing the next thrill took me deep into a gambling addiction. Losses on the table drove me to cover my shame by placing the next big bet. If I recovered my losses no one would have to know, right? Fear and anxiety closed in and completely took over. I was trapped and saw no way out.

On October 15, 2019 I walked through the doors of Adult and Teen Challenge and began a journey to freedom. There were plenty of days of kicking and screaming, wondering how I got here and wanting to leave but the support of the staff and my brothers in the program helped me pursue my relationship with God. He has changed the way I think. He has helped me slow down and enjoy life on life’s terms. He reminds me how much I have to be thankful for and resets me when I forget. I have hope. I am no longer controlled by anxiety. I am free. God replaced my self-centered thinking with a love and concern for others. I have experienced a spiritual awakening which would never have happened in the busyness of my old lifestyle.

I’m grateful for the lifelong friendship I developed with George (story below). We entered ATC within hours of each other and finished together in mid-October. We come from very different worlds but the bond we developed was and is a life-giving, stabilizing force! God knew what he was doing when he brought us in together.

There is no way I would have the peace, hope and contentment I now have each day without the opportunity your support gave me this past year. Thank you for standing with me and with my brothers coming behind me! We could not do it without your faithfulness.



I joined a gang in West Los Angeles at 13 years old. Drugs were, of course, a big part of my life but the driving force was to seek revenge for my little sister being raped. The gang life dominated the next 30 years of my life but it never satisfied the rage I felt as her big brother. I started selling guns at the age of 22. I was very “successful” until indicted and charged with gun trafficking resulting in a potential 40 year sentence. I am not proud of my past or of admitting it to you here but unless you know the depth of where my anger and despair took me, you might not understand how life-changing the infinite love of God is for his very lost sheep.

On October 15, 2019 I was accepted into Adult and Teen Challenge. My first 60 days were a real culture shock compared to my past but the truth of God’s Word started to get to me. I had the opportunity to meet with a volunteer counselor here, Kirby Hancock, who led me to the Lord. God used the influence of the staff to break down my bad character traits and build healthy new ones. The inclusive Love of God filled every empty hole in my heart. He is everything I had been looking for. Finding Him, I became more and more eager for real change in my life. Releasing control of my life to God has been a great and awesome adventure. I have been delivered from the pervasive gang mentality of vengeance and violence that had gripped me for years. He has freed me from unhealthy relationships and being caught up in crime.

God also used my brothers here at ATC. Never before would I have brought home to my mother the people I was associating with. But these brothers, because they have allowed God to change them, I can trust with my family. One in particular, Alex (story left), played a huge role in my life. We started and completed together. We were roommates for most of that time. Our backgrounds are nothing alike but that proved to be an asset. The talks we had as we struggled through the drastic changes we both made filled gaps in each of our understanding, making it easier for us both. I am blessed to have walked this out with such a great guy who I consider as close as a blood brother. I have stayed on as a Student Leader at the ranch.

Thank you for believing in us! You have made an incredible difference!

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