



## Atlas Banquet Guests “Experience” the Atlas Ministry



Dave

The First Annual “**Atlas Experience**” Banquet is now history and indeed is a positive addition to the history of Atlas of the Lakes Area. The initial goal for the banquet was to convey the true nature of Atlas (our most difficult task) to our supporters and the Lakes Area Community. The fact is that Christian ministries can relate their mission to supporters and/or community using the best communication techniques possible. But a genuine understanding of how God works through the ministry must be “experienced” by active participation. And this is only possible if you share an actual encounter with other people. Why do I share this nugget of wisdom? Because Tonya and I want everyone to “experience” God’s mighty hand in this tiny ministry in the same way that we are blessed as we share these special times nearly every day.

We approached the banquet program, “**Invisibles**,” differently than any other past Atlas banquets that I have taken part in. We did not cater to new participants who had a limited knowledge of Atlas. Instead, we targeted the whole audience as we revealed as much of the actual “experience” as we could create. Tonya did a marvelous job of making the experience of Atlas come to life for those attending. Her presentation was the best example of “sharing the actual Atlas experience” that we have been able to convey.

I have long known that a first-time ministry banquet will have about 60 people in attendance. Still, we set an optimistic goal at 150 and worked hard to fill the room. We invited many people whose lives, filled with family activities, encountered schedule conflicts. Attendance ended up at 65 with the room pleasantly filled. The same layout could have comfortably handled up to 110 but if we had accomplished our goal of 150, we would have been uncomfortably crowded. Why do I explain this in such detail? Because God’s plan is always better than our human efforts. We are delighted with the 65 people that God brought to us and believe they were hand-picked by Him to be there.

Here are some of the blessings that we sensed in our initial Atlas banquet:

- We had very generous pre-banquet financial gifts for table sponsorships and from donors who do not live in the Lakes Area.
- Through the RSVP process, 46 new families were added to our email list.
- Thirty-eight of the people attending the banquet were new to Atlas.
- Twenty-two new donors gave financial gifts that evening, and 6 others mailed donations since.
- Two people have offered monthly support (helps even our monthly income).
- We were able to reunite with past friends and also make many new ones.
- Tonya’s program, “Invisibles,” genuinely shared the “Atlas Experience” with our guests. (See her poem in this newsletter)

We are delighted with the way God used and continues to use our First Annual “**Atlas Experience**” Banquet to broaden the community’s knowledge of the ministry in the Lakes Area.

## Ministry Newsletter

September 2023

### Our Mission:

Changed Lives Through  
Christian Love and  
Advocacy

### Our Vision:

Fostering Community  
Awareness, Concern, and  
Response to the Needs of  
Area Residents

### Atlas Board

Roland Schmidt  
President

Clay Norris

Vice President

Sandy Kroutl

Secretary

Stacey Ahrenstorff  
Greg Jorgensen

### Atlas Staff

Dave Butterworth

Executive Director

Tonya Kuranda

Ministry Director

### Donate:

By Mail:  
PO Box 201  
Arnolds Park, IA 51331  
or  
Online at:  
[www.lakesatlas.com](http://www.lakesatlas.com)

### Newsletter:

If you would like to be  
taken off the mailing list,  
please notify us at our

### Lakes Area Email

[lakesatlas@gmail.com](mailto:lakesatlas@gmail.com)

### Visit our Webpage:

[www.lakesatlas.com](http://www.lakesatlas.com)

### Thank You:

For your Prayer, Ministry,  
and Financial Support

## God Working in the Atlas Ministry

As we prepared for the banquet a few weeks ago, my main task was to present a program so that those attending could “experience” how God works in the lives of Atlas clients as well as in the actual Atlas ministry. Dave and I bounced ideas off of each other as God prepared not only the program presentation but the agenda for the entire evening. It was an amazing process and I would like to share just one aspect of our preparation.

Do any of you have trust issues? I know I do, often showing up by trying to control outcomes and even success. How little do I truly “rely on” the power of our God? I limit Him to what I humanly grasp and even comprehend. Admitting this is downright embarrassing sometimes. If it weren’t for His endless mercies, I’d be lost in “my way” instead of trusting Him to guide me. I am targeting the word “**Trust**” specifically. When we choose to trust, it is only there where we can experience Him in ways we wouldn’t dream of. Every day, we should yield and place our trust in God but we don’t. Atlas is not our ministry, but His... and you know what, we are learning to trust more and more every day.

Below is a poem that started as my mumbled thoughts and various ways we see God at work here. I kept asking God to help me explain. When I stopped thinking and let Him take over, my hand struggled to keep up with the words flowing out. I have never been a poet, but this offering was written in about 7 minutes, from start to finish. That is our God, and His plans always go before us. My part was yield and trust. That’s it. He did the rest. This poem is a more significant reflection of what happens when we embrace Him and trust the Atlas ministry to Him. Faith in active motion, reflecting His will and plan for us “**IF**” we only choose to trust Him. I hope you enjoy the poem. This will not be the best poem you’ve ever read, but I promise you ...God led the heart. In reality, the Atlas ministry is His thing, not ours.



**Tonya**

### God's Way At Atlas

**When we experience God here, it's unexplainable...**

**People walk in dealing with a crisis but dive in... sharing their heart.**

**They share their struggles and life story with two strangers they just met.  
It's as if they have been dying to be heard or waiting for someone to listen.**

**How can it be in one visit, the world stops, and the flood of God's grace fills this place?**

**Every story is its own, marked with wounds and scars so deep some can't be shown.**

**It's hard to listen to the pain in their voice as they keep sharing and going deeper and deeper.**

**We see tears, cry tears, and often witness breakdowns,  
for His beloved can be real here; it's a safe place ...a place for the mind to let down.**

**It's there where God comforts His children, and we become tools for him to use.  
We see Him work through our words ...we introduce them to the Hope they can't lose.**

**We always pray for God to give them more hope than they had when they walked in the door.  
Their smile and hugs are assurance for that moment, and maybe even more...**

**We ask them to share how God fits into their story.  
We hear every answer you can imagine based on their journey.**

**If allowed the opportunity to share the Hope to which we cling,  
we get to share the trials and life of our King.**

**What a beautiful escapade or dance, if you will...  
With mercy, love, and His Glory revealed.**

**We get pumped, we get hyped, and sometimes overwhelmed,  
That's when we realize we're trying to do it all ourselves.**

**No credit, no blame is our motto at Atlas,  
He gets the praise and carries each client in the crisis.**

**Every appointment is because of Him as they come in for some reason,  
Deep down, we know it's divine intervention.**

**We never know what is coming, it's God's mystery to conceal,  
We just trust Him, there's no reason for Him to reveal.**

**I told you, in the beginning, it's hard to explain,  
the marvel of God's work through what may seem like misery and pain.**

**I thank God for this ministry and for the doors to be open.  
We will continue to love others and, in Christ, place our trust in.**

The miracle of this poem for me is that I wanted to share the broad scope and diversity of what God asks us to do with our clients who share common problems but have a fully unique story. God quickly put the words in my head and then released them in poem form through my pencil. My prayer is that through the offer of this poem, you can all see how each day, with each client, and each situation requires a unique response from the Atlas staff. I also hope that you understand that the variety needed in our responses is provided by God daily.

### **Ministry Interrupts Mission**

While we spent a substantial part of the couple last months on the many aspects of putting on a banquet, we received new client referrals, (22 in that time) and continued to maintain contact with those ongoing clients that were seeking life improvement. Presenting the first Atlas banquet, Tonya and I had substantial help from board members and key volunteers. However, much of the planning, preparation, and RSVP scheduling fell on our shoulders. The ongoing development of the Atlas Ministry, encouraging donations, and communicating the ministry to the Lakes Area community are all very important tasks of the Atlas. These tasks require the investment of significant staff hours.

The mission of providing direction and advocate support to those we meet who are facing some condition of life crisis, continues to be the driving force of what we feel "called" to do each day. We are committed to spending time with anyone who is referred to us and keeps their appointment. We never turn anyone away without having a "life story" session with them. Although we can't always find solutions to the immediate problem, we always provide some form of assistance. Some referrals are only looking for a financial handout, and have not reached the point of seeking bigger solutions, but those represent a very small percentage. The length and type of service that Atlas offers are totally dependent upon how ready and willing each client is to participate in knowing their needs.

We continue to need additional staff to handle the client's needs while we also attend to the needs of the ministry. As we look to 2024, we are poised, based on faith in Christ, to hire additional staff and have the time to do the special training that is necessary for all Atlas staff positions. As always, we trust God to provide in His way and in His time. Thank you for being a part of His plan.

### **Prayer Requests for Atlas:**

- Praise God for the wide-ranging results of the First Annual "Atlas Experience" Banquet.
- Praise Him for the banquet donations that return us to a September break-even position.
- Please pray for expanded use of the banquet program in the community and online.
- Pray for God's financial blessing in the last quarter & year-end to allow for added staff.
- Please pray for Atlas leadership transitions that may be taking place in October.
- Please pray for God's guidance for what new staffing positions to add In 2024.
- Also pray that He continues to clearly lead His choices for those positions to us in His time.
- We offer a huge prayer of thanks for all of the former and new supporters who help us in so many different ways. We could not do what we do without you. Our clients thank you also.