

# May 2021



## Ministry Newsletter

May 2021

### What's Been Happening at Atlas?



Hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, I have spent much of my time completing the office remodel, working on organizational details of the ministry, establishing the board of directors, completing the 501(c)3 non-profit status, developing staff job descriptions, and making some church and agency contacts.

Although limited, I have also had the opportunity to serve some Atlas clients. Atlas regularly sees clients who are at a point of desperation with nowhere to turn. Their often-hopeless situations cause them to reach out for help wherever they can find it. Most often their motivation is simply seeking money to handle an immediate financial crisis. The root problems are always deeper. The path from crisis and trauma to a renewed life is always a difficult one. We simply journey with them as their advocate providing hope for a better life as they seek to make the necessary changes.

### How Do We Define Success – a Single Case Study

Soon after opening the office, my first client was referred to me by Discovery House, a homeless shelter in Spirit Lake. I first met with him in a city park at 1:30 on a Saturday afternoon. Our conversation revealed that he had no money, no transportation (vehicle, license, or insurance), no job. He admitted to being a drug user, although clean for 60 days since being released from jail in Minnesota for an "unfounded" drug sales offense. He was estranged from his family who live nearby and from his wife who was currently living at Discovery House. For the past two weeks he had been imposing on a friend for a place to stay. The friend's parents owned the house and had kicked him out, adding "totally homeless" to his list of problems. He had no options for a place to stay that night.

All he was looking for was someone to help him find a place to sleep that night. A solution to his urgent problem that would only help him for a few hours, but it was his all-consuming, immediate need. Although extreme, this is the type of person that Atlas often attempt to help at their point of crisis. It seemed there was *absolutely nothing* that I could do to help this man beyond providing a cheap motel room, which only delayed his problem for one night. So I prayed and went to work.

I knew the owners of the house where he had been staying, so I contacted them on his behalf and they agreed to allow him five additional days of housing while we worked on his problems. Over the next few days, I attempted to facilitate reconciliation with his parents, which failed. I looked for any local possible housing option and found none. I checked with homeless shelters in a hundred-mile radius and found that none were taking residents due to the COVID virus. Finally, I was able convince the Sioux Falls shelter to accept him. I drove him to Sioux Falls, assuming that his main problem was at least temporarily solved.

We maintained contact and he did well, working as a night pizza cook and saving money to get out of the shelter. After two weeks, he called to tell me that his

### 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

Neil Heiser  
President

Roland Schmidt  
Vice President

Sandy Krout  
Treasurer

Jennifer Hesebeck

### Atlas Staff

Dave Butterworth  
Executive Director

### Donate:

By Mail:  
PO Box 201  
Arnolds Park, IA 51331

### Newsletter:

We will continue to email this Newsletter. If you prefer a mailed copy or would like to be taken off the mailing list, please notify us at [lakesatlas.com](mailto:lakesatlas.com)

### Lakes Area Email

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

### Visit our Webpage:

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

### Thank You:

For your Prayers, Ministry,  
and Financial Support

parole officer had tracked him down to tell him that he was not supposed to have left Iowa. He had until Monday to return. After talking with his parole officer, I found him a placement in a Sioux City shelter that would become available on a first come, first serve basis on the following Tuesday morning. On Monday, I drove to Sioux Falls, picked him up, and delivered him to Sioux City. I rented a motel for him overnight with clear instructions to be first in line the next morning. He was third in line and they only took two.

After receiving this disappointing news and clearing it with his parole officer, I found a placement in Mason City and bought him a bus ticket. After he arrived and settled in, he immediately got a job building pallets. Once again, he was doing well, earning enough money to move out of the shelter and into a rental house. He was so proud to share his success with me as he began to rebuild his self-image and life. **Then our communication abruptly ended.**

Dropped communication most likely means that things are no longer going well and the client has slipped back into harmful patterns from the past. When that happens, all that a mentor can do is to wait for the client to hit a new low and contact us again. Such results often feel a failure for mentors and even a waste of time and money. However, Atlas firmly believes that each such "failure" is a positive step toward the future success in a person's struggle to reclaim a meaningful life. We may not be the ones to see the success, and the others helping when break throughs come will probably never be aware of our contribution, but it is the series of helping hands and a loving God that lead to eventual change in troubled lives.

### **We're Here to Help, One Person at a Time**

This was a difficult encounter for me that ended before a meaningful relationship could be built, but it was well worth the investment of my time, energy, and funds. Each time we experience the discouragement of seeming failure of clients, we also experience the special joy of small successes. Each client follows their own unique path as we carry out the Atlas mission. We find our motivation in God's "call" to help others and to love them in the process. We are also motivated by the fact that, "There but by the grace of God, go we."

### **An Interesting Way to Begin the Atlas Staff Search**

As I begin the essential task of sharing the Atlas ministry with the community, I also am beginning the search for applicants for key staff positions. Job functions as the ministry grows will include staff mentors to work with clients, an administrative assistant who must be a jack-of-all-trades, and possibly even a ministry director who will oversee the complete daily work of the ministry. The first staff position filled will need to perform some or all of these duties as the ministry grows until additional staffing becomes necessary. Hiring this person presents an interesting challenge for the organization and requires faith in God's guidance throughout the search.

As a unique twist, I am seeking people who may be generally interested in either a full or part-time paid ministry position who also have a heart for helping others. At this point I have the flexibility to design the position to fit the applicants rather than the more traditional method of seeking a person to fill an established job. How does one find potential applicants for an undefined job for some time in the future? I first contacted the sixteen churches in the county and asked the pastors for recommendations that fit the general criteria, probably from their congregations. I immediately got a referral, set up an interview, and had a great time discussing the possibilities. She probably is not interested at this time but I made a ministry friend and met a wonderful young lady.

I currently have three more referrals that fit across the spectrum of the undefined position in the future. There is no need for me to hurry this process, and so far, the four possible applicants have jobs and are not particularly seeking a job change. We will simply explore the options together. The process is going just as I had hoped, although I never really thought it would move this quickly. Now I will just enjoy the interview process and patiently watch as God works.

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

**Please pray specifically that God will provide diverse applicants in the interview process, contributing to the overall ministry in ways beyond future staffing.**

**In addition, please pray that opportunities to share the ministry of Atlas with individuals, churches, and agencies will be easily established, well received, and fruitful.**

**And finally, please pray that we will begin to encounter a steady flow of people who need our help.**