



Ministry Newsletter

July 2023

**Staff Time Versus Client Needs - A Delicate Balancing Act**



Dave

Since Atlas of the Lakes Area opened its doors over two and a half years ago, there has been consistent growth in the number of people referred to the ministry for help. The needs also continued to grow until time limitations made it impossible to provide the ongoing quality of help that our mission statement calls for. With the addition of Tonya as Ministry Director, we were again able to provide the quality of ministry service that had once been. But this improvement required a sizeable training investment as we learned together how to best serve our clients.

The growth in client referrals has been consistent over the life of the ministry, but the actual client needs have been anything but evenly spread. For the first seven months of 2023, referrals have increased 67% over 2022. We have been able to handle this increase with the increased staff, but it is not always easy. Last weekend I worked a full day on Saturday before going on a four-day family vacation. I spent much of Monday, our first vacation day, on the phone dealing with Atlas' needs while Tonya was run ragged in the office just trying to get appointments scheduled for the unexpected onslaught of new clients. In that three-day period, we added five new and two existing clients who had become homeless and came to us with all of the contributing problems of that condition. As a staff of two, we are fully taxed with this influx of client cases described above. The original dream for our current office space was four full-time and five part-time Atlas employees. Volunteer Atlas Advocates can expand our capability but that also requires a greater training process. This vision is still years away from being a reality.

Even with that full-sized dream staff, Atlas can only scratch the surface of the problems that are present in the Lakes Area. The bigger solution to the problem is to continue to expand cooperation among the many dedicated helping organizations in the community and encourage more and more individuals to do what they can to help others.

Every major success story that we have experienced is an example of many groups and individuals working together to help one person improve their life and that of their family. The following is such a story and Veronica has been moved to tell her story because of the numerous people who have helped her toward a life of regained hope and a renewed life in Christ.

**Community in Action: Veronica's Personal Story**

My name is Veronica Whiteley, and I am 53 years old. By God's grace, I'm alive today and able to share a little about myself and how Atlas is now a part of my life. Not long ago, I was homeless for 12 years, also an alcoholic struggling with mental health conditions. Honestly, I had given up on myself. My purpose was survival, and my life was out of control.



Veronica & Tonya

**Our Mission:**

Changed Lives Through Christian Love and Advocacy

**Our Vision:**

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

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**Thank You:**

For your Prayer, Ministry, and Financial Support

I came to the Lakes Area in Dec 2021 and moved into Discovery House, where Jessica helped and loved me for 6 months. With a lot of support, I was able to get into an apartment on June 10th of, 2022. I was excited, nervous, and overjoyed to finally have a place to call home.

A friend told me about Atlas and explained it simply by telling me they care about you and want to help. I wanted more in my life but wasn't sure how to get it. I made an appointment and met with Dave and Tonya, who welcomed me with love and acceptance. They wanted to know my "whole story" and they cared. It's been so long since I've shared my story with someone who truly listened with no judgment or condemnation, just love.

Atlas has not only helped me grow internally, but they have also helped me physically. I have gotten a few things from their "paper" pantry when needed. Also, Tonya and Jodi often take me to the UDMO food pantry and spend special time with me. They are true friends.

They have never made me feel like I am burdening them, and I see my friends at Atlas as family. Even though I attend Good News Church (Celebrate Recovery has helped me greatly), Atlas "being the Church" has helped me in many ways. One big area for me has been regaining my courage and bravery. Tonya helped me put my resume together, and I have applied for a part-time job. I haven't gotten a job yet, but God is in control. I don't have a car, which is a big factor when it comes to work, but I have taken several steps to obtain my driver's license again after many years without one.

I feel as though I have been brought back to life if that makes sense. My purpose is no longer just survival, it's now a journey of letting God lead, learning to follow Him, and knowing how much I'm loved. Through God's power, I have now been sober for 19 months!!! I now have the deepest desire and dream to help others in my shoes. I would love to start a Christian Recovery Center to serve and help those who are homeless. It would be a dream to offer equine therapy, along with many other services. I would call the center "Hope Home." It's incredible how God has used Atlas to again plant the seeds of hope and compassion within me. My dream is huge, but with God all things are possible.

Almost weekly, Atlas is involved in my life. This is all in God's plan for me, and it's incredible. Is every day perfect? No, of course not. But on bad days, I have friends to talk to. I have even been able to help out by volunteering at Atlas, which has made me feel so good about myself. There are several other people who have played an important role in my renewed life. Lindsey (Plains Area Mental Health), Shawna (Friend & Mentor), Diane (My Special Prayer Warrior), and Jodi (Volunteer Atlas Advocate) have all contributed to my life change.

Overall, such caring people have been a strong community in the Lakes Area that has helped me take back my life. With Atlas, the relationship is ongoing, honest, grounded in faith, and in some ways, just getting started. I give all the glory to God and thank Him for placing this ministry in my life. Atlas has changed my life, and although I'm a client right now, my goal is to pay it forward and help others in the future.

### **Atlas Current Projected Financial Position**

Our current financial position remains strong but is in need of donations to maintain that strength. Actual expenses for 2022 were \$52,000 which included three months of payroll for the Ministry Director position. 2023 expenses including the full-time Ministry Director and one part-time Female Advocate position are projected at \$93,000. And 2024, with several staff additions is projected at \$150,000 or more. As the ministry grows, so do the ministry's financial needs.

In the first 7 months of 2023, ministry income is up 177%. That is truly amazing but with the increase in ministry costs, we have spent approximately \$13,000 more than we have taken in. This is not a serious problem today because God has provided generous donors as He continues to provide ahead of our actual needs.

For the first time we are facing, a possible shortfall for our 2024 ministry staffing needs. God continues to be very active in the lives of our clients. Other than needing additional advocate help, the Atlas ministry continues to be on fire! The fire of the Holy Spirit.

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

- Pray that we will be able to fully aid the rash of homeless clients that we are now faced with.
- Pray for our preparation for our first annual fundraising banquet which will be September 21 at Maser Monarch Manor. We are trusting that God will direct the outcome of the event.
- Pray for guidance as we consider a Female Advocate position yet this year.