



Ministry Newsletter

September 2021

A One Week Journey from Homelessness to a New Future



On September 3rd a young homeless mother of three was referred to me by David Lyons of Atlas of Spencer because he was out of town. I met with her and heard her life's story, one that was the most devastating of any that I had ever heard. The attitude that she displayed, an unusual acceptance of her situation, was unique and certainly not typical of most people Atlas seeks to serve.

What happened in the next week was a remarkable cooperative effort by ministries, government agencies, and individuals that transformed this woman from a life crisis situation of homelessness to having a home and a renewed hope for a continuing improved life into the future. The story is much too long to relate in a short newsletter but the change in her situation and the cooperation provided for this to be accomplished is highlighted as follows:

- Her request for help was received and referred by Atlas of Spencer.
- Atlas of the Lakes Area assessed her situation, contacting sources of help.
- When she became homeless, she had contacted Clay County General Relief who referred her to Atlas of Spencer and Upper Des Moines Opportunity housing assistance which could provide funding for emergency housing.
- Atlas of the Lakes Area contacted Lakeshore Center on Okoboji and set up three days of emergency housing (a shared Atlas and Lakeshore project).
- Key people from these four organizations remained in close contact.
- A special donor was recruited to provide funds for renewing her expired auto license plates. She was also given gas cards donated by a local church and food from the food party of another local church.
- A home was located by CCGR, ready for lease if funding was approved.
- Her case was referred to Upper Des Moines Opportunity for the funding.
- UDMO provided that initial rental funding and suggested numerous other sources of helpful aid.
- A mentor was recruited (actually 2 accepted invitations) to walk with her as she seeks renewal for a better life going forward.
- Through the whole process her relationship with Christ was encouraged, prayer was shared, and a search for a church home encouraged. This will be the ongoing support role of her mentor.
- She immediately offered to become a volunteer for Atlas and share her experience with others to provide hope in their situations.

This story has two amazing outcomes. First, this family has gone from homeless to having a house and from despair to hope. Second is the weaving of committed people in a variety of organizations. Not all communicated with her directly but all played a role in the process. Not all could share Christ with her but all were motivated by Him as they worked diligently to provide for her needs.

This encounter was a secular and a spiritual success only made possible through the intervention of God. Very few contacts with clients are so fully supported and result in such quick success, but every contact holds the potential for future unknown and unseen potential life changes for each client.

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 Prayers,
Ministry, and Financial
Support

Ministry Progress on Two Fronts

Since opening the Atlas office in February the ministry has slowly expanded services to clients referred by churches, agencies, and word of mouth. That total stands at a dozen client opportunities, mostly since June. These client contacts have resulted in one great success as demonstrated in the newsletter opening case study. On the opposite end of the spectrum are some situations where several attempts to meet with a referral resulted in no contact and eventually giving up on that possibility unless it is again initiated by the client. A dozen potential clients in 3 ½ months may not be impressive, but the growth and increasing flow of clients has been good, time consuming, and rewarding. This represents significant progress toward the **Atlas Mission**.

Another major area of ministry progress is the development of new cooperative programs to provide services that have not been previously available to Lakes Area residents. There are four such programs in various stages of development. One program has been proposed, accepted, and utilized twice with a third possibility now pending. The other three are proposed and are still in their infancy as far as becoming a reality. All programs to benefit the people of our community must begin with the vision being introduced to and accepted by the people who have the ability to make things happen. That is the current stage of development of the other three programs. All four programs potentially contribute to the **Atlas Vision** and are summarized as follows:

- A cooperative venture by Lakeshore Center, Atlas of the Lakes Area, and Atlas of Spencer to provide emergency housing has been approved by the Camping Council and is experimentally underway.
- A cooperative venture between the Dickinson County Ministerial Association and Atlas of the Lakes Area for distribution of benevolence funds has been discussed.
- Dickinson County and Atlas of the Lakes Area are considering the possibility of a proposed program to identify and fund overdue rent payments, reduce evictions, and support landlords.
- Atlas of the Lakes Area has designed a project and is just beginning discussions with companies and individuals to provide loaner vehicles, vehicle ownership, and vehicle repair to qualified Atlas clients.

What is the Source of Ministry Provision?

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

I have long believed that all we have belongs to God and is a gift from Him. That belief continues as I wait for His provision for the Atlas of the Lakes Area ministry. I have also always believed that God provides for ministry as there is need, and I have often said that if you desire additional funding, identify additional needs.

God's provision doesn't just appear, although often it comes in surprising ways. Humanly it comes from churches, organizations, and grants but primarily through individuals who are moved by God to provide what is needed to accomplish His purposes. The Bible verse above, of course, is a reference to much more than just financial needs, much in the same way that becoming a part of the Atlas ministry partnership includes several opportunities beyond financial contributions.

The primary need for expanding the Atlas Ministry is the addition of administrative staff to both "do" and "share" ministry mission and vision. Operating as we are today with no payroll expense the annualized budget is only about \$20,000. Since our inception, God has provided all Atlas ministry and office startup costs, the monthly expenses, and a consistent 6-month backlog of funding which has always surpassed our needs. Providing for our anticipated staffing needs requires hiring a Ministry Director and an Administrative Assistant. The payroll and related expenses for quality staff will increase the annual budget to approximately \$120,000.

I simply present this need and ask if God may be speaking to you to be a part of the solution. Or are you just grateful for His generosity to you and willing to share a small part with those who have not been so blessed. More in depth information about Atlas of the Lakes Area is available on our webpage at www.lakesatlas.com. I have had conversations with a variety of people who are satisfied with their current jobs but who have been willing to explore with me the possibility of becoming involved as full or parttime paid staff with Atlas. We all wait for God's hand in the process. Part of that direction has to be some demonstration of funding. To proceed requires sincere faith which is challenged by our humanness. We continue to seek God's will and direction.

Prayer Requests for Atlas:

- **Praise for the blessing and growth in the lives of current clients that are we serving.**
- **Please pray for God's will, direction, and funding for administrative staff positions.**