



October/November/December 2007



Hoskins Park Ministries Newsletter



the story of

A FREE MAN

2 **Financial Needs** Growth

3 **Life Transformation Plans** The Unique Approach of HPM

4 **A Free Man** Edwin Freeman

6 **A Birthday to Remember**



A Word from the Executive Director

Welcome to the first quarterly newsletter of Hoskins Park Ministries! Whether you are just learning about us for the first time or are a long time supporter, we are excited to be able to communicate our work for the poor and homeless in a concise and understandable manner to you. We know this is important, particularly since we feel our approach is a bit unique. And remember, you matter! At least you do to us. Mother Teresa once said, "We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop." The point, your drop matters to us regardless of how large or small it is. So thank you for reading!

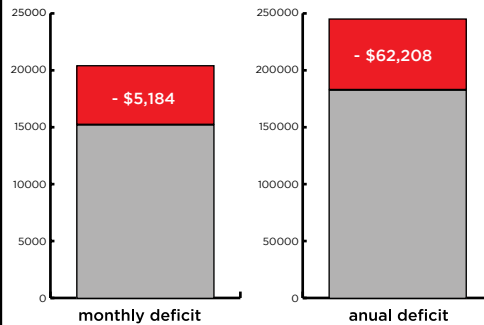
I'd also want to take this opportunity to thank Seeds of Hope for their recent donation to our ministry. We have used their funds to purchase three additional houses for Hoskins Park. We now have 12 properties as part of our ministry, serving about 40 people! So thanks to all those associated with Seeds of Hope. You truly are storing up treasures in Heaven. You are making a big difference in the lives of these men. So thank you! And Jesus, we are most grateful to you for allowing us to join you in your work. We do not think we have done this on our own and we are humbled by the grace you display in our lives and in the lives of those we serve. We trust you and continue to look forward to seeing the amazing work of Your Spirit.

In His Service,

-Tom Wheeler

FINANCIAL NEEDS

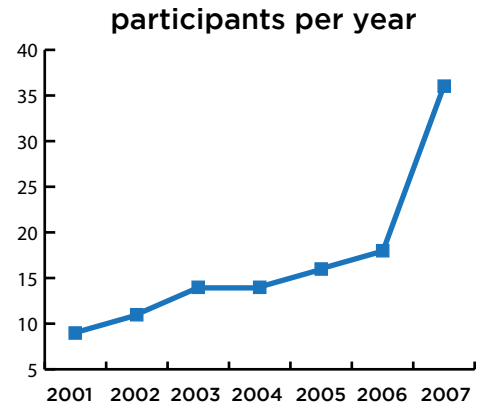
The current monthly budget of Hoskins Park is approximately \$20,395 per month or \$244,740 per year. Our current monthly revenue, from rent and donations, is approximately \$15,211 per month or \$182,532 per year. That leaves us a monthly deficit of \$5,184 per month or \$62,208 per year.



Salaries are \$126,000 per year for 6 employees, with the highest salary at \$27,000. As you might expect, these numbers are far below average for organizations in our field (this number would increase to approximately \$187,000 if we approached industry averages for this kind of work).

With an average of 32 participants, our budget translates into costing about \$7,600 per year, per person. In comparison to prison, to give you a figure to compare our figure against, it

costs about \$20,000 per year to keep a person behind bars, according to an article by Bradford Plumer (Mother-Jones, March 7, 2005). In fact, even if our numbers doubled, we would still be under the normal average to help those who are homeless, have mental illness, and or are addicted to either drugs or alcohol.



Regarding our donors, we have approximately 20 consistent monthly donors representing approximately \$3,500 per month or 23% of our total revenue. Rent collection is approximately \$6,700 per month or 44% of our income. Roughly \$5,000 per month or \$60,000 comes from sporadic donors. ■

Update!

Thanks to all of you who have answered our request for additional financial help! We now have close to 40 committed monthly donors (up from 20)! Furthermore, while our overhead has increased to approximately \$23,000 per month (from \$20.4k), the giving has grown as well. We are still behind about \$4000 per month due to our support of Blessings in The Storm, but we know God will provide. So thanks to all of you who continue to help God's least at Hoskins Park Ministries! We appreciate you more than you know! -Tom

LIFE TRANSFORMATION PLANS

The Unique Approach of HPM

by Tom Wheeler

Hoskins Park Ministries (HPM) has an identify crisis, at least when we are asked to define ourselves for news articles or to other organizations in Charlotte. We don't seem to fit into the standard facilities that have been formalized by the city. Many want to characterize us as a Shelter, Halfway House, Group Home, Church or Recovery Program. But that is not really who or what we are, although we are humbled to be compared to any of the higher quality organizations like those mentioned that are represented in the city. More accurately, I think we are a little bit of all of them with our uniqueness accentuated by our Life Transformation Plans. Let me explain.

“Our men live in “homes” rather than a “facility,” and we have an individualized plan for all our participants.”

HPM provides shelter for over 30 men, but we are smaller than a typical “shelter.” Our men live in “homes” rather than a “facility,” and we have a program for all our participants. We also have a higher staff to participant's ratio. Like a Halfway House HPM allows its participants to work and have some flexibility with their schedule but we are really not a Halfway House. We are more intentional at seeing the lives

of our participants transformed and we help in that process. HPM serves a group of men but we are not a Group Home since we have 12 different houses and a very diverse group of people. HPM preaches the word to its participants on a daily basis, even providing Sunday morning “church” for our participants, but we are not really a Church since most churches do not house their attendees. HPM has its own approach to recovery, since the majority of our participants are struggling with drugs or alcohol, but we don't have a formal “recovery” program other than loving these men the way God loves each of us. Although we fully support the organizations just mentioned, Hoskins Park's approach to helping the poor and homeless is a bit different. And our Life Transformation Plan's define that uniqueness.

These customized plans allow us to look at the individuals specific needs, develop goals and strategies to improve the quality of their life while monitoring progress as we live with and amongst those we serve. It covers anything from counseling to credit problems, help on mending broken relationships to job skills and resources. Additionally, each participant has a Life Coach that assists them through the entire program, monitoring and holding each participant accountable for his plans, goals and actions. These plans have 5 levels. Each level in this program is assigned requirements, boundaries, time frames and then incentives to completion. After completion of each level the incentives increase along with more freedom. Once all five levels are completed it is recommended by the staff that a participant graduate from the Ministry out on his own. The time frame is different for each man and there is no limit on how long one can stay.

[Continued on page 7](#)

INTRODUCING RICK SCHMITT

We are pleased to introduce Rick Schmitt to our staff, serving as HPM's Assistant Program Director. In this position Rick will work directly with Johnny Allen on the Life Transportation plans for our participants. Mr. Schmitt comes to us from another ministry serving God's least, “Gather Up The Fragments,” where Rick served as Executive Director under the leadership of Bishop James Houston. Previous to Gather Up Rick worked as a Discipleship Counselor at Grace Life International. Prior to his ministry positions, Mr. Schmitt had his own successful landscape company called “Olde Style Landscape,” which he ran for 12 years. Rick is also a former Navy man having enlisted in the Navy in 1976 as a Hospital Corpsman and discharged in 1980 after serving his 4 year term. He is a 1995 graduate of Columbia Bible College (Columbia, SC), where he received a Bachelors of Science degree. Rick accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior in 1987 and says it completely changed his life in a positive way. He is married to Marie Bowles (whom he met in church) and they have two adopted children, Hannah, 8, and Micah, 6. Rick was ordained in 1996 as a Minister of the Gospel under Steele Creek Church of Charlotte.

Please join us in welcoming Rick to our team at Hoskins Park Ministries! We are grateful to God for bringing Rick to us!





A Free Man

this is edwin

It has been over a year since I lived in the chilling darkness that constantly surrounds a drug addict. Since I totally surrendered my life to Jesus Christ and understood my identity as a child of God rather than as an addict. It has been over a year since I did crack cocaine. It's been over a year since I arrived at Hoskins Park Ministries. I am now a free man and I give all the praise and glory to God!

This is my story.

by Edwin Freeman

God's Faithfulness

I grew up in Osceola, Arkansas - the youngest child of a middle class family with one brother and two sisters. I am the baby. My mom and dad were upstanding citizens (my father was on the school board and my mom was a teacher) and my parents were good moral role models. In fact, neither of them smoked cigarettes or drank alcohol. Our family regularly attended church and my parents were firm believers in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. As a result, I believed that as well. And it paid off. I am an Eagle Scout. During High School I got A's and B's. I was the state Vice President of the 4-H club. I won numerous talent shows for singing and woodworking. I won an award from NASA for a science project. I played varsity tennis and I played the trumpet in the band. I also started a band and even recorded a couple songs! Not bad, really! But then there was the subtle dark side brewing as I began to follow the world rather than Jesus. I was shy and discovered that beer made it easier to talk to girls. My older brother was also drinking and I wanted to be like him. So I began to drink. I was 15.

College Life

Spiritually, as mentioned, I believed in Jesus, and even attended and participated in Church. But God was more of a distant figurehead than a Heavenly Father. I guess you could say I was one of those carnal Christians, still living in the flesh (my feelings) without understanding the importance of depending on God's Spirit. But I knew God was protecting me. In fact I remember falling off the roof of a house one time, flipping in mid air, and landing just next to a dangerous fence, on my feet! On another occasion I was driving down the road at about 70 mph when a car spun out in front of me. I was literally watching the car in front of me spin right before my eyes at 70 mph. I even caught the eyes of the driver in front of me, looking straight at me, as she spun in a 360 degree circle (as if in slow motion), and yet we never hit. It was another of those events in ones life that makes you know,

for certain, that God was involved and protecting me supernaturally. But even with events like that happening in my life, I continued to live the way I wanted without regard to my so-called “faith.”

After I graduated from High School I went to the University of Arkansas. And in good college fashion, I partied. In fact, a lot of my time was going to parties and drinking. I was also introduced to marijuana and started smoking that as well. As a result my grades fell to B’s and C’s while my social life blossomed. It was during this time that I met the woman who was to become my wife. Our dating was fairly typical of college life, until my girlfriend got pregnant with my first child, Edjuan Lamar Freeman. Since my girlfriend already had one child from a previous relationship, I was now taking care of two kids. As a result I decided I had to drop out of school, get a job and get married. So, I did just that. I dropped out of school and married her. Soon thereafter we had my second child (her third), my daughter, Andrea. I was 21 years old.

Married with Children

As newlyweds we had three young children and hardly any money. That meant we both had to work so we did

kids with her leaving me alone and without any hope. It was during that time, when I was hurting the most in my life, when someone offered me cocaine, crack cocaine. I had avoided crack before, but this time I needed something to kill the pain. I would have taken anything, quite frankly, but my friend offered me crack. I took a hit and was instantly hooked. I did not want to stop using. Although I may have thought I had already hit bottom, losing my family as I did, the bottom just got lower. I cried myself to sleep every night for over a year. I wanted to kill myself. In fact, one time I tried. One night I grabbed some of my fathers poison. My dad was a horticulturist at the time so he had all kinds of poison around, and I set out the poison to ingest it. Sitting in front of a mirror, wanting to die but without the ability to go through with it. I cried out to God and told him I would quit drugs – at least I would never stop trying to quit. I promised I wouldn’t ever commit suicide too. That is when the cycle of treatment began in my life.

At some point during this period my sister sent me the book, “This Present Darkness.” It is about a town that is trying to be taken over by Satan and his angels of darkness while God and His angels of light protect the town

from the enemy. Although it is fiction, I learned that this could be a close biblical representation of what we are all going through on earth. It suggests we are all in a spiritual war here on earth. Satan wants to destroy us and God wants to save us.

The Cycle of Rehab

Fiction or not I believed the book and my eyes were opened to the real battle I was fighting over my life. Even so, I struggled with the cycle of treatment into my mid-thirties. I’d go to a treatment program, stop using for 6 or 7 months, start again, and then go back to treatment. Since it was not working I decided to go to Bible school. I thought the only way I would get over my addiction was to get close to God, as close as I could, and studying His word would help in that process. While I was at bible school I did fairly well but the financial burdens forced me to work. Then I relapsed and eventually dropped out. After another run on drugs I ended up in the Detox facility in Charlotte, NC. My cycle was continuing as it had been for over 10 years. After Detox I was homeless and ended up at the Uptown Men’s shelter. It was 2005. I stayed in the shelter for over a year until I relapsed again and ended up at a ministry called Second Adam. I was

[Continued on page 7](#)

Programs play an important role in life, but they were not the solution for my life.

I HAD TO SURRENDER

not have much time for our marriage. Thinking back, it was a marriage doomed from the start, but we tried to make it work as best we could. At least until I found out my wife was cheating with my best friend. That was quite a blow to me and to our relationship. Even worse was the fact I went to the church for help with her cheating and found out that my wife had also had some sexual contact with the associate pastor at our church.

The Final Blow

I was hurt worse than I ever had been before. My wife and I separated soon after that incident. She took the



A BIRTHDAY TO REMEMBER



by Vickie Brammer

How do you make service a way of life? I believe it is through teaching and modeling. I was most impressed when a former student and recent college grad called to say she had an hour after work before her dinner date so she was running over to work at the soup kitchen. I don't know about you, but if I have an hour between appointments, I hit the nearest Starbucks. But for Amy, it was something she had done since early childhood. It is how she thinks.

I want serving others to be ingrained in my own kids so I started with my son's first birthday. I invited all our friends to meet us at Hoskins Park—a Christian ministry that serves men in crisis.

*Dear Friends,
I would like to invite you to join us in celebrating Michael's First Birthday. If you've been in my playroom lately, you are well aware that my kids have toys! We have decided to have his party at Hoskins Park—a service that*

provides housing/education for homeless men. Hoskins Park currently houses 32 men in 8 houses. They are totally dependent on donations. See below for a list of items they need. My plan is to meet at 107 Cromer Street at 11:00 on Saturday, July 21. We will have pizza and cupcakes with the men. Frank has been working with them for about 8 months now and also developed their website.

Please let me know if you can attend. If you can't make it, feel free to drop donations off at my house and we will take them on July 21.

We set up tables, chairs, and a big tent and provided pizza, sandwiches,

drinks and cake. The kids had fun running around the yard, listening to Randy sing, and playing dominoes with a group of men. If you walked onto the property during the 2 hours we were there, I would challenge you to pick out who was "serving" and who was "being served."

I am happy to say that we left the party without toys, there were no goodie bags for kids, and many hearts were softened as a result of eating pizza and cake with people not so different from ourselves. And my kitchen was still clean when I got home.

One of my friends asked me a few days later why I didn't just do the party at my own house and tell people to bring donations instead of gifts. She said, "no offense, but it didn't seem like we were really doing anything for them". I explained in Tom Wheeler's words that these men need people to "just show up."

I plan to do all my kids' parties as service events in the future. Initially, this was a little out of my comfort zone. The men in my life group have been working with Hoskins Park for some time now, but I keep telling the women that this is not where we will serve. The biggest thing for me was God opening my eyes and letting me see that it was ok to take the kids there on a Saturday afternoon. I've had several people contact me in the past week to say they have friends who want to know how to help Hoskins Park—this is all because people who attended the party have been out in the community talking about it. All we really did was show up and join God in a place where He is already working. ■

"I want serving others to be ingrained in my own kids so I started with my son's first birthday."

“As we see it, our Life Transformation Plan’s are not as much a program as a process. We are simply the instruments God is using, to help these guys find His way rather than their own.”

The minimum time frame is typically a year while the maximum could be five years.

The first step with a potential participant is to interview them to find out if we are a mutually good fit for HPM. If they pass a medical screen, are physically able to work, have a strong desire to seek God’s plan for their lives rather than their own, and sincerely want help, we typically admit them into our ministry. Then we have an evaluation process that includes an assessment of their basic physical needs (food, clothing, housing & medical issues), an assessment of their employment situation (do they have a job or need one?), as well as a personal faith evaluation to understand where they are with God. Upon completion of these evaluations we then move on to goal setting. We start with their long-term spiritual and personal goals. Together we derive where they want to be in 1-2 years, acting more of a catalyst with our participants rather than actual goal setters. Once they have decided their long-term goals we break them down into short and medium goals. And finally we break them down into tasks for the following week. This allows them to focus on today, while having a target for tomorrow.

For the first 4-8 weeks we do a review of the tasks that were set, which we call a Life Transformation Review, where we assess how they are doing according to the goals and tasks that they have set with our guidance. During this review we find out whether they are progressing towards their goals or not and whether they are in compliance with our guidelines. And based on that review they are put into different levels, from 1-5. If they consistently fail to meet our guidelines or follow

their plan, we decide whether they can continue to stay in the ministry or not or get reduced to another level. We are very forgiving but ultimately, just like when we deal with a family member, we must ensure we are not enabling our folks to continue to act in an unhealthy manner, which ultimately can affect others in a negative manner and hurt their own growth.

As we see it, our Life Transformation Plan’s are not as much a program as a process. We are simply the instruments God is using, to help these guys find His way rather than their own. And however we may be viewed from the outside, we believe the family model is the biblical model we are following. We have 3 of our 5 staff living with our men, 24/7. We eat with them, sleep in the same houses with them, bump into each other in our free time, hang out, pray and worship together, and deal with life’s up’s and down’s, together. When we look at the life of Jesus as is expressed in Scripture, it appears we are following His model rather than our own. And that is why we do what we do – for His glory! ■

A Free Man continued

there about 5 months until I relapsed again. I went back to Detox. I was talking with someone at Detox when I was given Doug Taylor’s phone number, from Hoskins Park Ministries. I told Doug everything about me and he was patient enough to listen to my story, for about 3 days straight! Since there was no room at Hoskins Park I walked around all night and I made a promise to God that I wouldn’t do drugs ever again, no matter what. I surrendered that night! I must have walked 7 or 8 miles praising God, thanking God and promising Him I would follow Him. I believe my life changed when I totally surrendered my life to God. The next day there was an opening at Hoskins Park Ministries and I was invited in. That was May of 2006. It’s been over one year and I have not relapsed since.

Although I believe God changed my heart the moment I surrendered to him on the street, I believe God led me to a place where He could love me, using His people so that I could grow in Him. Hoskins Park is a diverse ministry where race or color do not matter, as evidenced by the leaders of the ministry. I was willing for change to happen in my life and Hoskins Park is the place God led me for that change to develop. And it has. I am treated like God’s child here rather than being judged as a drug addict. That does not mean I do not know the continuing threat of drugs in my life, and that does not mean the leaders do not understand the importance of staying the course, but the atmosphere is more like a family than a program. Programs play a role in life, but they were not the solution for my life. I had to surrender. And once I surrendered, I needed to be in a place where Jesus Christ could love me. He loves me through these men. And now, as a leader myself, I try to do the same to those who, just like me, are struggling to be set free. I can now truly be what my name means, a free man! To Christ Be The Glory! ■

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

† **Prayer support.**

We need prayer warriors!

† **Financial support.**

HPM has over doubled in the past 12 months and we need a lot of financial help to accommodate the growth of our staff. If you were considering a donation or considering becoming a monthly contributor, now would be a great time to help us out! Send your donation to: Hoskins Park Ministries, 107 Cromer Street, Charlotte, NC 28208. You can also donate on our web-site, HoskinsPark.Org. Just look for the button for "Paypal."

† **Items for our multi-purpose pantry.**

HPM has a pantry that needs filling! We need paper towels, toilet paper, canned goods, laundry detergent, dish-washing liquid, salt and pepper, coffee, misc. toiletries, plastic bags (all sizes), and other things you might have in your own pantry! You can bring them to 107 Cromer Street if you have any items to donate.

† **Dressers.**

We still need about 10 single dressers to be used by our participants. They can be large or small, we don't mind. Just let us know if you have them and we can arrange to pick them up (tawheeler@truevine.net).

† **MS Windows and MS office for PC's..**

We need one copy of Windows and MS office for up to 6 computers.

† **Two Vans.**

Often times we need to transport 30 of us from place to place. We really could use a couple vans (or a bus) to handle this need. That would be a great help to us!

† **Life Groups to cook & serve during the week.**

We have about 25 Life Groups supporting Hoskins Park. But we could use a lot more! Our long term objective is to provide dinner every week night. We are going to rely on Life Groups to be a major part of that effort.

† **Volunteer Medical Doctor or Nurse.**

We always have medical issues we need to run by a professional. If you are a doctor or nurse or if you know someone that could help us, please let me or them know.

If you or your life group want to help, please contact:

Bill Dinkel (BillDinkel@aol.com)

Tom Wheeler (tawheeler@truevine.net)

Paige Vestal (paige@appliedsuccess.net)

Thanks! We know God will provide!



PLEASE DONATE

Hoskins Park Ministries

As the Lord enables, for the year 2007.....

I / we commit to the above needs with financial support in the following amount(s):

\$25 monthly \$50 monthly \$75 monthly \$100 monthly other monthly

My/our email address is: _____

Please add my/our name to the Hoskins Park Ministries mailing list.

Name () _____
Phone Number

Street

City / State / Zip Code

Hoskins Park Ministries / hoskinspark.org / 107 Cromer Street, Charlotte, NC 28208

Tom Wheeler, Executive Director - tawheeler@truevine.net Johnny Allen, Program Director - Hoskinspark@truevine.net

Donations are accepted on-line at HPM's website using "Paypal." HOSKINSPARK.ORG