



HEART OF HOPE  
MINISTRIES

# Hope is coming home to Giving Hope House!



**Heart of Hope Ministries couldn't be more proud to welcome Mr. David Staples as our first resident of our Giving Hope House!**

David came to us with 5 letters of recommendation from Augustana College professors excited to tell of this man's journey from 29 years of wrongful incarceration. David was released from East Moline Correctional Center in August of 2022 through the work of the Illinois Innocence Project. The Augustana College professors spoke of his strength of character in the face of spending most of his 55 years behind bars. David was in the first class that Augustana professor Dr. Sharon Varallo launched at the East Moline Correctional Center.

Dr. Sharon is happy to share with others that her own journey with the criminal justice system and a close family member revealed to her that the justice system is not always just. She realized that families that don't have the financial means to hire attorneys are often lost victims in a system that doesn't always work. She was moved to action and took steps to begin to advocate for those who have no voice or means to better their futures. She convinced the Illinois Department of Corrections to allow her to set up college courses at East Moline Correctional Center. In 2021, the Augustana Prison Education Program (APEP) enrolled 10 students with 9 Augustana faculty eager to teach. Now, for the 2022-2023 college year, 24 students are enrolled, and 18 faculty members are teaching.



*Dr. Sharon Varallo,  
Augustana Prison  
Education Program  
Director*



*David Staples in a classroom at  
Augustana College.*

Dr. Sharon encourages readers to watch Ken Burn's documentary "College Behind Bars." David Staples plans to graduate in May of 2024 with a BA in Psychology. He wants to continue his education and obtain a doctorate to become a Counselor and help others who may have encountered some of the same life challenges that he has.

David also has skills in Heating and Air Conditioning and Electrical work. He is a wonderful addition to the Heart of Hope Ministries Team. We will be partnering with Augustana's APEP to welcome another gentleman in a few weeks. A third young man is expected to be welcomed into our Giving Hope House in a few months. A great big **THANK YOU** to all of you who helped make this house a home that is transforming lives!

Our Giving Hope House is giving Hope and Healing to the Hurting and providing opportunities that **empower** individuals to become self-sufficient, and **equipping** future generations for success.

## IN THIS ISSUE:

- Driving Blessings Forward! ..... Pg. 2
- Save the Date! ..... Pg. 3
- Have you got a Heart of Gold?..... Pg. 4
- Will you help us help those in need? ..... Pg. 4



*Help us help others!*

**Cash App:** \$HEARTOFHOPEQC

**Venmo:** HOHQ

**PayPal:**

HeartofHope.HOH@gmail.com

**Mail a donation:** 1740 9th Ave,  
Rock Island, IL 61201

## Driving Blessings Forward!

It is a wonderful, blessed event when we get to be a part of the biblical word of God come alive and manifest in our daily lives in our service to the Lord. We, here at Heart of Hope, experience this daily by simply feeding and clothing people in a time of need or by being of service to the less fortunate. We had an opportunity to experience this "living word" yet again come alive in our attempt to sell our ministry van. The word of God says in Matthew 10:8 Freely you have received, freely give.

Here is a little back story: Several years ago, as Heart of Hope was growing in its outreach to the community, we found ourselves in need of a van to transport youth to different activities, to help with transporting food etc.... As we were looking to purchase something we could afford, a longtime friend of Pastor Lynda's named Claudia Lewis Hughes decided to donate a van to us, driving it to us, all the way from Memphis, Tennessee. The van was a blessing and well used in Kingdom work for several years here at Heart of Hope. Fast forward now to present day.

We have been blessed by many, namely Alfred St. Baptist Church and are now able to purchase a new van, so we decided to put our old van up for sale. As soon as we put the word out there, calls began to come in with people interested in buying, but the very first call came from a gentleman named Kevin who was super excited, telling us that He has been praying for God to provide a van for their youth ministry called Incredible Kids in Morris, IL. Kevin was willing to buy the Van from us. He began to describe the growing burden of having a "way" to pick up these youth twice a month, it was only him and a couple other congregants of Bethlehem Christian Church (where the kids meet) carrying the load of picking up the children ages kindergarten – 5th grade in their own vehicles. They desperately needed a van and were convinced this was the van God had promised. As Kevin was explaining their youth program and goal to reach as many kids teaching them the gospel, worship, evangelism, faith, hope & love.

Holy Spirit whispered in our ears **Matthew 10:8 –Freely you have received, freely give.** And that is exactly what we did. On April 25th Pastor Pat Lohse of Bethlehem Christian Church and Kevin Asbell of Incredible Kids came to Heart of Hope to pick up their new Ministry Van free of charge. Hallelujah!



Then

*Pictured from 2015 is Claudia Hughes, Pastor Lynda Sargent, and Nikki Lewis in front of this 2001 Dodge Ram 15-passenger van that they drove all the way from Memphis, Tennessee to surprise us with!*

*What a blessing "Big Bertha" has been over the 8 years she was gifted to us! We will begin our Neighborhood Youth Ministry again this summer and are currently looking for a newer model van.*



Now

*Pictured above is Kevin Asbell (Leader of Incredible Kids Ministry), Celia Rodriguez (Heart of Hope Office Manager), Pastor Lynda Sargent, and Pastor Pat Lohse of Bethlehem Christian Church in Morris, IL.*

*"Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together and running over shall men give unto your bosom."*

Stay Connected with Heart of Hope Ministries on Facebook! @Facebook/HOHQC

1740 9th Avenue, Rock Island, IL 61201 • (309) 428-4752 • [HeartOfHopeQC.org](http://HeartOfHopeQC.org)

# SAVE THE DATE!



♥ Saturday, June 3rd Community Love Fest

♥ Thursday, November 2nd, our 2nd Annual Dinner Gala (seeking sponsorships!)



**Special Thanks** to the Rock Island Rotary Club for their 2023 Community Service Award! We so greatly appreciate their continued support of our services to the community! Many of the members have volunteered over the years.

## Thank you!

to everyone who helped us raise around \$6,000 for our Food Pantry by attending or donating to our 2023 Trivia Night! We can't do what we do without you!



Guests had a great time answering questions and helping us to help others! Be sure to watch for next year's Trivia Night, and please join us for the fun!



Heart of Hope Board Secretary, Meecheeca McNeal and Office Manager, Celia Rodriguez welcome our guests to our 2023 Trivia Night Fundraiser on March 25th.



Heart of Hope Ministries  
**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

**SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY**

CALL US OR STOP IN FOR MORE INFORMATION (309) 428-4752 1740 9TH AVE ROCK ISLAND

**DID YOU KNOW?**

That due to a recent new federal policy, last month all Illinois SNAP households saw their benefits decrease. This along with rising food costs, means that many households are struggling to get food on the table.

*Will you help us help those in need?*

- ◆ **The cost of food we purchase from River Bend Food Bank has more than TRIPLED between January to April of 2022 and the same period in 2023! River Bend Food Bank has experienced this increase themselves, and have had to pass it on to the Food Pantries.**
- ◆ **Our delivery truck gas and maintenance costs also have increased.**
- ◆ **50% of the families we serve receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) benefits. This program reduced their assistance to individuals and families in March of 2023, after the ending of the Temporary Pandemic SNAP Benefit increase.**
  - ◆ These federal changes impact two million people in Illinois.
  - ◆ SNAP emergency allotments have been issued since the beginning of the Covid-19 public health emergency to address food insecurity challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. These increased benefits will end after February 2023 and return to pre-pandemic levels in March. With the end of emergency benefits, SNAP participants will see benefits reduced anywhere from \$95 to \$250 per person per month.

◆ **WE HAVE HAD TO STOP OUR DELIVERIES TO TWO OF THE SENIOR HOUSING COMPLEXES IN MOLINE AND EAST MOLINE BECAUSE WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FOOD AND/OR FRIDAY DELIVERY DRIVERS.** THEY ARE CALLING ASKING TO COME PICKUP FOOD, BUT WE ARE RUNNING OUT ON THURSDAY EVENINGS DUE TO INCREASE IN THOSE COMING TO OUR THURSDAY EVENING FOOD PANTRY.

◆ **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** PLEASE CONSIDER SENDING A DONATION NOW OR BECOMING A MONTHLY SUPPORTER SO WE DON'T HAVE TO TURN ANYONE IN NEED AWAY!

**POVERTY WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY**

- ◆ The 2020 Census discovered that 21.7% of Rock Island residents live at or below the national poverty rate. This has increased from the 19.8% listed in Welfareinfo.com in 2019. We are going the wrong direction, with few resources to change the tide!
- ◆ Heart of Hope has provided food and toiletry items to over 77,000 individuals since opening our food pantry on May 1st, 2014.
- ◆ 48% of those we serve are children under the age of 18.
- ◆ Over 75,000 pounds of food has been distributed between January and April of this year.
- ◆ 1,398 elderly and disabled individuals have had food box deliveries to their homes between January and April of this year.

**Special Partners:**

- ◆ Little Caesar's
- ◆ Midwest Food Bank
- ◆ River City Church
- ◆ Hy-Vee Food Stores
- ◆ Riverbend Food Bank
- ◆ Royal Neighbors of America