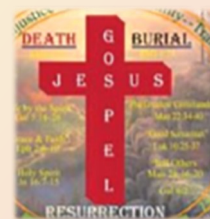




# \*\*\* THE MIRACLE NEWS \*\*\*



## 15 Stories from 15 Years

### Personal Accounts of God's Miracles in Our Ministries by Paul Kruse

First Step Back Home celebrates 15 years of ministry this month! I thought it would be nice to reflect on 15 success stories, one for each year. We take no credit for them. All the success we have had was by **God**, for **God** and with **God** in **Jesus'** name!! We are just examples and testimonies to His Love, Grace and Mercy to us that we were able to do these things!

We give **God** all the praise, Honor and Glory for what He has done in FSBH. We can't Praise Him enough for all His Miracles and Blessings given to the lives of the poor, desperate and depressed and having witnessed so many impossible situations turn to magnificent solutions! Actually, this has been one of our main goals: to relieve the pain and suffering of people living in homelessness and poverty and assist them in becoming self-supporting.

Here are a few quotes and verses that have guided us through the years:

*"It would be a changed world if everyone would attend to the sorrows and sufferings of others plain before them."* McLarin 18th century Preacher.

*'One of the most wicked sins of Christians in America is Complacency. Woefully guilty of apathy instead of empathy, and indifference to the poor.'* (Jesus Saves)

*From the beginning of the Old Testament, God's message has always been Love and Obey **God** and Love Others! The same message in the New testament states that again in The Greatest Commandments. (Matt. 22:37-39) As you have heard me say before: we all need to tell **God** we Love Him daily before we do anything else. Then obey His second command to Love others in Action beginning with the poor. Then by His Grace we are Blessed! Obedience is how we show **God** our Love!*

*Bear one another's' burdens and this fulfills the whole law of **Christ**. **God** says we can't do better than this. Gal. 6:2*

*We are Saved by Grace through faith. We are created in **Christ Jesus** to do good works! Eph. 2:8-10 paraphrased. We need more people to help in these Ministries.*

1. **TA Truck Stop:** First couple at our first church service there signed our Visitor Book and listed their address as "homeless," way before we knew anything about the homeless. That service was the only time we had 25 drivers. God's encouragement to us! First Miracle!
2. One of the first homeless guys we helped was camping behind the truck stop, living under a cardboard box. I told him I would send him home on the bus. One tear came out of his eye and nodded his head yes. Tear of Joy!
3. A driver trainee left his truck with all his belongings in it because his trainer was drunk and shouldn't be driving. I gave him a couple of nights in the local motel and a phone so he could call his boss. His wife called me few weeks later, who was the associate Pastor. She prayed blessings on me every way possible.

*(Continued on next page)*

**First Step Back Home**  
PO Box 966  
O'Fallon, MO 63366

### CONTACTS

**Paul Kruse**

636-466-1365

paul.kruse.1947@gmail.com

**Lana Kruse**

314-799-3694

lanakruse@gmail.com

**Newsletter Editor/  
Meal Coordinator**

**Kim Orf**

636-219-5496

korf18@hotmail.com

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bit.ly/fsbhyoutube



## 15 Stories from 15 Years (continued)

4. A driver said he was going to kill his boss. He was Spanish-speaking and I couldn't understand so I could tell him what God says about murder. I prayed for a Spanish-speaking Christian. In minutes one came in and Ricardo got saved and came back the next week. We baptized him by a Pastor with a bottle of Aquafina water. What a wonderful, excellent **God** we have!! After that Ricardo put his fist to his chest and said, "I love **Jesus**, love my boss!"
5. A TV interview **Channel 4** about the truck-stop. Worst snowy and cold day of that winter. Our speaker slid off the road; the TV crew (led by Jamie Allman) was late, but everything turned out great! We have been blessed with great media coverage and awards ever since then.
6. **Police** from Wentzville called about a guy sleeping in a barn who had frostbite on his feet, building a fire and people were afraid he would burn the barn down. I helped him get a job at a uniform company and he was named employee of the month shortly thereafter. The owner called to tell me that and wanted more like him.
7. **O'Fallon Police** said there was a young girl on psych meds that they found in a laundry mat whose parents abandoned her there. Crider, now Compass Health, hooked her up with a Pathways group home and got her meds schedule corrected. Now she's stable and well enough to apply for college and a driver's license.
8. Single Mom with six kids living in her van. I gave them a motel room, phone, food etc. She got a job at the hospital through a referral from Lana, got a house to rent and was doing well.
9. **Salvation Army** called and said a man and his daughter graduated from their program and needed permanent housing. We gave it to them with one of our mobile homes. The daughter graduated from high school and went with **Job Corps**. Dad got a different job and left to go to another housing unit.
10. **Sober Living House** said they had several people wanting to get into their program who had jobs and income but didn't have the \$300 deposit to move in. So we have paid the money for several of them. The last we heard, they have done well in the program.
11. Melissa and her family. She asked me how she could be saved and if I knew of a good church she could join. I told her a few things about the Bible. Her family was also blessed by one of our donors who adopted them for Christmas for gifts etc. Melissa was so touched by their gift she just bawled.
12. A man just out of prison and he wanted to go to St. Louis. He called me asking about a shuttle. I told him there was none. He got here anyway. Later he rode a bike 5 hours each way to work, and became self-supporting in the motel in 3 days working at a temp agency making \$50 per day.
13. Girl was a meth cook and asked me for help. I said not until you get off meth and get a job. She did and after our help became a manager in a big restaurant in Chesterfield Valley.
14. Client served 3 years in jail for alcohol abuse and trouble he got into because of it. We gave him a mobile home. The only way he could make money was by doing medical clinical trials to pay for lot rent and utilities. Now in recovery from alcohol abuse, he has his own construction company and is doing better.
15. Couple with 2 kids living with the man's sister for four years. They were having financial trouble and now both are working and in our mobile home doing well. His sister was very happy!

My prayer to you is that anyone can and will do what **God** has done through us and feel the tears and joy for the poor and receive many Blessings from **God** in **Jesus'** name. Amen!

We have been protected by **God** and have received many blessings from Him in our lives and our Ministries. My wife and I are both in our seventies and in great health. **God** has taken care of all our needs and much more! In **Jesus'** name, Amen!

Confess with your lips that **Jesus** is your Lord! (Romans 10: 9)

Believe in your heart The Gospel: Life-Death-Burial-Resurrection and Ascension of **Jesus**! Then you shall be Saved!

Thanks for your support that made all this possible! God Bless You!

Paul & Lana





We hope you will mark your calendar to make a special on-line donation to FSBH on this **7<sup>th</sup> Annual Give STL Day** on May 7. The BEST times for donations to FSBH will be midnight – 1 pm OR 6:01-7:00 am OR 10:00 – 11:00 pm. Those times specifically would help us win extra funds through prizes being offered for our sized charity.

We have several special ministry friends who have offered incentives for you to give, so \$14,500 is available to be MATCHED \$ for \$ when you give! Even a \$10 contribution helps! Last year FSBH was able to raise \$38,000 through this program. We came in 15<sup>th</sup> overall, out of more than 800 charities participating. More than \$3 million was raised throughout the region.

To give, go to [givelstlday.org/firststepbackhome](http://givelstlday.org/firststepbackhome)

## New Life Church Collaboration



“Sharing the Ministry Stories” was the theme for the Sunday morning Worship Service at **New Life Church**, O’Fallon on February 23, 2020. Paul tried to tell 15 stories in 15 minutes from 15 years of FSBH! Tall order. He ALMOST got it done.

Through the years this church has helped with meals, cleaning, serving at our Christmas Wonderland, made toiletry packs, sent funds (\$5 for each visitor each Sunday at their church and all of their Christmas Eve offerings), encouraged and loved the poor and needy in our region. So glad we can collaborate in so many ways!

**Pastor Jim Chapman** announced that they plan to have everyone contribute “something” on the Give STL Day this year, and to share our ministry opportunity with their social contacts. So excited!





## Hygiene Bags for Motel Clients

By Sarah Johnson



Four 8th grade students from **Christian Middle School**, O'Fallon, created 30 hygiene bags with the original idea of helping the homeless. Our idea was formed and cultivated due to the project at school called the "Capstone Project" which is supposed to be a fitting way to end middle school.

The students packed 15 men's and 15 women's bags in March, and included some of the following items: shampoo, tissues, razors and shaving cream, toothbrush and toothpaste, etc.

We gave them to FSBH who plans to give them to their clients at Economy Inn located in Wentzville.



## Runny Meade Playground Set Up Has Begun!

Thankfully, we are starting to see some nice weather days to focus on getting the new playground put up on the common ground at Runny Meade Mobile Home Park, O'Fallon, MO. One gorgeous Saturday in early March the project got underway. There must be a million parts to figure out for just one backyard playset! Our work crew was figuring out where all the parts belonged!

We're thankful for Board Member **Tom Street**, his son **Josh**, ministry friends **Rich Mattox** and **Bill Marler** for spending some time on the project! The set was contributed by **Central Presbyterian Church**, Clayton.

We even had an 11-year old boy standing by to be sure it was all being done right! Soon all the neighborhood kids will be able to enjoy it and we hope to offer some community social events in the common ground there this summer.



Project status at the end of the first day.





## Rolling Meadows 4th Annual Valentine's Party: Love Is in the Air!

Saturday, Feb. 15, 2020 FSBH and **Gateway West** hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Valentine's Party at Rolling Meadows MHP to show some love for residents where we provide outreach events. 82 people showed up for chili, hot dogs, punch, desserts, games, activities for kids, dancing and fellowship. It was fun to see the Daddy-Daughter Dance and the Mother-Son one, too. Several attendance and game gift cards were distributed to lucky folks who hung out to enjoy the event.

Shout-out to **Cheryl Street** and her crew from Gateway West for serving food. Teen **Shea Nortrup** and her entire family helped with set up and activities as part of her community service project for her confirmation class at **Assumption Church**, O'Fallon.

The Gateway West team is already making plans for a weekly VBS Program to begin on Tuesdays in July for kiddos living in the Neighborhood.



## J.K. Testimony of FSBH Support With Housing

I want to share my experience with the organization **First Step Back Home**. Two years ago, my kids and I were in transition from my husband, their father, walking out on us. I bounced from job to job while attending school and due to jobs with hectic schedules it was hard to maintain steady employment and be available for my children. We were blessed for certain family's members, but everything was temporary. We were couch surfing for more than a year. I was blessed to find a job that paid better and allowed me to be able to pick up and drop off my kids. However, in this economy and not finished with school I didn't qualify for housing assistance programs (because of the income being slightly above requirements) and I didn't make 3x the rent that most apartment complexes require. I was working and still struggling. With no help from their dad and then a repossessed car, I was forced to resign from my job and now wake my little guy up early to catch public transportation to school.

My first meeting with Paul and Lana was when my employer at the time got me in contact with them. I was about 2 weeks without a car before I was blessed with news that a van was waiting for me. It went through all the necessary inspections and was paid in full. I owned it. I got to keep that job!! Then I found out I was risking my family member's lease by her letting us stay there. Things were looking better for me, then got worse again. I reached out to Paul again and he began working to find my kids and me a place. A couple of weeks went by and Paul gave me a call. I met him and Lana in O'Fallon and they showed me around the trailer they were fixing up. I called my mom and cried. I was able to provide my son and daughter



ter a stable home. They got to sleep in their own beds. Lana even arranged for me to meet another organization, **The Sharing Shed**, and I was able to furnish our new home. This housing opportunity allowed me to save, get closer to finishing my degree and become financially stable to afford housing closer to my family/support system. I wouldn't have been able to get my life back on track if it wasn't for First Step Back Home. My children and I were so blessed to have crossed paths with Paul and Lana.

Thank you so much!!!!





## Christmas Wonderland – Biggest One Yet!

by Lana Kruse



The First Step Back Home (FSBH) **11th Annual Christmas Wonderland**, held December 21, 2019, happened on a gloriously sunny first day of winter with more than 600 people at the **Wentzville United Methodist Church**. On hand to greet everyone were Wentzville Mayor **Nick Guccione**, MO State Representative **Bryan Spencer**, and FSBH Ministry Founder/Leader, **Paul Kruse**. 459 needy people from 159 fragile families registered for gifts, filled laundry baskets, and diapers/wipes and personal care items. Only 28% of those attending were FSBH clients, all the others came from the region, having heard about the event from a variety of promotional efforts. Most came from St. Charles, Lincoln and Warren Counties, however 34% came from St. Louis City, St. Louis County and various communities in Illinois. In addition to the homeless and working poor, 180 people from the community representing 14 churches, 9 community groups and 6 businesses were on hand throughout the day or contributed items for the success of the event.

Along with crafts, games, face painting and activities for the 230 children and teens, the highlight for them was the arrival of Santa, who had each family group gather around him for personally selected by parent gifts, a special moment and keepsake photo from **Personal Expressions Photography**. **Jim McCormick** and his wife **Barb**, Lake

St. Louis, made sure Santa knew to show up at just the right time.

Before the Ho-Ho-Ho and jingle bells, the comedic “Jester for the King” **Cicoff**, a.k.a. **Christoph Zurcher**, St. Louis, performed on his unicycle, did some magical illusions and theatrical stunts and entertained the crowd, then led everyone in singing “Happy Birthday” to **Jesus**, since this party was for Him.







## Christmas Wonderland – Biggest One Yet!

The three-hour event featured party food prepared and served by ministry friends from **Grace Community Chapel**, led by **Janice O'Rourke**. A beautiful 3-tier birthday cake for **Jesus**, created by **Marjorie Schoonover** of Grace Community Chapel, was the centerpiece of the dessert table.

Nearly 2000 gifts were distributed throughout the day, including the handmade table centerpieces put together by **Janet Derr**, Lake St. Louis, and wooden crosses, crafted by **Don Smedhammer**, Lake St. Louis. More than 1000 toys came from **Toys for Tots**, and a toy drive from **Mission Financial**, St. Peters, and **Encouragers Church**, O'Fallon. 200 new sweatshirts were donated by the **Tammy Stratman Brown Charity Foundation**. Handmade dolls were given from the **Stitches for Life** group, St. Peters. Additionally diapers were donated by **Thrive**, **Men's Ministry** at **Wentzville United Methodist Church**, and **Crisis Nursery**. Cleaning and laundry products were provided in 93 laundry baskets for families that came and personal care items were donated by a variety of individuals and groups. At the end of the event, each fragile family also received a \$25 gift card that had been left by Santa and others.

Look on the FSBH website: **firststepbackhome.net** or **Facebook** page for photos from the day, and let us know how you or your group would like to get involved for next year.

There is a particular need for groups to collect laundry/cleaning baskets, diapers and wipes, as well as toys to make this annual event continue to meet the needs of the community. Next year's event will take place on **Saturday, December 19, 2020** at the same location.

For information contact **Lana Kruse**: **lanakruse@gmail.com** or **314-799-3694**.







## Recent Donor Acknowledgements

We want to thank several businesses, churches and community groups who have financially supported FSBH this past quarter with these recent gifts.

- \$5,000 – **Cuivre River Electric Cooperative** Operation Round Up
- \$3,000 – **Franciscan Sisters of Mary**, Bridgeton
- \$2,500 – **Central Presbyterian Church**, Clayton
- \$1,000 – **St. John United Church of Christ**, St. Charles
- \$2,050 – **Boeing** Match from 2 employees
- \$2,005 – **First Baptist Church**, Lake St. Louis
- \$1,670 – **Network for Good** – from Giving Tuesday and Lana Kruse campaign
- \$ 900 – **Mission Financial- St. Peters**
- \$ 800 – **Grace Community Chapel**, St. Peters
- \$ 683- **New Life Nazarene Church** -  
\$5 for each visitor who attends their services and Christmas Eve offerings
- \$ 500 – **Good Shepherd Lutheran Church**, Manchester
- \$ 500 – **Leiber Heating and Cooling**
- \$ 400 – **Element Church**, Wentzville
- \$ 400 – **Warrenton Christian Church**
- \$ 300 - **Outpost Church**, St. Charles
- \$ 300 – **Chapel of the Lake**, Lake St. Louis
- \$ 260 – **Home Maintenance Solutions**, Wentzville
- \$ 222 – **St. John's UCC Women's Bible Study Group**, Weldon Spring
- \$ 150 – **Covenant Garage Doors**
- \$ 100 – **Quality Systems Consulting**
- \$ 100 – **Pfizer** Match for employee contribution
- \$ 97 - **Thrivent** Choice Dollars as allocations from **Dennis & Donna Hall** and **Dale & Susan Bauer**
- \$ 52 – **Lorrain County United Way** Employee Contributions
- \$ 17 - **Amazon Smile** Designations



We are so very thankful to all of you who think of donating to our public charity when opportunities present.



**Janssen Longenecker, Mission Financial**, encouraged his clients to bring toys and gifts for our Christmas Event when they attended his annual Christmas Open House in early December.





## Creative Meals Provision

We are continually blessed with so many generous groups that serve meals at the Economy Inn. Every night the provision is different, but it's always filled with love and compassion for those needing it.

For Valentine's Day evening, **Pastor Mark Schoonover**, **Grace Community Chapel**, brought cutely wrapped Subway Sandwiches and trimmings.

During the last quarter, these groups and individuals served for the first time: **Tony Xenos**, **Girl Scout Troop 853** led by **Tania Pennock**, **Karen Geeding**, who also serves monthly with **Alberta's Angels**, and **American Heritage** group led by **Blaire O'Brien**.

Current openings are: 3rd Mondays, and 3rd Fridays (even months only).

The calendar is always available online at [firststepbackhome.net/meal-calendar](http://firststepbackhome.net/meal-calendar). Contact **Kim Orf** to sign up for serving meals. (Contact info is on Page 1.)



Pastor **Mark Schoonover** of **Grace Community Chapel**, at the hotel with festive meal bags on Valentine's Day.

## Donation Methods to Support FSBH

We want to remind you that your tax-deductible charitable donation is a great way to support the ministry. We are a public charity per IRS Regulations of a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations will be receipted for tax-deductible documentation purposes. Here are several options to consider:

- **Corporate Matching Grant Donations**
  - Some matching grant companies are **AT&T**, **Wells Fargo**, **Monsanto**, **Boeing**, **Master-Card**, **Pfizer**, **VMWare**, and **Thrivent Financial Services**.
  - Boeing and perhaps other corporations offer volunteer time grant matches. If you volunteer 25 hours with our ministry, Boeing will send a \$250 cash gift.
  - If you work for a company that offers match gifting, please initiate the paperwork for this to be done, and we'll complete the required elements so you and others can participate.
- **Write a Check payable to "First Step Back Home"** and send to the following address:  
First Step Back Home, Inc.  
Paul Kruse  
PO Box 966  
O'Fallon MO 63366
- **Log onto our ministry website and click PayPal** for direct donation via your credit card. There is a small fee charged to the ministry with this option. [firststepbackhome.net](http://firststepbackhome.net)
- **Thrivent Members** can create an "Action Team" and receive \$250 "seed money" twice per year for charitable causes. Details can be found at this link: [thrivent.com/actionteam](http://thrivent.com/actionteam).
- When you shop online, use **Amazon Smile** and choose **First Step Back Home** as your charity. They will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases. You can use this direct link to our page: [smile.amazon.com/ch/20-8676289](http://smile.amazon.com/ch/20-8676289)







## The Circus Came to Town!



FSBH was blessed to receive 150 FREE tickets (a \$3,000 value!) to the **2020 Carden Spectacular Circus** from **The Children's Circus Project** that was held in our community on February 11 and 12, 2020. We were able to share ALL of the tickets with ministry clients, supporters and friends. Those were two cold, wet wintry nights, but certainly the weather didn't deter as the National Equestrian Center in Lake St. Louis was packed full both evenings.

We sure did enjoy seeing families enjoy some special time together experiencing new things, like camel, elephant or pony rides, watching daring acrobatics and enjoying the thrills and chills of the high wire acts and crazy motorcycle stunts. And the yellow transformer car did not disappoint!

Of course, there were beautiful faces painted, lots of cotton candy, popcorn and many fun souvenirs. For many, this was their first time at a circus – for parents and kids alike!

Here are some comments from those who attended:

- \* Many thanks for the Children's circus for giving First Step Back Home tickets to give away to their clients and other ministries like ours. Thanks to FSBH for blessing **Show Me Your Hands** with 25 FREE tickets. This ripple effect was able to bless so many families tonight. We all needed to make fun memories for one reason or another. We all have a story and because of you these memories were made possible.
- \* Awesome evening!
- \* We had so much fun. Thank you for inviting us!
- \* Thank you, had a blast.
- \* Thank you for the invite, we all loved it!
- \* Thank you so much! It was a fun night!
- \* Last night was great! We all had a good time. Thank you so very much for thinking of us and sharing the tickets with us.







## CaseWorthy Audit

One of the ways FSBH collaborates with other social service agencies in our region is by participating in the CaseWorthy software data base tracking process. The annual audit of our program revealed an exceptional report.

Overall Data Quality was scored “very good” with 92% of all social security numbers entered; and Overall Data Timeliness was scored “very good” with an average of 7.3 days to input data for 211 new enrollments.

A comment made by the team lead, **Dottie Kastigar**, of the St. Charles, Lincoln and Warren County Continuum of Care was this: *First Step Back Home provides amazing support to the most fragile people in our Community. They accept a majority of referrals from Coordinated Entry and provide essential services to help individuals and families move toward stability. They are an awesome community partner!*

## How Did the Numbers Stack Up?

### 2019 Touchpoint Summary

When compiling data from services rendered last year, here’s some interesting stats that show the many different touchpoints we have with clients, donors and volunteers.

#### CLIENTS

- 226 - Total people served
- 158 – Households represented
- 26 - Children represented
- 589 – Motel nights in 7 local motels
- 2,802 – Mobile home days in 2 parks for 39 people in 8 mobile homes
- 61 - Received phones/cell minutes
- 54– Received assistance with transportation/fuel
- 19- Received personal care/prescriptions/clothing/groceries
- 67- Received rent/housing/utilities/repairs assistance
- 5 – Help with purchase of a vehicle
- 459 – Homeless, economically disadvantaged at Christmas Event
- 3,000 – Calls for help, estimated

#### HELPERS

- 3,450 - Volunteer hours spent related to meals served
- \$25,875 –Value of meals served at motels
- 42 –Groups that took meals to motel including 17 new groups
- 345 –Meal events
- 1,685 –Volunteers providing meals
- 249 –Other in-kind volunteers, including Christmas Event helpers
- \$19,866 –Other in-kind donations

#### DONORS

- 105 - Individual Contributors
- 19 - Church Group Donors
- 20 - Business Contributors
- 5 - Community Group Contributors