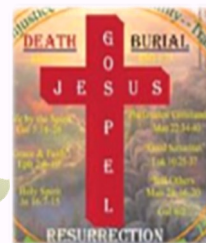




*** THE MIRACLE NEWS ***



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Leave Everything in God's Hands and You Will See God's Hands in Everything You Do (Isaiah 41:9-10)

by Paul Kruse

That Isaiah verse in the title: that's what I decided to do 16 years ago. I knew I was getting older and had to go one way or the other. Either work harder and longer to make more money, or give our future to **God** and see what happens. Wow! did **God** show me hundreds of times what He would do and DID DO. So many things, I can't list them all by paragraphs. I can only make an informal list of some of them to show the many ways I've seen **God's** hand in what He had planned for us. God gets all the praise, glory and honor for all He has done!

- Started my own remodeling/ handyman business several years earlier (Christian Handyman).
- Started helping homeless people get out of the woods they were using as their home. I am a Vietnam Vet, so to see people sleeping in the woods, mainly single homeless men, was not acceptable to me.
- Used our own money to give the homeless shelter in motel rooms.

Now here's the miracles He has performed for us!

Miracle 1: Asked **God** to let me do one or the other-- work in my business or give me the finances to help the homeless. He answered in a strange way. At the same time we had a recession and my business went to zero calls per week from many calls per week.

But He also knew I would be able to take retirement funds in a couple months so we would have some income besides my wife's salary.

My wife, who is the number one Miracle in my personal life (that's another story) said, "Are you crazy? We can't afford the \$1,000 you've spent on motel rooms." I said, "Oh, I didn't think of that because **God** said in His **Word** He would take care of everything if I obeyed His Greatest Commandments and believed the **Gospel**." Boy did He ever!!

Miracle 2: Neighbor gave us a \$1000 a week later because he heard we were helping the homeless, not knowing how much in debt we were in helping them. (Got me off the couch, HA!)

Miracle 3: Found out through local **Community Council** there was a grant we could apply for through our electric company and at that time we weren't a 501(c)(3) public charity. Their "**Operation Round-Up**" Program had just begun and we received \$5,000. This was spent rapidly on motel rooms, clothes, food, cell phones, gas etc. for the homeless.

Miracle 4: Electric company put an article on us in their monthly magazine **Rural Missouri**, and we unexpectedly received over \$25,000 in donations from all over the state.

Miracle 5: A media frenzy began after that. I was interviewed by T.V., radio, newspapers and more and the donations just rolled in faster than we could spend it.

Miracle 6: The word got out to many organizations and we were told we needed to become a 501(c)(3) public charity so we could become legal and reputable. We got calls from a lawyer and a CPA accountant and they did all the paperwork pro bono to become a 501(c)(3) Public Charity. It happened so fast. Only three weeks after the application was submitted, it was approved by the IRS!

(continued on page 2)



Leave Everything in God's Hands and You Will See God's Hands in Everything You Do *(continued)*

Miracle 7: We had to form a board of directors and were able to recruit many top businessmen and even a mayor of Wentzville to join in our cause.

Miracle 8: Then the awards started coming. About 9 awards for improving **Racial Equality** and **Social Justice**. These were from the **City of St. Louis, St. Charles, Wentzville, St. Peters, Crider** (now **Compass Health**), and more. We also received proclamations from the **Missouri House of Representatives** and **Senate**. Later we received the **Senior Citizens Award** from **Missouri Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder**.

Miracle 9: **Commerce Bank** awarded us with their **Community Service Award** and hosted a banquet for 100 people and provided a \$6,500 grant to our favorite charity. (Wonder who that would be? HA!)

Miracle 10: I then learned more about helping the homeless and was able to counsel spiritually and practically to all the thousands of homeless and working poor who somehow know to call ME for help.

Miracle 11: Decided that we needed to provide more than motels for shelter and housing for the poor. We did what we could afford and bought eight mobile homes for permanent housing for the working poor after our clients graduated from our motel ministry. Helped other agencies with permanent housing in our mobile homes also for their clients. Now we have one of the most affordable housing programs in the area because we own the homes and don't charge them to rent the home or ask for any deposits. They just pay lot rent and utilities.

Miracle 12: We discovered transportation is a big barrier for the poor in becoming self-supporting, which is the main goal for our clients. I did some investigation and discovered we can buy good high mileage cars that we can afford for them. Now we have bought 27 cars for clients.

Miracle 13: More than 9,000 homeless and fragile families have been helped with temporary housing in motels, 64 people from 24 families in the mobile homes, and providing 11,659 days of permanent housing. **God** has given us over \$2.5 million to do this, not even asking for most of it. **God** just provided.

Miracle 14: Also started a **Trucker Ministry**, where it all began at the local truck stop in Foristell and have ministered to nearly 5,500 drivers in 20+ years.

Miracle 15: Most important of all we have seen many clients become self-supporting with jobs, transportation and housing that could have only happened through **God's** Miracles!

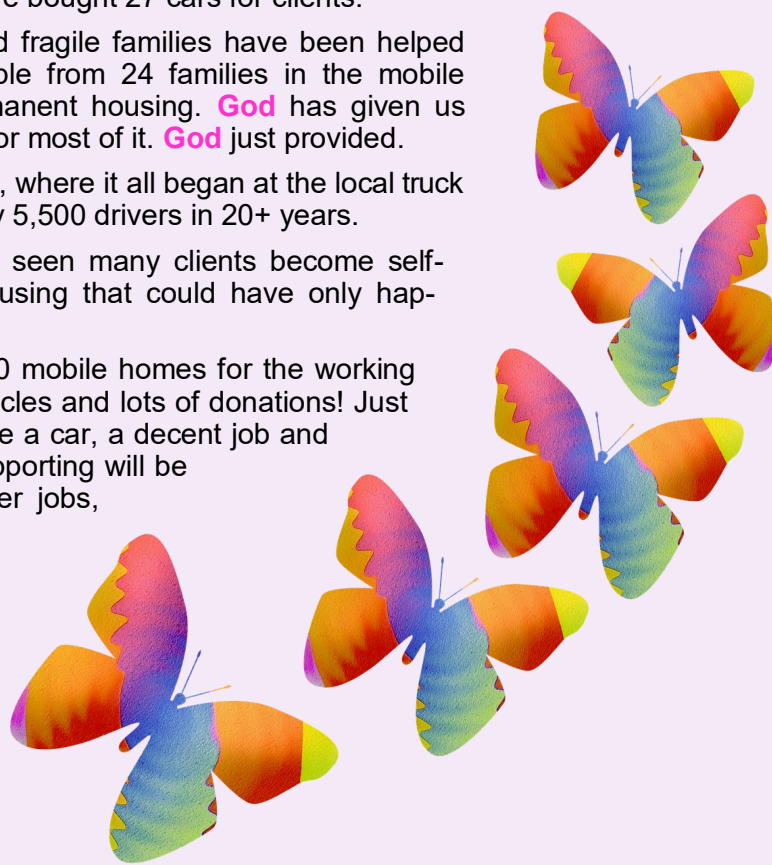
Now our goal is to buy 50 more cars and 50 mobile homes for the working poor if **God** okays that and sends more miracles and lots of donations! Just think, if 50 homeless or working families have a car, a decent job and a home, then their goal of becoming self-supporting will be met. From there they can advance to better jobs, cars and homes.

There is a lot more but this is getting too long. Just wanted to show how you can see God's hands in everything, when you turn everything over to Him. Amen!

Thank You!

God Bless you all!!

Paul

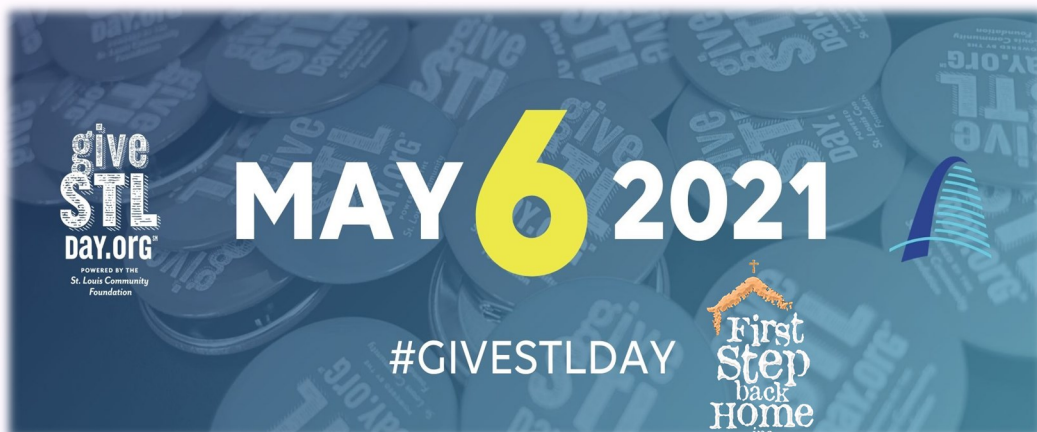




Give STL Day Will Be May 6

The 7th Annual Give STL Day will start at midnight May 6 and run for the next 24 hours. We hope you will "save the date" on your calendar and make a special offering to FSBH sometime during that day. We have \$25,000 in matching gifts from ministry supporters including

Lynn and Peg Griswold and several others who wished to remain anonymous. Every dollar you contribute will be matched at 100%! Here's the link to our page on the GiveSTLDay website: givestlday.org/firststepbackhome.



The BEST times to donate will be **midnight – 1 am**, when a \$1,000 prize will be awarded to the non-profit organization with the most dollars raised during that hour. FSBH has won that prize for the past 3 years. Help us do that again if you can find yourself awake then! The next best time will be in the **6-7 am** hour, when other "bonus dollars" will be added to everyone's contributions, thanks to corporate donors sponsoring the venue. If you miss either of these windows, just give when it's best for you!

All donations need to be done online. There's a \$10 minimum. Actually, if you know you're unavailable to contribute on May 6, there will be a month of "early giving" starting on April 5. Giving during April will be matched, but not contribute towards the prizes or bonuses mentioned above.

Let us know what questions you have. Your help on this day keeps us from having to run golf tourneys, galas, bingo nights, dinners or other fundraiser type events. Ministry friends have been very generous in the past and we pray that will happen again this year. Last year we were able to raise more than \$48,000 during the GiveSTLDay! We came in first in the micro-charity for human services, and 15th overall in donations given to more than 970 non-profits in the St. Louis region. This year we're praying for a \$50,000 total at the end of it all!

Ministry Friend Leaves Financial Blessings to FSBH

Mrs. LeVona (Vonne) Herndon, Lake St. Louis, was a staunch supporter of First Step Back Home, Inc. from Day 1. She enjoyed participating in our community events, celebrations and coming to Trucker Church on occasion. She supported our cause in many gracious ways and now upon her passing, has bequeathed us with a \$10,000 gift to be used as needed to help fragile families in our community.

Vonne died on April 18, 2020. Every time we visited her, she knew us and smiled and asked how the ministry was going. We had no idea she intended to bless FSBH so abundantly. She was a very special friend to us and our family. We thank her and her family for this gracious provision! LK





Special Car for Special Client

by Paul Kruse



Ryan called one day after Christmas and asked if I could help him with some bills. Upon further questioning I found out he had eight kids, four living with him, all adopted, and he was separated from his wife. He said he was paraplegic and has had many surgeries in the past for his condition.

If that's not enough, his specially-equipped van had recently been stolen! He was renting a duplex in O'Fallon and has been supporting all his family on his social security disability income of about \$1,100/month.

I listened to all this and I couldn't help but think, "This guy needs a car!" Then I told him I could possibly buy him a vehicle. After he heard this he started crying profusely and said he couldn't believe it. After asking "Is this real"? many times, he finally asked when I could come meet him.

I told him he should start looking for a high mileage van at about \$3,500. First he found some in St. Louis and other far away places. I told him that was too far. Surprisingly, he called the next day and said he'd found one a couple of miles from his home. We bought the 2006 Mazda SUV for less than we planned. Now he can make it to doctor appointments and take his kids to their events.

FSBH has been able to acquire 27 vehicles for fragile families in our service area over the past couple of years. If you have a good used car that you'd like to donate, just let us know!

Food, Carols and New Shoes Bless Clients

During a special outreach week for members at **First Assembly Church**, St. Peters, a group of servant-hearted folks, led by **Robert Purcell** came to **Economy Inn** to lovingly bring a delicious dinner and provide some masked Christmas caroling. Clients were blessed doubly with food and music! Such sweet loving service. Each one who came got a gift bag with toiletries, personal items and a \$30 gift card to local shoe store for new shoes!





Warmth for the Body, Soul and Spirit on Frigid Winter Night

Warmth for the body, soul and spirit for the homeless at **Economy Inn** one frigid winter night. After dinner was lovingly served by ladies from **Assumption Church**, we enjoyed listening to the acoustic guitar music of **Paul Baxter** while we passed out coats, donated puzzles, and new blankets from **Dave McClaskey** of **BO15, Inc.** O'Fallon, along with snacks for those staying inside from friends at **Faith United Church of Christ**, Wentzville. About 20 were blessed for the evening.

Economy Inn was just one of many local motels that was lodging the homeless for the 15-day arctic blast that hit our area in February through the **Emergency Weather Response (EWR) Program** that operates when temps are less than 20 degrees. The EWR has been operational over the past four winters, but this year, due to COVID, it was necessary to use motels instead of churches for most of the lodging.

More than 2,000 bed nights of lodging were provided to about 200 people, according to the preliminary reports we have received. The cost was estimated to be about \$50,000! Thanks to a highly successful last minute "GoFundMe" appeal, enough money was raised to keep the program operational until the bitter cold ended.



Local Manufacturing Business Employees Help Homeless



Toiletry Backpacks were put together - 21 of them... by the 35 employees of **Clark Dietrich Company** in O'Fallon. Paul added in a few food snacks and drinks, and now they're ready for distribution to the homeless we meet up with every day!

Thanks to **Nina Prince** and team, many happy faces will be blessed!

BTW... they have good paying jobs, if you know of anyone looking for work, they can go to this website to apply: clarkdietrich.com/company/careers.

Rolling Meadows Mobile Home Park Events

Due to COVID we've had a hiatus in events at the mobile home parks, except for a successful "**Drive Thru**" **Thanksgiving Dinner** last November.

Plans are under way for a **Kids 5 Day Club** to be hosted by **Grace Community Chapel** using Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) materials for the last week of June. That is all tentative, pending COVID status closer to the time. **Grace Chapel** was the group to fund the playground we placed there, and the hope is to have the VBS-type program happening around the playground area.





Drive Thru FSBH Christmas Wonderland

The **12th Annual Christmas Wonderland**, sponsored by FSBH, was held COVID-style December 19, 2020 on a relatively warm winter day (54 degrees and sunny) in the parking lot at the **Wentzville United Methodist Church**. The rally from the community was so evident this year with more than 400 Bibles from **Matthais' Lot Church**, St. Charles, snacks for 535 people from **Grace Community Chapel**, St. Peters, 200 laundry baskets from several groups including **Mercy Health Care** and clients from **Mission Financial** in St. Peters, and ministry friends who organized smaller collections. Diapers were provided by **Crisis Nursery**, and toys from **Toys for Tots** along with other FSBH ministry supporters were given to 232 children.

In addition to all the goodie bags, each of the 120 families was presented with a \$25 gift card from **Jim and Barbara McCormick**, **Bill and Kathy Schweikert**, **Wentzville UMC Men's Group** and **Grace Community Chapel**; and the 83 teen gift bags were distributed including a \$10 gift card from the **Tammy Stratman Brown Charities** group.

Masked and gloved angels and elves distributed items as cars passed by the tents in the church parking lot. **Santa** was staged strategically to wave at kids this year, as all the families stayed in their own cars throughout the event.

Since an abundance of laundry baskets showed up this time, the ministry was able to pass on several to other local ministries, including **LINC**, **Immanuel Lutheran Church** outreach, **Wentzville UMC Adopt-a-Family** program and **Matthew 25 Women's Service Group**.

Some wonderful professional photographs were captured by **Carrie Harvey** of **Harvest Bloom Photography**, Defiance.

To see more photos, visit bit.ly/FSBHxmas2020.



Pictures by **Harvest Bloom Photography**
harvestbloomphotography.com/



Below is an edited version of an article we've submitted for publication by the Thrivent Magazine. It should be appearing in their summer edition! We're excited that our story will be shared all across the nation. If you're a Thrivent Member, this type of project could be done easily as one of your own Action Team Projects. - LK

Thrivent Action Team: Laundry Baskets Filled for Needy Families

First Step Back Home, Inc. is a homeless ministry that has received funding through **Thrivent** over the past seven years. Twenty-one Thrivent members have allocated nearly \$6,000 from their Thrivent Choice Dollars to help us cover the costs of supporting the critical needs of the homeless and working poor from the western suburban area of St. Louis region in St. Charles, Lincoln and Warren Counties. Each year one of our biggest community outreach events has been the **FSBH Annual Christmas Wonderland**, a festive "Happy Birthday Jesus" party including a luncheon, entertainment, Santa and lots of gifts and activities for children. One of the most popular parts of this event has been the provision of filled laundry baskets for each family that attends. The focus has been on blessing the poor and economically-disadvantaged families in our area.

December 19, 2020 was the date for our **12th Annual Christmas Wonderland**. It was held at **Wentzville United Methodist Church**. The provision of filled laundry baskets has been happening for the past 10 years or so, and was spawned by the anonymous receipt of 10 tote bags filled with laundry detergent, fabric softener, bleach and a roll of quarters many years ago when our event was small and held at the local motel where the homeless were lodged. The families that received those bags were so touched by the generosity of the donor that it impressed us as a very practical way to bless others as part of our Christmas provisions.

We created a comprehensive list of items that could be packed into sturdy laundry baskets and started to distribute that throughout the year to churches and organizations who wanted to help us help others during the holidays. Some years the number of baskets that came in was sufficient; other years, we ran short, never really knowing how many people or laundry baskets might come in ahead of time.

One group that felt led to support our cause this year was a family from **Good Shepherd Lutheran Church**, Manchester, MO who decided to create a **Thrivent Action Team**. Led by **Mike and Sandy King**, this couple put together five baskets for part of their church's donation. Here are some thoughts from **Sandy** about all of this:

*"Really all I did was take the seed money that Thrivent gave me, \$250, and put together five more baskets for part of our churches donation. Since I was being very careful about COVID, I picked up all the supplies in the parking lot at Target. I ordered them online with the **Thrivent Action Team** Visa Card, and in a few hours they brought everything out to my car in their parking lot. That made it super easy, although I had to do more than one order because cleaning supplies were limited.*

*When I got those together I still needed to add a few more things which I did, and added my own basket that I had donated, and my husband and I took the six baskets, plus some others that had been delivered by other church members to the venue location in Wentzville on Friday, December 18. **Janie Wolfangel** and **Dennis Mall** also drove their cars with more baskets at the same time. At the venue location we were met by **FSBH** volunteers who took our 40 baskets plus many others that were being delivered at the same time. It was inspiring to see all those baskets that had been put together for people in need, knowing they would be distributed to them the next day.*

*I would really like other Thrivent members to know how easy it is to apply for a grant that can help the projects that are being done by different groups and people in our congregation. Over the past three or four years, I've seen many projects that could be helped by a **Thrivent Action Team** grant. All Thrivent members get the opportunity to apply for two grants each year from Thrivent. Maybe my story could help others make good use of these opportunities."*





FSBH Client Services for 2020

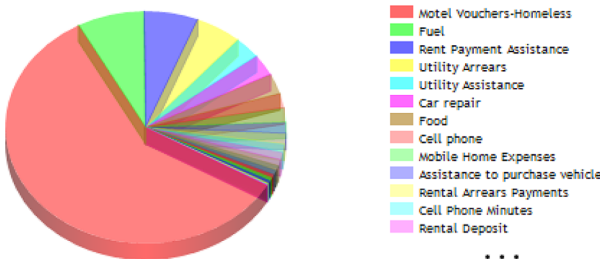
Here's a snapshot of where your donation dollars got spent last year. The data shown below details services rendered by FSBH for clients throughout 2020. You can see the type of service and how many people were served. Motel stays and assistance to purchase vehicles were the largest expense areas this past year, followed by rent assistance, utility, assistance and car repairs for fragile families. Nearly 300 families, including 185 children, were assisted in one way or another.



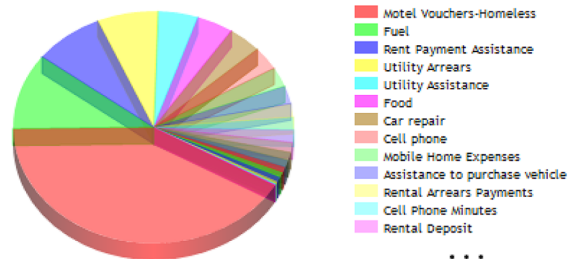
St. Charles, Lincoln, & Warren
Continuum of Care

First Step Back Home

Top 5 Services by Units



Top 5 Services by Clients



Service	Entries	Units	Total	Clients	Families	Adults	Children	Seniors
Assistance to purchase vehicle	<u>10</u>	10	20,864.00	10	10	12	6	2
Car repair	<u>19</u>	19	3,728.71	15	15	20	9	1
Cell phone	<u>11</u>	11	557.64	11	11	13	12	0
Cell Phone Minutes	<u>6</u>	6	246.28	6	7	8	6	0
Clothing	<u>3</u>	3	396.13	3	3	6	0	0
Dental Care	<u>1</u>	1	300.00	1	1	1	0	0
Department of Revenue Payment	<u>5</u>	5	313.41	5	5	5	0	0
Emergency Home Repair	<u>1</u>	1	49.06	1	1	1	0	0
Food	<u>16</u>	16	782.40	14	14	21	12	1
Fuel	<u>36</u>	36	878.07	31	32	49	31	3
Insurance	<u>5</u>	5	745.43	5	5	6	5	0
Medication Assistance	<u>3</u>	3	164.19	3	3	3	0	0
Mobile Home Expenses	<u>8</u>	8	2,515.90	7	8	10	8	2
Motel Vouchers-Homeless	<u>220</u>	319	32,213.24	152	158	227	88	9
Rent Payment Assistance	<u>35</u>	36	7,225.00	30	31	37	24	1
Rental Arrears Payments	<u>5</u>	5	1,116.00	4	4	8	6	1
Rental Deposit	<u>8</u>	8	1,830.00	8	9	11	2	1
Storage	<u>5</u>	5	826.52	5	5	5	2	1
Transportation	<u>4</u>	4	857.59	4	4	3	4	0
Utility Arrears	<u>18</u>	18	4,280.94	16	17	23	31	1
Utility Assistance	<u>13</u>	13	1,368.59	12	12	17	20	0
Utility Deposit Assistance	<u>3</u>	3	600.00	3	3	5	1	0

Organization Total: 435 535 \$81,859.10 262 268 371 185 15



Gas Tanks and Food Tanks Filled for Family

by Paul Kruse

Kim is an old client who has been helped with assistance for utilities and cell phone minutes in the past. In early February she called to tell me her spouse **Jeff** was laid off because of COVID. Also, she said there was no food in their house, and they had their heat turned down as low as possible to save money and to keep things from freezing.

I offered to meet her at a grocery store and agreed to pay her utilities again. Then she told me she was already at a gas station near my house and her tank was on empty. She didn't know if she could get to a grocery store. She and her little daughter **Rainna** were crying because they were stranded and family only had one car. I met them at the gas station, filled their tank and then we went drove to the grocery store close by to get some food. They both stopped crying and smiled because I had brought them a cart full of food for their family of four. We loaded up her car and they went home happy and safe, with a full tank of gas and a car full of food. She told me her family prays every day for their needs to be met, trusting in Jesus!

Kim and Jeff are both recovering from drug addictions in the past. They have been on the right path since 2018 and say the ONLY way they could overcome their addictions was through a relationship with **Jesus**. They both went through recovery programs at **Mission Gate** and are so very thankful for the healing and restoration that only **Jesus** could bring to their lives. At this point in his career, **Jeff** is praying to find an opportunity to learn a trade like welding so he can provide better for his family in the future. Let us know if YOU have any contacts to help move that dream into fruition for him.



Jeff, Rainna, Jordyn and Kim





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. Also during the holidays there were donations made in honor of others in place of Christmas gifts. Such gracious contributions!

- \$10,000 – **Vonne Herndon Trust Bequeath** (See story on page 3.)
- \$ 2,000 – **Central Presbyterian Church**, Clayton
- \$ 1,800 – **Grace Community Chapel**, St. Peters
- \$ 1,620 - **BO15, Inc.** – O'Fallon
- \$ 1,450 – **Mission Financial**- St. Peters
- \$ 1,200 – **Element Church**, Wentzville
- \$ 1,088 – **Good Shepherd Lutheran Church**, Manchester
- \$ 1,050 – **Oakridge Baptist Church** – St. Peters
- \$ 1,000 – **Acoustical Ceiling Specialists** – O'Fallon
- \$ 1,000 – **St. John UCC** – St. Charles
- \$ 1,000 – **MasterCard** – match from employee donation
- \$ 800 – **Home Maintenance Solution**, Wentzville
- \$ 585 - **New Life Nazarene Church** - \$5 for each visitor and Christmas Eve gifts
- \$ 500 – **Wentzville United Methodist Men's Group**
- \$ 463 – **JRS Ventures** – O'Fallon
- \$ 400 – **Norbert Schaeffer Family** – in lieu of Christmas gifts to one another
- \$ 364.43 – **Wentzville Teen** who wishes to be anonymous. *He got a job and committed to tithing his earnings and donating them to charity! What a teen!*
- \$ 300 – **Warrenton Christian Church**
- \$ 300 – **Tammy Stratman Brown Charities**
- \$ 225 – **Chapel of the Lake**, Lake St. Louis
- \$ 200 – **Dardenne Presbyterian Women**
- \$ 150 – **Pfizer Corporation** – match from employee donation
- \$ 100 – **Laura Landgren** in honor of **Keith Walton**
- \$ 66 - **Thrivent Choice Dollars** as allocations from **Dennis & Donna Hall**
- \$ 50 – **Amy Clark** in honor of **Sandy Lowery**
- \$ 23 - **Amazon Smile** Designations
- \$ 14 – **PayPal Giving Fund**



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



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 **Ally Industrial, AT&T, Wells Fargo, Monsanto, Boeing, MasterCard, 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**
- **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.**
- 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**



Meal Ministry Update

We continue to be blessed with many dedicated groups who provide meals and encouragement to the families at the **Economy Inn**. We particularly appreciate that some groups are able to continue serving during the Covid restrictions. During the last quarter, we welcomed new servers from **First Assembly of God, Waypoint Church, Morning Star Women's Bible Study**, as well as the **Stiff Family, Staci**



Servers from **Waypoint Church**

Bailey, the Bassinger Family, Nonnie Crawford, and Debbi Georgevitch and her daughter **Stacy Tolliver.**

There are many openings in the schedule now due to groups that are unable to serve during this time. The permanent openings now are **1st Fridays, 2nd Tuesdays, 3rd Fridays** (odd months only), **4th Tuesdays, and 5th Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.**

The calendar is always available online at **firststepbackhome.net/meal-calendar**. If you are interested in serving, contact Meal Coordinator **Kim Orf** at **korf18@hotmail.com**.



Servers **Debbi Georgevitch** and her daughter **Stacy Tolliver.**