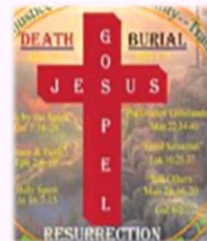




# \*\*\* THE MIRACLE NEWS \*\*\*



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

## Putting God's Word into Practice

by Paul Kruse

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### VISIT US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

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I found over 80 verses and many articles explaining how we need to not just read the **Bible** but put its words into practice. What good does it do to have all the good, excellent, life-giving, lifesaving, loving, helpful, life-changing information from the **Bible**, but then not do anything constructive and productive with it? With so many commands, demands, and advice connected with acting on **God's** word, what more convincing do we need to be **doers** of **God's** Word and not **hearers** only? (James 1:22)

Talking about the Commandments, John 14:15 says, *"If you Love me, you will keep my Commandments."* That's just another way to show **Jesus** we love Him, such as James 1:22 says.

Hebrews 4:12 tells us **God's** Word is active, sharp, piercing, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. All this! But some people (as I used to be), just sit on His words and don't act on them. Sounds like a sin to me!

Ephesians 2:10 says, *"We were created to do **good works**."* This is another verse that explains our purpose here on earth. If this is our purpose then, acting on **God's** words is what we should be doing with most of our time.

Why do we say **good works** are the greatest things we can do? Well, it's because of the Greatest Commandments (Luke 10:27). They say to love **God** first and your neighbor next. We look at the "neighbor" as the least of our people . . . the working poor and homeless. So, to us loving and helping the poor is the best of the **good works** we can do.

So, what are **good works**? Titus 3:14 says "they are the overflow of Love for **Jesus** that meets the needs of others." If we love **Jesus** we will love and help the poor, who are the least of the others. **Jesus** said this is the most important thing we can do on earth! **Jesus** spent a lot of time helping people and setting an example for us to follow. I think this is what He means by saying, *"Follow Me"*- physically going and doing what He does.

This is the **Why** of our ministries! I saw people living in the woods, which I don't call living but barely surviving. I am a Vietnam Vet and I couldn't stand

to see this so I started helping them with motel time, food, clothes, cell phones, bikes and cars and plans for finding jobs and eventually housing. Now in 19 years we have helped thousands of "neighbors" and have spent thousands of dollars doing it. **God** in **Jesus'** name must be happy with us because He continues to send funding, people and resources to enable us to operate the 10 ministries we have now for the homeless and working poor among us. Most of our clients have experienced a better, and for some, self-supporting lifestyle; living in transitional and/or permanent housing. It seems like the demand gets greater, but funding just doesn't keep up with it all.

God's provisions are the **How**. St. Charles, Lincoln, and Warren Counties are the **Where**, And seven days a week is the **When**. We would rather people call us Monday through Friday 10 am to 5 pm, but that never seems to happen because of our clients' unpredictable circumstances.

(Continued on Page 2)



## Putting God's Word into Practice (continued from Page 1)

Recent statistics from Housing and Urban Development reveal that there has been a 12% increase in homelessness in the past year nationwide, and it's 15% in Missouri. In addition, thousands of working poor need help to keep their housing. So, needless to say, we need help! We receive more than 60 calls each week and most take a lot of time to help.

For example, nearly 3 months ago a client called us about their home burning down. Ever since then, we have been providing funds for everyday essentials like ID replacements, showers, laundry, food, clothing, fuel for kerosene heaters and car repair. They are living in a small broken-down camper next to where the house in the country was, and have no electricity, water, or anything else it takes to survive even now. They are happy to receive any help they can get. Things are looking up because more people are trying to help them. But they still must wake up every morning to look at the burnt mess outside their door. Black charred ashes are where the house was. Insurance is a tricky situation and not coming to them very timely, it seems.

These kinds of cases are most fulfilling when we see clients become happier and less depressed than they were before we started helping them. It is so enjoyable and a blessing to see people succeed from having absolutely nothing as far as housing and basic necessities. We can't figure out why more people aren't doing this. All social service agencies are overwhelmed, underfunded, and understaffed. We try to keep up with the demand for help. It is our opinion that if more ordinary angels (big-hearted people) would get involved and if we were to get more funding and staff, we could keep up with more of the many calls that come in daily.

So here is how you help the homeless:

- Start with learning about the existing agencies in your area and other support systems that help the poor. Then investigate the **Continuum of Care** division of **HUD** in your region. Here that's through the **Tri-County Continuum of Care** and the **United Way's 211** system. People who are homeless or about to be homeless dial 2-1-1 and follow the phone prompts to be connected to local resources. This system is the primary method **FSBH** receives referrals each day.
- Next, interview clients to investigate their past and current situations. Sometimes that includes doing a data search on **Missouri Casenet**. Call me and I can explain all this.
- Then list clients' past employment, skills, education, etc. If clients don't have jobs, make a recommendation for them to do job searches. We require they submit 15 applications per day and record the results. The best places we have found for quick employment and income are temporary employment agencies. Once clients get jobs they can start paying for housing and their basic needs in the motels we provide in the beginning.
- Once clients can completely pay their motel bills, you can help them progress further. That would look like more affordable housing, better and higher paying jobs/careers, and better transportation.

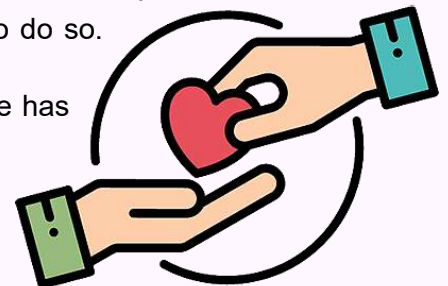
We pray clients can begin living in permanent housing and have a better life. We believe in always leaving people better off than where we found them. **FSBH** owns seven mobile homes which we can provide for those who qualify for permanent housing. This is the most affordable option and easiest to obtain in the area for the working poor. We could fill at least 50 more, but do not have the finances to buy additional ones.

This is just a brief rundown on how to help the needy if you feel called to do so. The **Greatest Commandments** say we all are!

We give **God** in **Jesus'** name all the Praise, Glory, and Honor for what He has done for us and has given to us to steward in our ministries.

Thank You! God Bless You!

Paul- 636-466-1365





This year's **Give STL Day** will be the 11<sup>th</sup> one for this amazing fundraiser platform and will take place on **May 9, 2024**. **FSBH** has participated for the past nine years and we have been blessed with wonderful funding from friends and supporters of our ministry.

Please mark your calendar now to help us out on this powerful one day of online fundraising throughout the St. Louis region. At this time, we're seeking some match-gift supporters. Last year we had \$52,000 available to create incentives for giving on THE DAY. Maybe you'd like to be a part of that effort this year. If so, please contact me for how to make that happen: [lanakruse@gmail.com](mailto:lanakruse@gmail.com). So far we have **\$15,000** of a match available as an incentive for others to participate!

Would you please mark the date in your calendars NOW and plan to support our cause sometime during this year's program? Donating and sharing with your social media contacts would be wonderful.

For the seventh year in a row last year, we won the midnight hour \$1,000 prize for most dollars raised by a micro-charity. **FSBH** was one of 1053 organizations that participated, raising more than \$78,000 from 83 donors. You can help us win that coveted prize again this year by being a midnight owl and contributing between midnight and 1 am on May 9<sup>th</sup>!

You can help us achieve this year's goals with as little as a \$10 donation that day, or during the month prior of "Early Giving." The giving site is [givestlday.org/firststepbackhome](https://givestlday.org/firststepbackhome).

## New Ministry Helps with Cars



We're thrilled to introduce to you our new ministry partner, **Wheels of Faith**, based in Warrenton, MO. This new project seeks to find reliable car donations that they can fix up and sell to clients in the Warren County area. The "fixing up" part will be done by **Righteous Rides**, another transportation ministry in Truesdale. If you have a car to donate, check out their website (link above).

The leaders of this organization are **Jim & Cindy**

**Kientzy**, members of **Faith Christian Family Church**. The church is providing guidance to them as they get their new public charity up and running. The image above will be on an I-70 billboard at the **Anchor House** property in Warrenton. To contact **Wheels of Faith**, email: [wheelsoffaithmo@gmail.com](mailto:wheelsoffaithmo@gmail.com) or call 636-395-0265.

One of the earliest transactions for this new ministry in February was for a client of **FSBH** who is staying at **Anchor House**. **Ella** needed a car, and donations had come in to **FSBH** for her benefit, so now she has reliable transportation!

Other donations came in for **Ella's** benefit, so she has graduated from homelessness to independence with housing and transportation. When she first came to us last Christmastime, we thought her situation was "impossible." But our awesome **God** has supplied in many ways for her well-being and for that we are very thankful. (See Ella's story on Page 5.)







## Do Invisible People Really Exist? by Paul Kruse

Basically, “Invisible People” are those who are at the bottom of the social order who have for one reason or the other, due to bad decisions or no fault of their own, become homeless. The reason they are said to be “those dirty, nasty-looking people” is because people who are doing well do not perceive them as human, and don’t want to even look at them. They don’t realize **God** looks at the soul of everyone no matter what they look like on the outside! (1 Samuel 16:7)

Like, “Oh, look at that guy. He doesn’t even seem real and looks unsafe!” as they pass by a poor person leaning up against a building or someone dressed in rags and unclean. They just don’t view these people as visible or real people because of the way they appear or dress. They don’t want to get involved because they are not equal to them. I know this, because I was once sort of like these folks before **God** opened my eyes to his Love for everyone!

The **Bible** says **God** Loves the poor and wants His people to demonstrate a compassionate and sympathetic heart towards them. Leviticus 25:35-36 says, paraphrased, to help the poor as you would a stranger, so they can continue to live among you. This reminds me of the **Greatest Commandments** that say, paraphrased, “Love **God** and Love your neighbor as yourself.” There is a lot in that statement also. It agrees with the Levitical verse meaning to help raise the poor to the same status as you.

But how do we talk about helping the poor to increase in status as we are and help them to maintain that status and live among us? When we do that, we are helping **Jesus**. (Matt. 25:40) Luke 14:13-14 says, paraphrased, when you help someone in need, you will be repaid at the Resurrection of the righteous. Which means, when **Jesus** comes back the righteous will be chosen to go with Him! I want to be one of those persons, don’t you?



We have a friend who runs a website called **Invisible People**. The lifelong goal of **Mark Horvath** is to raise awareness world-wide and institute public advocacy to solve homelessness. I have always said the only way to put a dent in the homeless problem is for more everyday citizens not connected to a social service agency to get involved. The need far outweighs the number of agencies and the support there is for them today! If **FSBH**, as a public charity, could get more funding, staff, and volunteers, I believe we could help everyone in our three-county area who is homeless. We could help them and realize at least a 50% success rate of giving them a much better life, a plan, and a program to increase their status in life. Many would become self-supporting and be homeless no more.

Here is an example: **Mark** came to me in early December and asked if he could interview two of my clients to put on his website to raise awareness and gain public involvement to help the homeless. He did, and I could not believe the unexpected results! You will read later in the newsletter how the videos of these two clients helped them tremendously overcome their plights of homelessness.

The **Invisible People YouTube channel** has 1.15 million subscribers. The two videos he produced on our clients’ amazing stories have received more than a million views, more than 28,000 new views on our **FSBH** website and 220 new donors to **FSBH**, many of whom dedicated finances to these two specific clients. (See Page 5 for Kevin’s and Ella’s stories.) Those donations have come in from all over the world! Australia, Russia, China, Greece, England, Canada, Mexico and the USA! Most of the gifts have been sent by everyday citizens being “ordinary angels” working just like the ones featured in a movie of that name that is out now. Many have sent funds, made phone calls and provided special Christmas holiday treats for the children involved.

These donors are everyday people who have compassion and sympathy for our clients’ miserable situations. This is exactly what we need more of - **to raise awareness of what misery and depression poor people are going through and do something to help!** Donating money is fine but we need people to be the personal strength and physical help the homeless and fragile families need to succeed as well.





## Part of Ella's Story

**Ella** has progressed from the motel where we first met in mid-December, to getting into an apartment at **Anchor House** in Warrenton and getting a car through the new **Wheels of Faith** program. (See article on Page 3.) If you haven't heard where she was when we first encountered her, watch the **video** here.

Much of Ella's progress has been made possible by the 250k **Invisible People** viewers, some of whom donated to **FSBH** so we could supply for her needs over the past 2 ½ months. Shortly after she moved to her stable housing spot, we shopped for a recliner chair. **FSBH** has been able to pay for lodging, get her new glasses, groceries, pay for part of the car purchase, provide fuel and laundry funds. All this is because of the generosity of donors sympathetic to her cause.



## Part of Kevin's Story



Over the past 2½ months **FSBH** has been able to help **Kevin** and his family of four children with lodging at a local motel, and to get him a much-needed new reliable vehicle, a 2013 Chevy Silverado. In this picture, he's tailgating with two of his daughters on the evening he got it. What a blessing to him from the 889+K viewers of his story and the 130 of them who sent funds to make this happen! (Watch Kevin's story on **YouTube**.)

Kevin works locally and has a generous boss who works with his situations to be available to his children when they are out of school or have other personal needs. He is still looking for an affordable permanent home for the five of them. He wants to stay near Wentzville where the kids are in school, and where his job is located. If you can help him find a place, let us know!

## Bridge Church Bridges a Gap



Thankful and blessed by kitchen supplies lovingly gifted by **The Bridge Church**, Lake St. Louis, for our client **Christie** whose family is 2 months, 3 weeks post devastating fire that burned everything down. They live in the country, staying in a small old camper on the property, north of Warrenton. The water and electricity were finally restored on their property during the first week of March.

Christie was thrilled to receive a toaster, mixer, pots & pans and baking dishes. We wrapped them up as a sort-of late February birthday present for her. She said she can't wait to bake something now!

At least the chickens survived and are producing eggs again. Assistance is greatly needed to help them clean up this property. Anyone??? Just let us know and we'll get you connected.

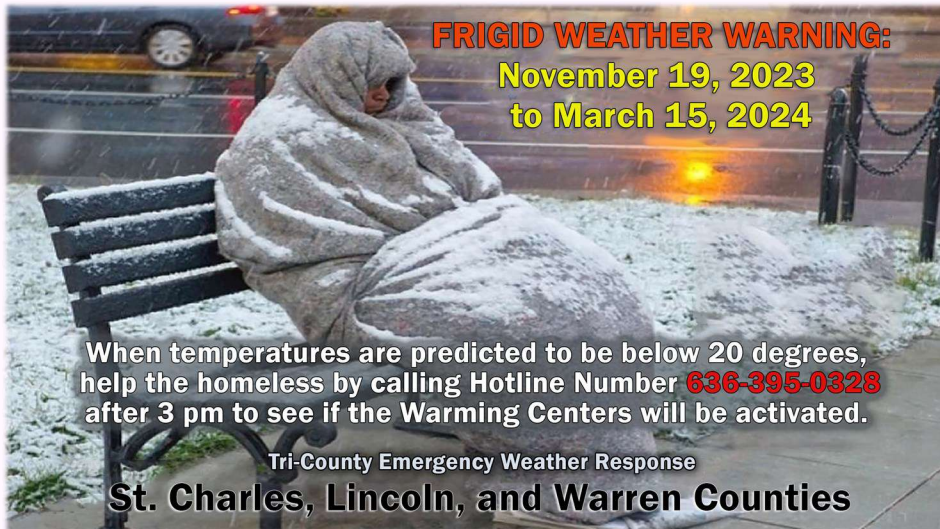
**The Bridge Church** also helps **FSBH** through the provision of

meals at the local motels as part of our **Meal Ministry Program**.





## 7th Year For Emergency Response Team Activations



While March is finally here, and spring is really on the way now, it was once again another full season for the 65 or so volunteers who were on stand-by to serve at the seven locations used for 11 of the bitter cold nights we experienced this winter through the **Emergency Weather Response Team** of the **Community Council**.

This was the seventh year for this life-sustaining program, to provide warming centers throughout our three-county region for people on the streets when temps were predicted to

be 20 degrees or less. A total of 123 people were served this year, representing 70 households. Bed-nights added up to 124.

FSBH is pleased to be a part of this essential program for our unhoused neighbors. During the January frigid snap of several days, we were also able to help supply food and volunteers for the daytime services that were offered this year for the first time ever.

## 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 **Industrial Ally, AT&T, Wells Fargo, Bayer, 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
- **Visit our ministry website and click "Donate"** for direct donation via your credit card through PayPal. There is a small fee charged to the ministry with this option: [firststepbackhome.net](https://firststepbackhome.net).
- **Donate directly** to our PayPal account: [paypal.com/paypalme/firststepbackhome](https://paypal.com/paypalme/firststepbackhome)
- **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](https://thrivent.com/actionteam).



## Operation Round Up Funds Help Cover Motel Stays for Homeless

Last November right before Thanksgiving Day, **FSBH** was blessed to receive a \$7,000 grant from the **Cuivre River Electric Cooperative's Operation Round Up (ORU) Program**. These funds are being used exclusively for motel stays for clients in our region. Over the past 19 years, the **ORU** Program has funded **FSBH** with \$133,000 for this cause. It is expected that the current grant will supply lodging expenses for 39 single

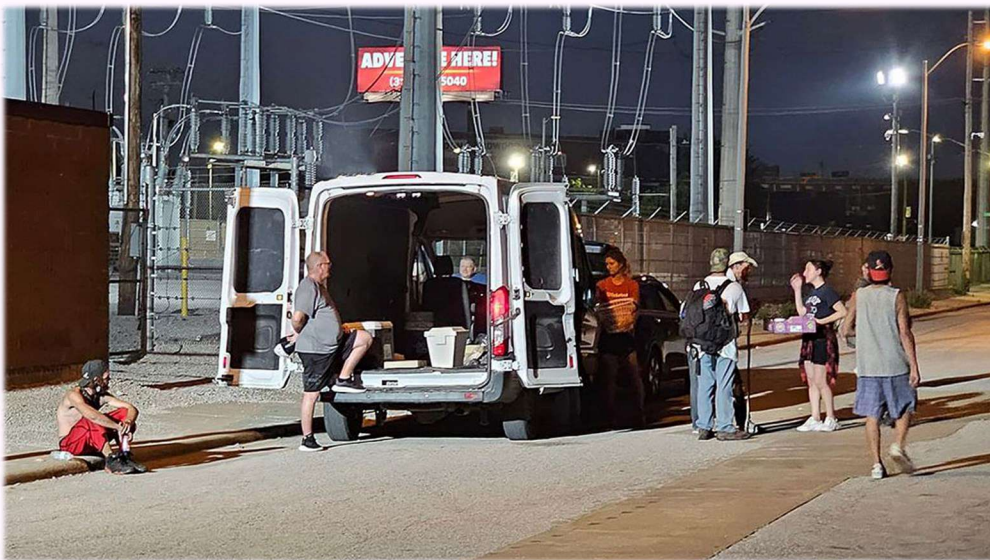
homeless or family units to have a 2 day stay at one of several local motels used for shelter.

While our primary program is to house men and help them get work through temporary employment agencies, we do also provide lodging for women and children who are not able to stay at places such as the Salvation Army, our Ladies Inn (pregnant) or Robertson Center (women facing abuse). People not willing to work are not accepted into the program.

If you live in a **Cuivre River Electric Cooperative** area, you can "round up" your monthly electric bill to be part of this program. For you it will only cost cents on the dollar. But those "cents" add up, and the **ORU** team has more than \$20,000 each month to distribute to worthy causes. We're grateful to be a part of this provision.



## FSBH Collaborates with Downtown Outreach Ministry in St. Louis



**Ed Kallery**, founder of **Mind the Gap**, often stops by **FSBH** to pick up items he can pass out tailgate style during his Thursday evening connections with the street homeless folks in downtown St. Louis. We are often given items he and his clients can use, such as toiletries, socks, blankets, hats and coats.



We also supply him with cell phones for clients he knows are serious about their job searches and progress.

We recently received a huge donation of 400 pairs of new men's socks from **Divvy-Up Socks** in Florida. We supply this ministry as well as our own clients with new socks when treasures like this are left at our doorstep.





## 15th Annual Christmas Wonderland



Our **15th Annual Christmas Wonderland** was held on December 9 at **Wentzville United Methodist Church** as a drive-through event once again in their parking lot. It was another glorious day for the 600 clients who benefitted from it and the 50 volunteers who showed up to make it all happen once again! This year we focused on providing holiday treats to NEW families, and we were FULL with our registration list for the 120 families shortly after it opened!

We're so very thankful for the bountiful provision of toys, gift cards, filled laundry/cleaning baskets, Bibles, holiday food treats, toys and handmade quilts that were provided. A grant from **Healthy Blue** of Missouri helped to cover expenses as well.

In 2024, we'll be holding this popular event again at the same place on **Saturday, December 14th**. Keep us in mind if you'd like to enjoy and be a part of bringing Christmas blessings to the needy in our region.



Many of the volunteers before the event began







## 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. Some gifts have been made in honor or in memory of loved ones.

- \$7,000 – **Cuivre River Operation Round Up** (See article on page 7.)
- \$5,000 – **Tom and Mitch Fleming Charitable Foundation**, Chesterfield
- \$3,200 – **Mission Financial-** St. Peters
- \$1,000 – **Central Presbyterian Church**, Clayton
- \$1,000 – **St. John UCC** – St. Charles
- \$ 931 – **Mary Martha Thrift Shop**, Wentzville
- \$ 900 – **Element Church**, Wentzville
- \$ 800 – **Wentzville United Methodist Men's Group**
- \$ 751 - **Thrivent** Choice Dollars allocations from **Dennis & Donna Hall, Tina Konchi, Marita LaChapell, Valerie Elliott, and Diane Prange**
- \$ 700 – **Warrenton Christian Church**
- \$ 695 – **AbbVie Corporate** Match from employee giving
- \$ 600 – **Chapel of the Lake**, Lake St. Louis
- \$ 500 – **Waypoint Church**, Harvester
- \$ 450 – **Church of God Faith Fellowship**, Grubville
- \$ 400 – **Knights of Columbus Ladies Auxiliary Council 823** – St. Charles
- \$ 300 – **New Life Nazarene Church** O'Fallon Christmas Eve Offerings
- \$ 225 – **Tim Halls/Moneta Group** in honor of **Ken Kilen**
- \$ 200 – **Grace Community Chapel**, St. Peters
- \$ 200 – **Mark & Lisa Sammelman** in honor of her parents **Norbert & Joann Schaeffer**
- \$ 200 – **Dardenne Presbyterian Church Women**
- \$ 47 – **PayPal** Giving Fund
- \$ 25 – **Ladies Serving Together Group** of **First Baptist Church** O'Fallon
- \$ 20 – **AT&T** corporate match for employee gift



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



## 8th Annual Thanksgiving Dinner

Thanksgiving Dinners was served up on November 18 for about 250 for residents of the mobile home parks where we provide services and for clients at two motels in Wentzville where the homeless stay. Lots of big smiles receiving the turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, green beans, rolls and pumpkin pie.

This was our 8th annual Thanksgiving event. Coordinating it all was **Cheryl Street** and her hubby **Tom**. They recruited lots of helpers from friends of **Gateway Church**, St. Peters and **2 Rivers Church**, O'Fallon. Since covid, we've done it drive-thru style, and it works very well for this event.





Waypoint Church serving food prepared by **Crossed Heart BBQ**

viewed online at [firststepbackhome.net/meal-calendar](https://firststepbackhome.net/meal-calendar). You can sign up to serve by contacting **Kim Orf** at 636-219-5496 or [fsbhmeals@gmail.com](mailto:fsbhmeals@gmail.com). Come be a part of this rewarding ministry!

## Meal Ministry Update

The Meal Ministry is running wonderfully, thanks to all the fabulous groups and individuals who put so much time, effort, and love into preparing meals and serving at the Economy Inn.

Over the last quarter, new servers have included the **Castlio K-Club**, the **Page & Co.**, **Knapheide**, **Waypoint Church**, the **Corbett Family**, and **Berman Zapata**.

It is wonderful to meet so many dedicated people and witness the dedication to serving families in need. People have come out in frigid cold and snowy weather to bring warmth to the families. The group that served on New Year's Eve gave out food, and bottles of sparkling cider so families could celebrate. Often someone thinking of serving will stop by before they first serve to observe another group, and the current groups are always warmly welcoming and helpful. **Waypoint Church** began serving twice a month with food prepared by **Crossed Heart BBQ**.

As of this writing, there are only 3 open dates in the month of March, which is the best coverage we've had since before the pandemic. There are still openings for anyone interested in volunteering. The calendar can be



The Corbett Family and Michelle Schroder 2/12/24



St. Patrick's Church 11/27/23



Page & Co. 12/17/23



Sisters of Service 12/31/23





## Why Do We Help the Homeless?

This is an overview of where your donations have been put to use during 2023. 286 families were served including 412 adults, 221 children and 20 seniors. That's a total of 653 people helped - only God could make this happen! As you can see from the charts below, your donations are used to help many families in our region.

### Service Summary

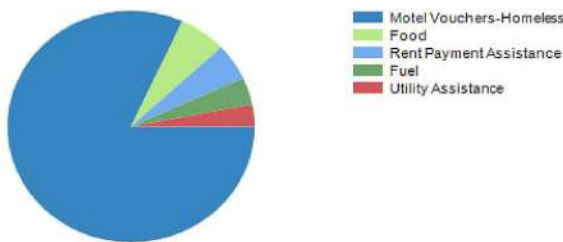


St. Charles, Lincoln, & Warren  
Continuum of Care

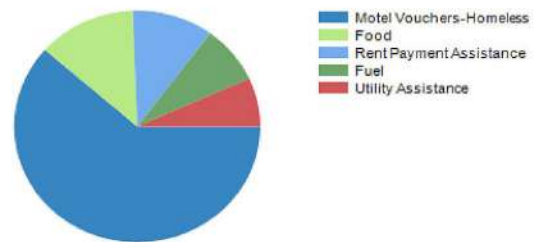
Service Date Between: 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2023

#### 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	1	1.00	\$329.00	1	1	1	2	0
Car repair	20	20.00	\$7,363.21	20	19	37	17	2
Cell phone	13	13.00	\$660.94	11	11	11	3	0
Cell Phone Minutes	12	12.00	\$853.22	12	12	14	6	0
Clothing	9	9.00	\$1,036.00	9	9	12	11	0
Department of Revenue Payment	4	4.00	\$669.78	4	3	5	2	0
Emergency Home Repair	1	1.00	\$25.00	1	1	2	0	0
Food	47	47.00	\$5,039.82	40	37	48	24	1
Fuel	29	29.00	\$1,029.05	25	23	39	9	3
Household Goods	6	6.00	\$724.80	6	5	9	3	0
Medical Services	1	1.00	\$27.64	1	1	1	0	0
Medication Assistance	3	3.00	\$39.12	3	3	3	0	0
Mobile Home Expenses	13	13.00	\$5,120.20	5	4	6	4	3
Motel Vouchers-Homeless	297	622.00	\$56,522.62	190	183	272	121	8
Personal hygiene items	6	6.00	\$492.08	5	5	5	0	0
Rent Payment Assistance	39	39.00	\$8,591.00	33	33	37	28	7
Rental Arrears Payments	3	3.00	\$555.00	3	3	4	2	1
Rental Deposit	11	11.00	\$2,888.00	11	11	14	11	2
School Supplies	2	2.00	\$168.36	2	2	3	4	0
Storage	4	4.00	\$699.00	3	3	2	1	0
Transportation	6	6.00	\$503.94	5	5	7	7	0
Utility Arrears	16	16.00	\$3,269.30	14	13	22	24	1
Utility Assistance	23	23.00	\$4,148.99	21	19	30	15	2
Utility Deposit Assistance	1	1.00	\$400.00	1	1	2	2	0
<b>Organization Total:</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>892.00</b>	<b>\$101,156.07</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>20</b>