



Lehigh Valley Outreach Depot

GOD MOMENTS

Jesus was asked “What is the greatest commandment?” He said: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22: 36-40). Later He was asked “who is my neighbor?” He told the parable of the good Samaritan which ends with

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40)

During a visit to Mission Central, we saw this written on the wall and it inspired us to go to the Mission Central web site and study their “God Moments”. In the early stages of setting up our own web site, we decided to record our own God Moments – those every day experiences and circumstances that could only be explained by acknowledging that God was working through us and through the actions of others.

While we experience God Moments every day at the Depot, we’ve only recorded a few of those. We invite our visitors, guests, and volunteers to send their own God Moments to bob@lvoutreachdepot.org.

Our First God Moment!

A dream became a vision and that vision inspired our local church to create a ministry. After discovering Mission Central and being awed and inspired by their vision, creation and development and by volunteering and experiencing what we choose to call “Practical Christianity,” we wanted to do the same thing for the Lehigh Valley. The economy was bad! Would some business owner be willing to donate space for a start-up warehouse? Only by reaching out to them by way of a mass mailing project would we find out. We got in our car, drove through several of many industrial parks located within close proximity and convenient to the lower income populations of our city. Then we mailed our letters. That was late fall, 2009!



Bingo! Ed Sinko and Gary Wagner, owners of Rustic Exteriors, a company specializing in stone facings for houses, contacted us. They had actually read our letter and they responded! They were willing to let us use 5,000 square feet of space for one year – at no cost! What a blessing these two gentlemen were!

We-Haul Moving



In the beginning our warehouse space was not perfect but was very useable, near major highways (for trucking) and had truck access for loading and unloading furniture and supplies. The area needed major cleaning and painting. A large group of people from Wesley Church volunteered their time to help with the tasks at hand. This was March 2010!

One day another tenant of the building, James, inquired about what was going on and what were we creating. James had, and still has, a truck rental and moving business. Business trips find him frequently returning from the mid-west by way of Mission Central with a only a partial load or an empty truck. James offered and has already been able to transport pallets of goods from Mission Central to us.

Our God moment occurred when we had to show patience in getting those pallets from James' area of the warehouse to our depot area. What a blessing that was! We experienced an accidental and unexpected flooding of our entire depot space. The materials on the pallets were spared being damaged by the water due to our having to wait. These pallets contained desperately needed Health Kits, destined to be sent to Haiti. Our job was to verify that the kits had been properly packed. When James' men brought the pallets to our depot, the space was completely dried out and our verification work could begin. Thank God we had decided to wait for the move!

Pots and Pans

A couple of church members walked in the door and said they wanted to deliver some items for the depot. We were used to such announcements, having received numerous donations over the past few months.

These donations were different! Apparently this couple had been asking themselves what they could do to help our ministry. They opened the morning paper and discovered that Boscov's was having a clearance sale on many useful items. They went to Boscov's and selected a variety of items – toaster ovens, coffee makers, vacuums, electric grills, pots & pans, sheets, towels and other items – more than \$280 worth of new items!

We were awed by this act of generosity - but not surprised – we find that God is always there renewing our faith in His goodness and His support of our ministry.

Within a half hour after this couple left the depot a mother of 4 walked in to pick up items she had selected last week – a sofa, two chairs and a variety of educational toys for her children. She asked if perhaps we might possibly have some pots and pans

she could use. When handed a brand new set of pots and pans, she was visibly touched and very thankful for what we were able to do for her and her children. This was fall, 2010.

The Blessing of HEAT!

We were still in the first year of our ministry and resources were limited. We were completely dependent upon donations. The area we were offered had a furnace and oil tank that hadn't been used for years. The owner had never had a need to use it. We learned that the furnace was inoperable because the exhaust had to be removed to make room for an access ramp.

As winter approached we hoped and prayed we could refurbish the furnace and use it for heat. We soon discovered the cost would be prohibitive. We were led to call in Hannabery HVAC, a local heating company, to get their advice.



Hannabery's technician came to the depot and, after hearing about our vision and ministry, came up with a creative solution - bypassing the existing furnace and installing a propane furnace. He was able to convince his management to donate a new 80,000 BTU furnace and he donated his own labor at no cost to our ministry. This happened in November 2010, just in time for winter!

As we do for every major benefactor, we added a link to Hannabery HVAC on our web site. While posting the link, we learned that Hannabery's motto is "THE COMPANY THAT CARES".

The Bushkill Inn & Resort

In early 2011 we had been telling dozens of our "guests" that the Lehigh Valley Outreach Depot simply had no beds or dressers available. Our prayers often included pleas for help.



By way of a considerate friend at Trinity Church, we received notice that the Bushkill Inn & Resort (in the Poconos) needed to get rid of more than 50 rooms of bedroom furniture on a first come, first served basis. We called & were told that we were caller #3. As soon as the first caller took what they wanted, the second caller wanted to take what was left.

We decided to follow up with a second call (right after caller #1 had left) and were told that, because of what we planned to do with the furniture, we could get up to 15 rooms full of furniture if we could just pick it up the next day.



On short notice we were able to get a team of 8 volunteers, two pickup trucks with trailers, and rented a 24 foot truck!



Using every cubic foot of available transport space we successfully moved a large number of beds, dressers, nightstands, desks, tables, blankets, bedspreads and mattress covers to add to the Depot's inventory.

As we arrived to unload the trucks, there was a "guest" waiting anxiously to take away a bed, a dresser and an end table!

A Recliner for Amanda

One Thursday morning in 2011 we opened our email and found a plea for help. The message read, in part:

"As you may have read in the newspaper one of our students was seriously injured in an automobile accident. The immediate need of the family is they could really use a Lazy Boy recliner for the daughter who was injured in the accident.



She will be coming home this week and will do her rehab at home. She is still using a walker and they do not want her to lie in bed all day. A recliner would be helpful on two levels: one, she could spend part of the day sitting up and two; she can use the arms to help push herself up to use the walker."

We replied, saying we didn't know for sure if we had a recliner at the depot but would check. If not, we would send out a special request to get one donated – and would be surprised if we couldn't come up with a recliner by Saturday.

There were no recliners at the depot so we asked our church office to include a request in the Friday morning e-news. Within two hours we had a response! By Friday evening we had two recliners delivered to the depot and two more were donated Saturday morning!

God loves you, Amanda, and God's people love you too. We were glad we could help!

People Blessing People

One of our many volunteers is a realtor. Working full time keeps Debby from volunteering at the Depot, but she's constantly working as an ambassador for this ministry. Whenever she attends a realtors' meeting, she lets them know that there's a place that will gladly receive leftover furniture and household goods.

Debby "popped in" one day in late 2011 to announce that there was a home with a couple of beds available but they'd have to be picked up before the end of the week. The moving volunteers asked if they might follow her to the house right away. She agreed and they returned shortly with 2 beds.

A guest had been in earlier that morning and was scheduled to return that afternoon to pick up the little furniture she had chosen. She had asked for 2 beds but we had had none. Now we had them & were able to tell her of her good fortune. She was, of course, very pleased and explained, in broken English, that the county agency was coming the next day to see if her home was suitable for her two children. She hadn't seen her children for two years. Her husband had bashed the face of one of the children and the children had been removed. Now she had hope and shook with excitement!

She had been referred by a mental health agency. She went on to say that her mattress was on the floor and she'd like to get it off the floor if possible. We had no box springs and could only offer a frame, slats and a board. Lo and behold, two volunteers arrived with a complete full sized bed. It was suggested she take it and donate her mattress to someone else. At that point she had tears in her eyes and went around thanking all the volunteers. As she left she felt sure she'd get her children back because of what she had found at the Depot. God is good!

God Works in Unexpected Ways

One of our God Moment tells the story of a church couple purchasing a variety of household goods for the Depot, and a half an hour later being able to answer a single mother's request for pots and pans by giving her a set that the couple had provided. There have been many more of these God moments since, and naturally, we came to develop an idea of what a God moment looked like. But then He surprised us!

In the fall of 2012, a young mother came in hoping to find beds for her family as well as a few other things. Unfortunately, that day we had nothing that she needed. As she sat there digesting this and talking with the volunteer who was working with her, she realized there were other ways she could get what she needed - there was a bed in storage which could be used, and - she had just gotten a job and could put a few

things on layaway.

When she left, she was pleased with the outcome of her visit. She was pleased with herself. And we realized that, even though this encounter was different from our usual guest visits, we had still been able to help a woman in need pull her life together. This too was a God moment!

Leslie

Last January, Tom and Anne, two of our regular volunteers, took a run to Joann's Fabrics to pick up more fleece for the no-sew blankets Anne makes and donates to The Depot. Two shopping carts were filled with bolts of fabric. The employee cutting the fabric asked what the fabric was being used for. They were about half way finished at the cutting area and the explanation when a young lady came and stood beside them and listened to the story about the Depot, the usual shortage of blankets, and how we try to supplement with the fleece so there are blankets at least for the little ones. She began digging through her purse, although she didn't think she had too much money with her. Even though they declined, she handed them some money towards the fleece. She didn't know them from Adam!!!

She said she supports anything she can within the Lehigh Valley. Long story short - this very young woman had been on Yaz birth control pills, and almost lost her life from the huge tumors that developed in her lungs and a large tumor that developed in her heart. Her doctor brought her back from the brink of death, and she was just happy to be alive. (She will be on blood thinners for the rest of her life which she is also allergic to.) So she tries to pay it forward in any way she can. Needless to say, there they all were in Joann's crying and hugging. All she would tell them was that her name was Leslie.

Leslie has successfully sued Yaz, and won, and is currently awaiting a settlement check which will go toward her daughter's college education.

What a difference a vehicle can make!

God Moments can come from 4 simple wheels. Shari Noctor & her husband Tom are Re-Max Realtors in Whitehall. They own a box truck which they make available to non-profit organizations. We learned of this community service opportunity and of their generosity while sharing information about the Depot at a meeting. Our moving volunteers were using their own pick-up trucks, vans and station wagons to pick up items donated by the generous people of the Lehigh Valley. They



most often would pull a small closed trailer. Moving items was a struggle to say the least. With advance notice, when available, we were able to borrow the Noctor moving truck. The Noctors only asked two things 1) proof of insurance; 2) return the truck with a full tank of gas. The use of their truck was a blessing to the Depot in so many ways.

Later we discovered another Re-Max Realtor – Kathy Parcell of Macungie—willing to let us use her truck - also on an “as available” basis.



Talent

Some people have a God given talent. That talent creates God Moments for others. Fritz is one of our volunteers who can do anything and everything. He can fix anything and creates clever devices for making projects easier. For months we struggled with lugging mattresses and box springs into and out of the Depot. Fritz arrived one day with a “mattress table”. A long table with wheels that will handle a couple mattresses and box springs at one time and can be wheeled in and out and about. Fritz has also created small carts that are perfect for moving things like air conditioners, TVs, and various other smaller, bulkier items.

Believing in our ministry!

In the spring of 2012 a generous donor offered to match financial donations made during the Lenten season. The Depot has no direct funding and relies completely on donations to help cover ALL expenses. This particular donor was willing to match dollar for dollar up to a maximum of \$20,000.

We have also been blessed by a generous donor who has given \$100,000 toward the purchase of a building to house the Depot permanently.

Grant

Receipt of a \$15,000 grant in December 2012 enabled us to buy our own box truck. We received a check for \$15,000 and began our search for the right truck. One of our Wesley Church members invited the Executive Director of the Greater Lehigh Valley Automobile Dealers Association to the Depot to hear our story and see what we do for the needy. As a result of that visit, he sent a message to all of the dealers asking that they do their best to find a used box truck in decent condition in that price range. Needless to say, we prayed a lot and finally our prayers were answered. Our



new (used) truck, which boasts a hydraulic lift gate (a perfect accessory for our older volunteers!) was bought from Milham Auto Group for less than \$15,000! We had enough left over to add professional art work to the sides!

This truck now helps our volunteers use their valuable time much more effectively and efficiently when picking up donated household goods. Several stops can be coordinated in one "run", saving both time and money. Previously our volunteers would have to return and

unload at the Depot several times a day, eating up lots of valuable time.

We often get calls asking us to pick up donations on short notice. In April 2013 we got a call from the general manager of the Fairfield Inn in Allentown. He had just been asked by his renovation contractor to clear 7 hotel rooms so his people could start work the next morning. The hotel manager offered the Outreach Depot 14 full size beds with frames and pillows— but only if they could be picked up and removed by the end of the day! If we hadn't had the truck ready to go, we may not have been able to get multiple pickup trucks and volunteers on such short notice. Fortunately we had both the truck and a few willing volunteers available to do this on short notice! What a blessing!

An Angel Appears – delivering sweaters

In March, 2013 Karen was working with a guest, helping load the vehicle with the selections just made. She noticed a woman standing near the entrance to the depot with a large cardboard box at her feet. When Karen inquired if the woman needed help she stated "I have a box of things to be delivered to the Depot." They went inside and Karen discovered the box was full of knitted/crocheted baby sweaters that Mary's Shelter could not use. All she had to say was "baby sweaters" and Karen got so excited. You have to understand, baby sweaters are needed in the layette kits that are assembled for UMCOR. We don't have the funds to purchase the sweaters and have found that our knitting circle for sweaters has slowed down production. That box brought the joy a child experiences. It was hard to believe that believe that we had just received 33 handmade baby sweaters along with tiny hats, scarves and mittens!

Although our new friend, another Karen, let us know she had not made the sweaters, she was the Angel that brought them to us . In return we gathered overstock of non-compliant cleaning supplies for her to take to the women housed in the shelter. What a great day this was! We have a new friend and another community connection.

Mary's Shelter Cay Calgon Center provides temporary housing to young women while assisting them with counseling, education and quality pre-natal care that focuses on

achieving independent living skills. The goal is the birth of a healthy baby to a healthy well informed mother.

Mary's Shelter finds that many individuals want to make baby sweaters for the infants but often there are not enough babies to fill the sweaters! Now these wonderful knitters and crocheters will have their sweaters sent to babies all over the world. In turn we can assure individuals who donate cleaning supplies to the Depot, that if we cannot use them, we will make sure we find someone in need who can. We have been blessed with this new connection!

A Christmas Blessing

It was a few weeks before Christmas and a mother of 5 was in to select furniture and house wares. She was looking at the Christmas lights we had out for our guests to take and picked up a few items that would be used for gifts for her children. When we realized what she was doing, we brought out some markers, crayons and a crafts kit that had been kept in the kits area so she would have a few additional things to give her children. When she saw what we were giving her, small as it was, the tears began streaming down her face as she kept saying "Thank you, thank you, thank you."

A Special Talent

Sometimes God blesses us by bringing us people with special talents that help create God moments for our guests. Anne is a new volunteer who loves to make flower arrangements in memory of her mother. She has taken some of our vases home and created beautiful decorative pieces with them. The vases, which used to sit on the shelves, are now snapped up by guests who enjoy being able to get something extra – something just for the pleasure of it.