

What You Don't Know Can Hurt You.

Continued from previous page

Aside from that, I spend a lot of time talking to seniors trying to educate them to get ahead of their misconceptions.

Often senior ladies believe that if their husband dies, they will continue to get his pension, and many seniors I work with don't understand Medi-Care and food stamp rules. So I think that one of the things I always try to get across to seniors is that what they do not know can and will hurt them, I try to educate them.

Q: If you could talk to one of Network's donors, what would you say to them?

A: There are so many seniors who rely on Seniors' Net to help them each month, and I know that Network relies on donors to give seniors the help they need, so if I could talk to a donor, I would thank them from the bottom of my heart for all they continue to do for those in need in the community.

A Message from CEO Cindy

Dear (Salutation),

As 2017 has ended, it is appropriate to pause and reflect on the events of the year. Often words fail to relate how transformational the help of Network has been in the lives of those it has served, but it is important to convey to you with clarity what you have accomplished in the lives of those in need in our community through the simple act of donating to Network.

How do I explain what it is like looking into the eyes of an impoverished parent pleading for food to feed their hungry children? With mere words, can I express to you the sheer joy experienced by parents who enter our Toyland Express warehouse to choose Christmas gifts for their children? Can I help you to imagine what relief those parents must feel that their children won't have to wonder why other children received presents at Christmas and they didn't? Using words, can I bring you into a small room with me to watch as a crying mother like Nanette tells me that everything she owns is in her car, and asks if we can help her find a place to sleep tonight?

Frequently throughout 2017 I have written to you, sharing stories of clients finding the help they need. I wrote those letters to let you know that in each moment I described to you, you were with us. By donating to Network, you have adopted the cause of providing for those in need, and all that Network has accomplished, we have accomplished together. Together we have fed the hungry, clothed those in need, and provided hope, healing, and restoration. Together we have cared, together we have coached, and together we have empowered.

In closing, I recall the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. who said, "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase." I want to thank you for taking a step in faith. I want to express my gratitude to you for being with me through moments of harsh reality, tearful sorrows, infinite hope, and tremendous triumph. I also want to ask you to be with me again in 2018, so that the good work we have undertaken will continue. Please give today - your help means so much to so many.

Kindest Regards,

CEO, Network of Community Ministries



PS-I am pleased to report that more than 36 organizations donated toys to support Network's Toyland Express Program in 2017. Over 1200 were served during the program which allowed parents to choose Christmas presents for their children in a store-like setting. I am also very grateful for the commitment of dozens of volunteers who worked tirelessly to help make sure that those who received toys through Toyland Express had an amazing experience while receiving the help they needed. The success of programs like Toyland Express relies on donors like you, thanks for helping children.



Impacting with Intention

Vol 2

Issue 1

A NEWSLETTER SHARING THE OUTCOMES OF YOUR GENEROSITY

From a Violent Past to a New Hope

How you Helped a Desperate Mother Who Escaped a Nightmare



When Nanette left her husband, he'd made it clear that he could find her anywhere she went but she took the chance, and left anyway. She left knowing what was going to happen next - he would cut off her access to money, refuse to help her in any way, and force her to come back because she had no place to stay. He would promise to change, but she decided that no matter what he tried, she wasn't going to repeat the cycle again.

But staying away wasn't easy- Nanette found herself in a difficult situation. Her parents were ailing, and needed her help, and Nanette needed a place to stay, but Nanette's ex-husband knew where her parents lived. After some thought, Nanette decided to put her fears aside and leave Florida, and came to Texas to be with her parents.

In This Edition

Receiving SNAP- and still hungry

Education is key to helping seniors

Living without utility service

Reflecting on 2017 with CEO Cindy.

From a Violent Past to a New Hope

How You Helped a Desperate Mother Who Escaped a Nightmare

Continued from front page

Shortly after arriving in Texas, and moving into her parents home, Nanette visited Network, in a state of panic.

Earlier in the week she had found that her ex-husband was in the Dallas area. She had come home to find that the back gate of the house, and an interior door had been broken into. Nanette was scared that her worst fears had come true, and that her ex-husband had tracked her down, and was going hurt her or her son.

"I don't know what to do," Nanette said, "I feel like I have had all of hell come against me."

Since leaving her husband, Nanette had been penniless. Her parents were in their seventies, and living in an aging home, so in addition to worrying about the safety of her child and her parents, Nanette worried because she couldn't figure out how

"I don't know what to do," Nanette said, "I feel like I have had all of hell come against me."

she was going to pay to fix the gate and the door. Nanette had been relying on the kindness of neighbors like you to help her with food, and clothing for her son. She began to wonder if Network's Seniors' Net Handyman Program could help her to fix the damage to her parent's home.

Even though the repairs Nanette requested were out of the ordinary-leaving the home open to threat was not a comfortable prospect. The handymen fixed the door, and the gate, making the home Nanette shared with her parents once again as secure as possible. Finally, Nanette was referred to a counselor who could help her further.

"My parents were so touched", Nanette said, "the help they got from Network really meant everything to them."

Feeding the hungry isn't always a SNAP.

Inside the struggle against hunger in the world's richest nation.

Last year your donations made it possible for Network to distribute 408,423 pounds of food to the hungry in the Richardson community, putting Network's donors on the front lines of the battle against hunger. Many of those Network serves are eligible for the SNAP program (the government's supplemental nutrition program, more commonly known as Food Stamps), but still use Network's Food Pantry for extra help.

There are many reasons that government food assistance is often not enough to last all month. The program is not designed to pay for the entire food budget of those who receive help. Also the government has calculated what food costs for each person on the program are by deciding what the average person will eat, and how much the average person will eat. Often these calculations lead to a low monthly allotment for recipients of SNAP because they fail to accurately calculate what types of food will be bought, and they assume very small portion sizes. There are also many items that are not eligible to be purchased with SNAP, such as toiletries, cleaning supplies, and even soap.

It is difficult for those in need to bridge the gap between how



much they receive, and how much food they need to survive. Often this dilemma leads to seniors choosing between food and medical care, or it leads to busy parents choosing food that lacks nutritional value because it is easy to prepare and/or inexpensive.

Fortunately for the hungry in Richardson, Network's donors continue to enrich their lives by providing food for families, and seniors whose SNAP benefits fall short of meeting the challenge of hunger.

What You Don't Know Can Hurt You.

Education is Key in Helping Local Seniors.

Becky Riffe has volunteered with Network for over 5 years, and leaves a legacy of care for seniors. Recently, Becky shared her insights, and her motivation to assist local seniors.



Q: What kind of seniors typically come to Network for help?

A: The seniors I work with usually have no retirement savings. In their work life, they had low paying jobs without retirement packages. They are mostly blue collar and they scraped by before retirement. I also see home makers who are now single, or their spouses have passed, and seniors who never planned to retire, but their health isn't good enough to work anymore.

Q: Which Network programs do you believe are most valuable to seniors?

A: Probably the most valuable is food, the new changes to our Loaves of Love Program have made it popular with seniors. The seniors also seem to like the handyman repair service. For seniors who are still in their homes, having help with home repair is important.

Q: What are some of the biggest challenges that you see facing seniors?

A: Rents in the area have been getting so high and it's so hard for a senior to move if their rent goes up. They are not in physical shape to move everything by themselves. It's even harder for low income seniors, because they can't hire people to help them move, so housing has been a problem that's exploding among seniors in the Richardson community.

Lights Out and In the Cold

Meager wages and rising utility bills lead to peril.

A single mother with two children to support and a third child on the way, Sarah found herself in a difficult situation. With soaring medical expenses to cover, Sarah fell behind on her utility bills, and was facing disconnection of service.

Electricity is essential - not just for quality of life, but often to sustain life as well, it provides protection from extreme heat or cold, powers life saving devices, cools medications that must be refrigerated, and provides light. As the weather cools, rising energy bills result in a lack of protection for thousands of vulnerable households who are struggling to make ends meet. Households who lose utility service often resort to dangerous ways of lighting and heating their homes, and the results can be tragic. Stories range from injury and property destruction in house fires, to deaths from fire and carbon monoxide poisoning caused by using



kerosene heaters.

Once a household's utilities have been interrupted, a large deposit is typically required to restore service. Deposits compound the problem for those living on meager wages. If the original bill was difficult to pay, imagine how hard a deposit is to come up with, leading to prolonged periods without electricity or water for vulnerable families in the community.

In 2017, you helped approximately 5 people each day to avoid utility service interruptions. One of the families that benefited from this help was Sarah's. Network was able to help Sarah catch up on her utility bill, and avoid a service disconnection.

"I don't know what I would have done without the help of Network."