



FRIENDS IN SERVICE HELPING

Executive Director Update



I recently talked to a group of business people who knew very little about FISH. I explained that we have a lot of programs and fundraising efforts, but our real emphasis is on helping people turn their lives around. Many people come to us feeling hopeless and lost (see stories later in the newsletter), and we provide the opportunity for a second or third chance to turn their lives around.

After providing essentials of food, shelter, and showers, we include encouragement, dignity, and volunteer/other growth opportunities. FISH develops individualized action plans, so our clients find hope. With hope, they change their thinking and expectations.

Once these clients take an active role in the changes they need to make, their attitudes and behaviors change. If they change their behaviors, they change their lives.

Of the 4,400 people we helped last year, up to half are climbing out of despair and working toward self-sufficiency. We work with those trying to put their criminal past, drug addiction, alcoholism, and homelessness behind them. Many have relationship problems and other behavioral health issues that keep them stuck in low-paying jobs, unhealthy relationships, and self-destructive habits.

FISH provides a hand-up, not a hand-out... so we continue encouraging the other half of our clients. Some we have to tell, "Come back when you are sober, or let us take you to a treatment center." Some need to get their emotions under control before we can help, and many need short or long-term mental health assistance before we can really help. Fortunately, we have local organizations that we collaborate with (and refer clients to) for services FISH does not provide.

When we find missing community services that fall within our summarized mission of providing: **F**ood, **I**nstruction, **S**helter, or **H**ealth Care, we find a way to fill that shortfall.

With our region's current economy, many technical jobs are going unfilled due to the lack of skilled workers. This has motivated us to develop our most recent "higher-level" service... so we can strengthen our regional economy.

We expect about 1% of our clients to have the work history and college aptitude to qualify for college-level courses that will take them from "minimum wage to meaningful careers." Most of our clients who qualified in the initial technical training programs were single parents who never dreamed of attending college. They are now gainfully employed or just finishing a program that will launch them into the fields of medicine, manufacturing, long-haul trucking, IT, HVAC, etc. Check out our website to learn more about the revitalization of these lives as they exceed their career expectations and function as a role model for their children who are taking their K-12 education more seriously.

A large part of this program provides student/family housing for program participants. The complex being built at the former Whistle Stop Inn will be dedicated to those seeking college-level training at Western Nevada College and other institutions pursuing the knowledge and skill sets that regional employers are looking for.

Less than 1% of our budget is government funded, so we are looking for community support to help us fund our student housing project.

We have raised just over 50% of our \$16 million budget, and we are asking how you can help us change the trajectory of these single-family households with financial support for their housing and education.

FISH provides **F**ood, **I**nstruction, **S**helter, and **H**ealthcare to community members in need, so that they may improve their self-sufficiency through life-changing experiences.



Carson Admin & Thrift:
Minden Thrift:
Gardnerville Ranchos Services:
Mound House Thrift:

Locations

138 E. Long St. 775-882-FISH (3474)
1561 Hwy 395 775-783-FISH (3474)
921 Mitch Dr. 775-265-FISH (3474)
10126 Hwy 50 E 775-721-FISH (3474)



FRIENDS IN SERVICE HELPING

There Is Hope



My life has taken many turns, some for the better, most for the worst- until recently.

I started doing heroin when I was 14 years old. I was involved in gangs and groups of bad people for most of my life. It's crazy, too, because I had a great family growing up; unfortunately, I was the black sheep. After each time in jail or prison, I would try to get it right and start new, but heroin would always make its way back in the picture. It wasn't

until I was released from Carson City jail a few months ago that I realized something had to change. I was out walking down Hwy 50 with nothing but a plastic bag. I'd lost everything: my house, my car. I couldn't see what my next step was. As I was walking down William St., I saw a friend of mine who was driving taxis. She told me to hop in. She took me right to FISH. It was time to put my pride to bed. It was time to confront the man I knew I could be.

Luckily the FOCUS House had a bed available. I met with Ashley at FISH, and I got a food grant and some clothes. I went right out and got a job with A&A towing. It's been great ever since. I finally feel like I've seen the light. I've been going to church and trying to join the worship team. I'm also starting a group called Keep It Real, where troubled men I meet throughout my life can gather and surrender everything from their past to be good men. Honest, truth-living men with real life stories. I want to help as many people as possible in Carson because that was me. Things have to change here, and I want it to start with me.

Today, Roger is over 300 days sober, has moved out of the shelter, found housing, and is doing well.

Dear FISH,

I'll be fine after all. The fact that I could engineer a financial fix speaks volumes about the differences between my life now and when I was at the bottom and needing F.I.S.H. (I still miss the excellent kitchen there, by the way).

More than seven years have passed since I improbably won my battle with alcoholism and returned to society. My near-death addiction experience in Carson City revealed to me that the only things that truly matter in this world are relationships, love, and kindness. I give you so much credit for trafficking heavily in those very things in your work.

I doubt you are thanked enough. Our society lionizes "self-made" people who help themselves more than any others. You're one of those people who help the world function better, which is a hell of a mission, and one I and many others respect immensely.

Brian Sandford

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There Is Hope cont.

Hi, my name is **Randall Jackson**, and my story starts when I was very young.

I grew up in LA County and was introduced to drugs and alcohol at a young age. The area was infested with gangs and drugs around every corner.

I came to Nevada almost 2 years ago. When I came here, my girlfriend and I were homeless and sleeping in my car. My girlfriend got in some trouble and a couple months later so did I.

I thank God for it, though, because this was the wakeup call we needed. I found out about the Focus house and FISH through her, but ultimately God put us here.

Today I am actually happy again. We will move into an apartment soon and I am excited to see where God takes us.

I thank Him for bringing us to FISH so we could get our life back on track.



When I first found out about FISH, I had just been released from jail after a yearlong sentence.

I had gone to FISH with my Probation Officer because I had nowhere to live. I am from California, but Parole and Probation said I had to stay in Nevada. FISH had a shelter for people like me.

When I was accepted into the Focus House, FISH also helped me with clothing and food that same day. John, the shelter manager, made sure I got to all of my classes at CCC on time.

FISH also helped me get a job and gave me the hope I needed to get my life back on track and stay sober.

I used the resources that FISH provided to my advantage and that allowed me to save up enough money to leave the shelter, get my driver's license back, move into my own house, and get the necessary things I needed in life.

I am very grateful for everything that FISH has done and still does for me. They work with people like me and really care. I will always go back to FISH and refer my friends and family to FISH for help.

Daniel McRunnel

Have A Heart Fundraiser: A Grounding Experience

A huge thank you to the 500+ people who attended our largest fundraiser yet. With the help of all the guests, we raised over \$56,000 toward our FISH Revitalization Project.

It was wonderful to see you all on the construction grounds where eventually, two apartment towers will stand and where individuals going through technical training and their families will be able to live while attending school.





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Special Thanks To



Fresh Produce Donated
to FISH by
The Greenhouse Project

In 2022: **502 lbs.**

Since 2013: **6,290 lbs.**

JD: From Prison to Program Coaching



My name is JD Powers; I am a person in long-term recovery from a substance use disorder. That means I haven't taken a drug or a drink or gambled in over four years. I began drinking at the age of 14 and used meth for the first time at age 17. From that time forward, I continued on that dangerous and destructive path throughout my life. I became a liar, a cheat, and a thief. My first arrest was when I was 19. My last arrest was at 47. The 28 years in between were filled with jails, prisons, and institutions. I've completed 12 inpatient programs, two mental health courts, two drug courts, many days in jail, and three prison sentences.

From 1990 -2018 I was either drunk and loaded or in jail or treatment trying to get it together. There were many times I almost died from my addiction. The worst happened in 2014. I developed a heart infection that summer. There was an abscess in my heart valve that burst, causing sepsis. This was a direct result of I.V. drug use. I was on life support and in a coma for two and a half weeks under the assumed name I gave them because I was on the run from probation. After I woke up from this coma, I was in the hospital for another month and had to go to a nursing home and learn how to walk for another month and a half.

During this ordeal, I had many people who just loved me back to health: my husband, my kids, my family, and the very few friends I had left. I didn't know this then, but I've come to understand that even though I had all the love and support in the world, if I didn't feel worthy or valuable, I would never think I deserved recovery or anything good. After the sepsis, I hated myself more than ever. So, by the spring of 2015, I was drinking and using again. I had left my husband and young son to begin a relationship with a man that I could use with freely. He turned into an abusive, violent man who had no problem physically, emotionally, and mentally beating me down. He was the physical embodiment of my self-loathing. He treated me exactly the way I felt about myself: ugly, worthless, hopeless, demeaned, and degraded. I existed under the threat of physical or verbal assaults for the next three years. I walked around this town with both eyes black and blue more times than I could count. I was at my lowest.

In 2018 we committed a crime together and got arrested. I wanted so badly to prove my worth to him; maybe he would finally be good to me, so I took all the blame and pleaded guilty to a burglary charge. While awaiting my fate, we continued to use, and he continued to beat me up and emotionally torment me. Finally, in August 2018, I went to sentencing, the Judge looked at me, and I believe he saw how bad it was for me and sent me to prison. He honestly saved my life. I was given a 16-72-month prison sentence. While there, I did a lot of praying and completed an 18-month drug and alcohol program that changed my entire life. About halfway through the drug and alcohol program in prison, I decided I had way more value than I ever gave myself credit for and finally cut all ties with my abuser and left behind any remnants of that life.

I was released on parole on Dec. 6, 2019, and reunited with my first husband, who never gave up on me. We both decided to start over from that day forward. I don't know where I'd be without him. I'm sure I'd be dead (by my hand or someone else's). We quickly moved into a home of our own, then COVID hit, and I was unemployed and still on parole. I found a job at Food Maxx for 3 or 4 months. Then a friend told me about a job opening as a receptionist at FISH. Much to my surprise, I got the job. I was initially nervous, but my FISH family was so supportive and helpful. I absolutely loved, loved working there. It was super rewarding and kept helping me move forward on my recovery path.

As the Receptionist, I realized I needed to learn more about Microsoft, typing, and general office skills. So, FISH paid for me to attend the Microsoft Office Assistant course at The Dream Center. They let me come in late to work to get this training and paid me my regular hourly wage. FISH paid *me* to learn. I got all Microsoft savvy, and it's fantastic because I can use those skills in many different places.

Working at FISH was the start of my career path in Human Services. I always knew I wanted to help people, but I didn't know where or how to get into that field before going to school. FISH gave me my chance. They helped me grow personally and professionally. My job there was a springboard for where I am now as a Certified Peer Support Specialist and full-time Program Coach for Capital City C.I.R.C.L.E.S. Initiative. FISH has helped me move from minimum wage to a meaningful career. Thank you with all my heart.

Sincerely,

JD Powers



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Moments In Time



Students from Lake Tahoe School sorting food after a food drive



A client working on job applications in our lobby



A beautiful sunrise over the FISH campus in April



The FISH team wearing orange during Hunger Action Month in September



Our Food Bank volunteer, Casey, walking a food grant out to a family



A blind client waiting with his dog for a food grant



Our receptionist Dawnyel and our intern Anna at the Mental Wellness Awareness Event in September



A dog waiting to get vaccinated at our Pet Wellness Clinic sponsored by Pets of the Homeless in April



Volunteers and staff smiling next to our new food bank storage bins, donated by the Nara Fund.



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A Special Thank You to Our FISH Members!

7-Eleven	Click Bond, Inc.	Genoa Community Church	Nara Fund	Sonic Drive Through	
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The FISH Manifesto

FISH believes hope is the most empowering approach to self-sufficiency. Without it, there is no igniting the fire underneath each one of us.

We believe that goals, action plans, and accountability can help our clients that are willing to help themselves.

With our “hand-up” mission, our clients find renewed hope. With this hope, clients can better assess their behaviors and skills, and, in turn, develop a willingness to change behaviors that lead to self-sufficiency.



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