

THE CARING PLACE

Another Season of Caring in Our Community

STICKING TOGETHER

Jeremy and Francesca told us all help is not the same. Two years ago they were in Florida because Francesca's mom was sick. She was their support system and their rock. When she passed away, their next home was a shelter. Jeremy was working and saving money while Francesca was pregnant with their second child. They were really trying to create change in their lives and always felt like they took one step forward and two steps back. After nights of tears and worry, the shelter said they had exceeded their stay without giving Jeremy and Francesca the promised assistance that would have helped them secure housing. So, with a young child and now a newborn, they left in search of a safe shelter for the entire family. That didn't exist. Jeremy and Francesca preferred sleeping in the car with their children to being split apart and feeling unsafe in a shelter. For two weeks they lived in the car at Daytona Beach. Jeremy said, "We couldn't give up. It was so tough because I saw the kids in the car all day. We had to keep trying to make it work."

Jeremy and Francesca felt that opportunities for jobs and assistance might be more promising in Texas, where Jeremy once lived and worked in landscaping. On hope and a prayer, Jeremy and Francesca journeyed towards Central Texas, only to be stopped by a car accident in Mississippi. In an instant, plans changed and transportation was lost. Jeremy's cousin helped them with train transportation and a hotel to get them started in Central Texas. Why Georgetown? Georgetown had more affordable hotel options than the surrounding area. Jeremy and Francesca found a convenience store within walking distance that was hiring. They both started working an alternating schedule at the store so they could continue to care for their children. Life was starting to move in the right direction, but the hotel was still too expensive.

Jeremy and Francesca were ready to take their next steps towards stability with their family. Due to their experience asking for help in Florida, the couple was hesitant, but they eventually found their way to The Caring Place through a neighbor's referral. The Caring Place staff did what they said they would do every step of the way. Jeremy said that impressed him and gave him faith that things would be okay. The Caring Place helped with a deposit, rent and utilities on their apartment that first month so they could move out of the hotel. The Caring Place also helped with food, furniture and clothes through its voucher system. And since the family walks everywhere, The Caring Place provided occasional Uber vouchers so they could attend important appointments that were not within walking distance. In a few short months,



Jeremy and Francesca with their two children.

stability felt like a reality and dreaming began. Jeremy shared, "We have cried together here more than we ever have, but they are happy tears."

Dreams look different for every family. Jeremy wants to work in landscaping again and Francesca wants to start her own cleaning company. "This is for our family and our kids. One day I'll tell my son, come to work with me!" These dreams are on the horizon as Jeremy and Francesca both have begun new jobs with better and more consistent pay. They also dream about needed dental care, buying a car and homeschooling their kids. Jeremy said, "I hope donors are aware of the help they are giving families. It has meant so much to us. As long as my kids have what they need, I am happy. I am so grateful."

Case Manager Quynh shared, "This couple has put in the work. As a Case Manager, I provide help and resources, but a lot of the help requires the clients to make connections, fill out paperwork and make phone calls. This couple did all that and kept me updated." Jeremy added, "Every time Miss Quynh gave me a phone number or website, I jumped on it." Jeremy expressed gratefulness for budgeting tips, too. "It's a little overwhelming, but we have things to take care of now." He continued, "I know that we are going to be better. And I know 100% it's going to be because of The Caring Place. If it wasn't for this place we'd be on the streets or in a shelter."

There is something special about putting in the work and making it to the other side of heartache. As the interview closed, Jeremy turned to Francesca and said, "We've stuck together. We've done it, right?" They fist-bumped with pride and laughed as their two kids played between them. Life is filled with joy again. ❤️

AN INTERVIEW WITH PROGRAM LEADERS



David Earl,
Director of Food Programs & Facilities

How is 2023 different from the past few years?

DE: There is certainly an increase in the number of neighbors utilizing our pantry. With the reopening of our “free choice” pantry in April 2022, families can more easily receive items based on their dietary restrictions and eating habits. We also started accepting food donations again in March of this year. That is something we haven’t been able to do since before the pandemic.

EB: We have seen an increase in the number of new families visiting us for services. With the area’s housing costs drastically increasing over the past year or more, families are left with few options for living arrangements. Many individuals would need to work two jobs but require help with childcare and transportation. Also, the number of people requesting assistance due to homelessness has grown exponentially. While support services for the unhoused are sparse in our community, TCP ensures that these neighbors receive basic needs, such as food, clothing and referrals when appropriate.

Can you provide some statistics to illustrate what you have seen this year?

DE: Each month, the pantry serves more families than the previous month. In January of this year, we served 2,174 individuals through our pantry. In August, we served 3,395 individuals. That is a 56% increase in seven months. Our HOPE program, which is a supplemental food box for neighbors 55 and over, has seen a 328% increase in enrollment during the same time frame. Through August, we have distributed over 650,000 pounds of food and necessities this year.

EB: Through August, we have served 7,612 unique neighbors, surpassing the total served in all of 2022 by over 1,000 people. 3,349 of these individuals are new to services at The Caring Place.

What are some factors that contribute to the increase in neighbors?

DE: As we all know, the cost of fuel for our vehicles, groceries and housing has increased, making it harder for families to make ends meet. One medical emergency, one car repair or one unexpected bill can throw many families in our community into crisis. Our food programs allow families to redirect their funds to more critical bills by saving them money on food.

Are you seeing any new trends?

DE: We see a wider spectrum of people from all demographics utilizing our services.

EB: We are noticing a lot of new residents, job losses, new medical needs and increased homelessness.

Are there any concerns that stand out?

EB: The lack of resources for people experiencing homelessness is especially a concern, but one we are analyzing to better serve those in need. Families with jobs who are residents of Georgetown are being evicted because they can’t afford rent. This leads to destabilization for the whole family. While we work to assist these families with resources to remain in the community, the lack of affordable housing and barriers associated with eviction can make it challenging.



Erin Becnel,
Director of Programs & Services

What are we doing right at TCP? Are there any successes that stand out?

EB: David and I agree on this one. We are proud of how The Caring Place has changed with the times. We provide more assistance than ever and are constantly re-evaluating our services to serve our neighbors better. We are also very grateful to this community for supporting The Caring Place. Because of this caring community, we can do this work for people who need us most.

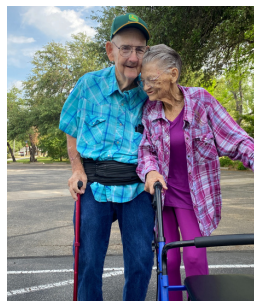
MORE TCP UPDATES

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

With the 'Back-to-School' season came a new program for The Caring Place. In August, TCP announced a supplemental voucher for an additional \$15 per child for children 18 and younger in the service area. The voucher, for shoes and clothing only, aimed to combat the growing costs associated with going back to school.



The limited-time program helped 160 families in our community by providing over \$3,300 in back-to-school clothing relief. The Caring Place will bring this program back next August.



Samuel and Patricia

The Programs & Services Department also hosted free educational workshops this year from third parties. Topics have included fraud prevention, financial education and chronic pain management. Look for more classes in 2024, many of which are open to the public. A schedule will be posted at caringplacetx.org/gethelp.

FOOD PROGRAMS

Food Pantry volunteers and staff have been very busy. Year to date, the department has served 21,771 neighbors. That's a 132% increase from the prior year. The increase in Food Pantry shoppers has brought us record-breaking days in our bustling space. In the first four days of September, the Food Pantry served 400 families. That's 1/3 of the number of families we typically see in a month!



Monday Food Pantry Volunteers: Steve, Stan and Joe

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023-2024



We are delighted to introduce you to The Caring Place's 2023-2024 Board of Directors.

From top to bottom, left to right: Michelle Betts, Dayne M. Carlson, Chuck Collins, Lindsay Harris (At-Large), Harriett Jones (Vice-President), Patricia Khoury, Isaac Lopez, Jen Mauldin, Glenn Schwab, Christopher Stanley, John Stock, John Sullivan (Secretary), Melissa Renee Valdez, Rhonda Wilson (President)

Thank you to outgoing board members Holly Steger Stevens, Sheron Scurlock and Van P. Swift for their work and leadership on behalf of The Caring Place during their tenure.

'TIS THE SEASON FOR GIVING

HUNGER FREE HOLIDAYS STARTS NOW! HOST FOOD & NECESSITY DRIVES



NEW TARGETED DRIVES!

Drop off items in the 2000 Railroad Avenue drive through Mon-Sat, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Need donations weighed and recorded?
Email fooddonations@caringplacetx.org for drop off times.

Each month during Hunger Free Holidays we are sharing our Food Pantry wish list with you. Why? We must stock our Food Pantry with what we need most while also cutting down on the need for processing time and storage space. Holding targeted food drives will help us do that. And it will allow you to take part in community giving in a more impactful way.

October: Hygiene Items

shampoo, conditioner, body wash, toothpaste, dish soap, toilet paper

November & December

*We are assessing our needs each month!
Check our website for the items we need most in November and December.*

Targeted drives help us use resources wisely. Please use this guide when donating food & necessities.

OR

GIVE A MONETARY GIFT

Help where we need it most by making a financial gift at caringplacetx.org/donate.



The Gift of Time

Whether you want to help others as a gift to the community or simply desire a greater sense of purpose, you can accomplish that by volunteering at The Caring Place.

If you are interested in a long-term volunteer position to help us fulfill our mission, contact Volunteer Coordinator Dennis Hilgeman at dhilgeman@caringplacetx.org or 512-943-0708.

The Caring Place hosts volunteer orientations twice a month.

Learn more at caringplacetx.org/volunteer.



Imagine your face in this group of friendly staff and volunteers in 2024!



Jill and Rita rally our community every year for Amplify. We hope you'll join the fun in 2024!

Amplify 2024 Begins in January!

Amplify has become The Caring Place's biggest fundraiser of the year. How? Through our supportive Board of Directors and amazing sponsors. Corporate and individual sponsors are stepping up to provide valuable matching donations for our Amplify campaign. If you'd like to be one of our matching sponsors, please contact Rita at rturner@caringplace.org. Learn more at caringplacetx.org/sponsor.



To the rest of our community: We need you, too! Every dollar counts when we begin the official campaign. Be on the look out for ways to Amplify beginning January 24th!

'TIS THE SEASON FOR SHOPPING

It's no surprise that we want you to shop our Georgetown thrift stores during the holidays and all year long! The Caring Place's two thrift stores and an ebay store can fill your every material desire!



The Shops at The Caring Place

Lisa, Dena, Ken, Ann (Retail Director), Mark, Boo & Kris coordinate the volunteers and work in the store at 2000 Railroad Avenue.



Second Helping

Camille and Lori brighten up Second Helping along with their volunteers at 3700 Williams Drive.

Our two thrift stores offer a continuous revenue source to support the many programs and services of The Caring Place. When you shop at The Caring Place, you are also supporting neighbors with basic needs like food, rent, utilities and more. This support is meant to bring resources to neighbors in our community when times are tough. The staff and nearly 200 volunteers involved in our two stores are dedicated to creating a positive shopping experience through their amazing displays and heartfelt kindness. It's not your typical thrifting experience, so if you haven't visited to find unique treasures or irresistible bargains, now is the time.

The power of thrift stores and ebay... starts with you!



Pat Sugrue

The Caring Place went one step further in its effort to raise money for programs through shopping with the introduction of an ebay store in 2012. Many volunteers and staff have had a hand in this endeavor through the years, but today's library of collectibles and fineries is curated and shipped out by volunteer Pat Sugrue. Staff and volunteers seek Pat out when they have found an ebay-worthy item.

If you are looking for something special, the TCP ebay site is worth a look. You can find it at caringplacetx.org/ebay or utilize the QR code to the right. Looking to save on shipping? Select local pick-up.



Behind the Scenes: The Technology



Mark Turner & George Ury

One thing you probably don't think about when thinking about The Caring Place is the importance of technology. However, it's something we think about daily. For 13 years Mark Turner, Director of Information Management, has taken care of those needs, from our Point of Sale (POS) system in our cash registers, to our security system, to our remote HVAC concerns, to our everyday computer and networking needs, to store and services databases. Beyond that, Mark has an interest in guitars, technology and collectibles, which is knowledge that often aids us in pricing or selecting items for ebay. Mark works with volunteer, George Ury, who volunteers at least 20 hours a week.

George deserves a paragraph of his own. Under Mark's direction, George handles our store product database and helps track sales in every department. This life-long learner joined TCP 23 years ago, helping neighbors with ramps and home repairs. In 2011, he became a database whiz to fill our inventory and sales needs. His previous computer experience rounds out our two-person technology team. Mark and George will implement a new POS system in the retail stores this winter with our retail team. We are incredibly grateful for their expertise as we enter into a new era of user-friendly technology at The Caring Place.

SIMPLE ACTIONS CAN MAKE HOLIDAY SHOPPING MORE MEANINGFUL

Fill the Stores!

Your generous item donations keep our thrift stores filled!

You can donate gently used or new items
Monday - Saturday
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. in our
2000 Railroad Avenue drive through.

By filling our stores, you directly support programs and services that help neighbors in need.

Learn more at caringplacetx.org/donatemystuff

Our two thrift stores in Georgetown offer a wonderful holiday shopping experience. It will be a season to remember with décor and unique gifts from The Caring Place thrift stores.

When you shop at The Caring Place, your purchases support our mission. We call that "Shopping for Good."

The Shops at The Caring Place
2000 Railroad Avenue | 512-943-0700
Open Mon-Sat, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Second Helping
3700 Williams Drive | 512-987-2998
Open Tues-Sat, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Learn more at caringplacetx.org/shop

The mission of The Caring Place is to provide for the basic human needs of all people in our community in a welcoming, respectful and caring way.



"I know that we are going to be better. And I know 100% it's going to be because of The Caring Place. If it wasn't for this place we'd be on the streets or in a shelter." -Jeremy

Programs & Services
Mon-Fri, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
2001 Railroad Avenue, Georgetown

Food Pantry
Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
2000 Railroad Avenue, Georgetown

The Shops at The Caring Place
Thrift Store, Mon-Sat, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
2000 Railroad Avenue, Georgetown

Second Helping
Thrift Store, Tues-Sat, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
3700 Williams Drive, Georgetown
512-987-2998

Item Donations
Mon-Sat, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
2000 Railroad Avenue drive through, Georgetown
For furniture pick-ups, call 512-943-0711.
512-943-0700
caringplacetx.org

Georgetown, TX 78627-1215
PO Box 1215

