



Empowerment, Not Entitlement!



Dear Friends in Christ,

We all know and have been inspired by the words in Matthew 25 - "... Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me." The needs are many, and you may already be ministering to the hungry, the thirsty, and the sick. Another group of the brethren Christ refers to have been incarcerated, "...When I was in prison you came to me." That group and Matthew's scripture of Christ's words to us were a particular inspiration for Marianist Brother Mike Murphy who founded the HELP program nearly 15 years ago.

The HELP Program inspires hope for people who have been convicted of a felony. Our caring, faith-based community of support provides mentoring and resources to find and sustain employment. This allows members to become financially stable and contributing members of our society.

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati Social Action Office has partnered with HELP for a number of years to minister to the imprisoned when they are released to overcome the numerous barriers to restoring a productive life for themselves and their families. Many of you have heard the stories of those Returning Citizens as you have attended one of our DISMAS Journey presentations, and you too minister to returning citizens in your own parishes and neighborhoods. Today we are reaching out to invite you to participate and further assist in the mission.

Finding a job is just one of the many barriers Returning Citizens face. A huge impediment is transportation - getting to and from work. Most have suspended licenses - or never had one - and reinstatement is a costly process. Very few have vehicles to use. One of Brother Mike's dreams of being able to provide a ride to work was realized a few years ago when a van was donated to the program.

Today 60 - 75 people a day ride the HELP van to and from their jobs. Meanwhile, as part of our life changing programming, a HELP volunteer with the aid of funding provided by a local foundation works with HELP members to pass the driving tests, get licenses restored, and save for their own cars. Sometimes donated cars become available, and HELP gets them in safe and reliable condition before transferring them to a HELP member. When a HELP member can drive themselves and some of their co-workers to the job, there is room on the van for the next group ready to start their vocational recoveries. You can read about the many aspects of the HELP transportation effort in the attached brochure.

HELP is initiating a fundraising campaign to support the transportation program including replacing their original van which is showing its age and demanding excessive maintenance to keep it on the road. Funds raised will also go to repairing donated cars as well as buying gas to keep the van on the road. We are inviting parishes across the Archdiocese to assist us in reaching the goal of raising a total of \$75,000 (\$49,000 of which will go towards purchasing the van). Small contributions from many can raise the funds to sustain the operation. Thankfully, we are off to a great start: a recent community grant of \$15,000 kicked it off, and several parishes and a few individuals have already contributed. Particular thanks to parishioners at IHM in Anderson, Good Shepard in Loveland, and St Francis DeSales in Walnut Hills (home of the program offices). Would you consider joining them with a contribution?

Your help will be greatly appreciated, and you will change lives. Beyond financial support there are other ways you can partner in and benefit this mission. If you are working with returning citizens in your ministry, HELP can provide employment opportunities. If you would like to learn more about the challenges of our criminal justice system and hear the stories of people who have been caught up in it, we can provide speakers. Old but usable cars are always needed, and individual mentors are needed to "walk with" returning citizens and guide their journey. Contact information is in the brochure.

Donations may be sent to:

HELP Program
C/O St Francis de Sales Parish
1600 Madison Avenue
Cincinnati, Ohio 45206-1815

Or online at: [Donate – Help Program \(helpprogramcincinnati.net\)](https://helpprogramcincinnati.net)

Thank you very much and God Bless you for the work you are doing and thank you, in particular, for your assistance in this initiative.



Andrew Musgrave
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