



Stories of HOPE

Education

Healthy Activities

Resource Connections

Faith Development

More Than A Food Truck

By Jill Dejewski, Director of Programs

“Can you imagine how much we would pay for this at the State Fair?” This was the discussion as neighbors sat and talked with one another on a beautiful Thursday on picnic tables at the Hope Center. The ACTUAL cost for each person to have a fresh pulled pork sandwich, french fries and coleslaw? Free! Because they are a part of Riverworks’ “Golden Neighbor Club.” That is code for anyone over 60 years old.

Riverworks added a food truck to their resources to help meet tangible needs and connect. Each Thursday the food truck pulls up to the Hope Center at Maple Hill. Seniors can come get a free hot meal which they can eat at the picnic tables or take home.

This is a great opportunity for community building.

As folks started to brag about the food and I was able to personally taste how good the meal was, we began to discuss who else from the park could benefit from this opportunity. (Full disclosure: I am not 60 yet!) I know most of the families within Maple Hill, so I grabbed the golf cart and started knocking on doors where I knew seniors live. Some jumped on the golf cart to head to the food truck and get a to go box. Many had never been on a golf cart and enjoyed the adventure. Others enjoyed getting out of their house as they had not been out for an extended amount of time. Some great conversations took place getting updates, checking in with one another, and enjoying a State Fair meal for free.

For me, this was a highlight of the month. This is what Mobile Hope is all about! The Hope Center is a great place to offer programming, but it is the *relationships* that take place that make it so special and powerful. The food truck was special, but more



importantly, it was what provided the means for the conversations that took place. I found myself learning how life has been extremely difficult or seeing the appreciation that someone knocked on their door because I knew they could be a part of the Golden Neighbor Club.

We are grateful to Riverworks for providing the food truck and the weekly food distributions. This practical need and chance to gather is life-giving. The conclusion, however, is the meal would have cost \$15, but I realized you could not put a price on what just happened.

“I’m so glad you knew to come get me. I never have the chance to get out” - Neighbor



MobileHope

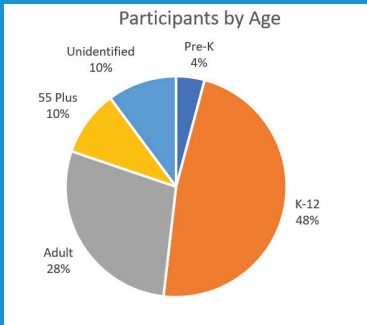
Mobile Hope, 7900 Maple Hill Road,
Corcoran, MN 55340
www.MobileHopeMN.org
www.facebook.com/MobileHopeMN

A Few Numbers

At the end of our fiscal year, we reviewed our program numbers and we saw a 34% increase in program check-ins, serving **10,503** people from September 2020 through August 2021! Those attendees participated in 1,085 activities that were offered in that year.



We were able to serve roughly the same number of unduplicated individuals at a total of **384**. This is great, considering COVID impact, and broke down by the following age groups:



Volunteers Needed!

46% Drop!

While the numbers of people served didn't change, unfortunately we saw a drop of 46% in our volunteers! Most of that is due to people feeling uncomfortable due to COVID - but now that things are opening back up, we want to encourage you to COME BACK!

We are in need of volunteers on most days for Homework Help, which runs from 3:30 to 4:45 at Corcoran and 3:30-5:30 at Dayton. We also need additional ESL teachers on Wed and Thurs evenings. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Jill at Jill@mobilehopemn.org.

The Building Blocks of Reading

By *Brian Dejewski, Executive Director*

Summer is always a highlight at Mobile Hope. This summer, our staff swelled to 10, and included 3 temporary staff: 2 AmeriCorps Vistas (Emma Krause and Rebecca Compton) and a long-time volunteer turned Summer Intern (Grace Teal).

is a wizard of remembering students' names and we loved having her as a part of the team.

Our summer staff invested deeply in the students of Mobile Hope and we appreciate them!

One of the many outcomes of COVID was the increased education gap as a result of distance learning requirements. Foundational skills such as reading and math suffered significantly for most of our students. To try and offset that, we partnered with AmeriCorps to add two full-time staff focused on literacy for the majority of their time at both Corcoran and Dayton. Two days a week, nearly 50 students would come in small groups to receive targeted attention using games, phonics, exercises, and reading to help get kids ready for school this fall.

Results showed that 88.8% of these students increased their reading fluency scores by an average of 6 words per minute. Our biggest learning from the summer was that next year, we hope to have 4 AmeriCorps Vistas instead of 2!

Grace Teal, our summer intern, was a big part of Mobile Hope programs as well. Grace is a student at Northwestern College in St. Paul, studying nonprofit management. She has volunteered with us for many years, starting with our summer VBS and joining a host of other activities throughout the years. This year, she was able to see "behind the curtain" and be a part of planning and running Mobile Hope programs.

Each intern we hire is asked to come up with one project that is solely their own, from start to finish. Grace wisely chose a project that included students from within the community in helping to better the community. She hosted the "At The Table Project" which included students building several much needed picnic tables so that we have more space to gather together and build relationships, work on homework, or enjoy a meal. She



Summer Highlights

One challenge about writing these articles is how to include all that is going on! Since we can't do that, we will offer some key bullets with pictures on the bulletin board highlighting some of the main things that were accomplished:

- Over 50 bikes were given away to students in partnership with Free Bikes 4 Kidz!
- Three Rivers Parks offered a week long day camp for each of our locations to explore nature and our environment
- We sent nearly 20 students to summer camp at Trout Lake, to enjoy a week of encouragement, fun, and Christian messages of hope each day
- Taco Tuesdays kicked off again this summer to bring large groups of families together for picnics, games, food and prizes. This was much needed after social distancing.
- FCA came out to host sports camp helping kids learn new basketball and soccer skills and learn more about practical faith.
- Summer School was a HUGE success in partnership with Rockford Schools. 5 teachers and Mobile Hope volunteers hosted 54 K-8 students every day for 4 weeks helping students get back into learning, prepare their minds for school, and have fun!
- And of course, our longest running program, our summer VBS/AWOL camps were back in full swing! We saw 80 Corcoran students and 40 Dayton students each day enjoying games, songs, stories, and crafts that help build trust and teach the love of Jesus in exciting ways.



This was a BUSY summer for Mobile Hope and **we want you to know how valuable your encouragement and support are** to making these things happen.

Mobile Hope is **HIRING!**

Do you know anyone who might be a good fit?

Like many organizations out there, Mobile Hope is going through some staff changes and we would love YOUR HELP in finding some great candidates!

Alexis Gerulis, who has served as a long-term volunteer, a summer intern, and most recently our Corcoran program manager has decided to go back to school for her Marriage and Family Therapy degree. We wish her well in this next chapter! That leaves an opportunity for a new Site Director position as we seek to manage both Corcoran and Dayton with fewer staff.

The Site Director role is a full time senior position overseeing and managing all the programs at a location. They build relationships with families, oversee volunteers, and interface with park ownership, among other things. It is a challenging yet fulfilling role with tremendous impact.

Ashley and Gama Xitumul, who have

been faithful on-site staff for almost 8 years are making a shift into a more flexible role of Community Engagement Specialists - allowing their gifts of hospitality and community connections to flourish while also giving them the time they need to focus on their three foster children. This means TreeHouse needs a new director.

The TreeHouse Program Director provides leadership to the TreeHouse youth program including youth nights, peer support groups, and one-on-one mentoring to the teens in the mobile home parks. It is a great opportunity to help teens build healthy relationships, better coping skills, and a sense of purpose rooted in the hope of Jesus.

These job descriptions will be available on our website but if you have anyone who might be interested, have them contact Brian at brian@mobilehopemn.org.

Prayer Needs

- We are asking for prayers regarding the open staff positions at Mobile Hope and for the upcoming positions with Family Thrive, that the right people would be prompted to join this work.
- Volunteers are a critical part of making Mobile Hope function effectively. Please pray for individuals willing to join the volunteer teams.
- Students, and teens in particular, are facing unprecedented levels of anxiety, depression, and other mental health hurdles. Please pray for their well being and peace that can be found through faith.

Wish List

- Some staff are working with 6 year old technology. Two new laptops are needed for staff to be brought up to speed.
- Our folding chairs at the Dayton Hope Center are in need of replacement. We would love to purchase 30 new folding chairs at \$32 each.

Jr. Wish List So Kids Can Help Too!

- Dry erase markers are needed for the white boards!

Donations

Financial Donations - You can give safely and securely through our website (www.mobilehopemn.org) by credit card, or by mailing a check to 7900 Maple Hill Road, Corcoran, MN 55340.

Non-cash Assets - Would you prefer to support Mobile Hope through assets such as the sale of stock, business interests, real estate, charitable gift annuities, or by setting up a donor-advised fund? Mobile Hope works with our partner, The National Christian Foundation -Twin Cities, to provide these and other services you may find helpful. Contact us for more information.

NEW “Family Thrive” Program to Launch Soon

Mobile Hope staff has been focusing a fair amount of time diving deeper into the impact of toxic trauma on the families we work with. The experience of early trauma on children leads to health deficits, mental health challenges, and increases in high risk behaviors. In an effort to help families deal with these realities, we are developing a new program for Mobile Hope called **Family Thrive**.

We have spent much of the summer researching, fundraising, and planning for this concept, which will include a partnership with Nystrom and Associates, a local mental health provider. Together, we will be hiring a licensed counselor and a family advocate who will be providing in-home support for



families within the mobile home communities we serve.

We will focus on providing resources for families including trauma-informed therapy, in-home visits, resource enrollment assistance, follow through on personal goals, and group classes on parenting, conflict resolution, brain science, etc.

If you have questions about this or would like to get more information on supporting this program, we look forward to talking with you.

We are excited to launch sometime in the late fall of 2021.

“Mobile Hope offers a win-win for everyone involved. It invests, encourages, and builds potential in the students and their families to set and achieve goals that will impact them for the rest of their lives.”

~ School Teacher