

September 28, 2006

Dear Letter to the Editor,

I am writing to you today with a request. The request is for help with our Thanksgiving and Christmas Basket Outreach. I know this is early, but after watching TV & Newspaper reports on the 5 year anniversary of 9/11 & the 1 year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, I want to make this one of the most special expression of Gods love and my gratefulness for what He has given to my family, my church and the people I have been called to serve at the Christian Caring Center. There is some much suffering all over the world and even in our own back yards. We help 400- 450 households each month with food, clothing, case management, etc. Some are homeless, some are on welfare, many work etc. We can always use your help by volunteering, but I want to specifically ask you this year to personally make a difference in your neighbor's life by coming and helping us distribute the Thanksgiving Baskets or Thanksgiving Day Dinner, give a bible or prayer, a gift for a child at Christmas, donate can goods, a gift certificate for a turkey (we don't have enough freezers to except a frozen turkey), or you can send a monetary donation. We are asking that your church, group, business, or group become involved some way. This year Thanksgiving Baskets will be distributed on Nov.18-21, 2006 and we will be cooking on Thanksgiving day-covered dish style. Christmas Baskets will be distributed on Dec. 16-21, 2006. Last year we were able to distribute to 483 households thanks to the generosity of individuals like you, each basket consisted of a turkey/ham dinner with all the fixings & gifts at Christmas for each child, (over 1,500 Children). This year we really want to focus on our neighbors, the child that sit next to your child in school or church, or soccer bench. Your touch will make it special. I recently read this article & it made me look at my people in a new & special light.

Will Work for Food

God's way of blessing us...often surprises! I sat, with two friends, in the picture window of a quaint restaurant just off the corner of the town-square. The food and the company were both especially good that day.

As we talked, my attention was drawn outside, across the street. There, walking into town was a man who appeared to be carrying all his worldly goods on his back. He was carrying a well-worn sign that read, "I will work for food." My heart sank. I brought him to the attention of my friends and noticed that others around us had stopped eating to focus on him. Heads moved in a mixture of sadness and disbelief. We continued with our meal, but his image lingered in my mind. We finished our meal and went our separate ways. I glanced toward the town square, looking somewhat halfheartedly for the strange visitor. I was fearful, knowing that seeing him again would call for some response. I drove through town and saw nothing of him. I made some purchases at a store and got

back in my car. Deep within me, the Spirit of God kept speaking to me: "Don't go back to the office until you've at least driven once more round the square." Then, with some hesitancy, I headed back into town. As I turned the square's third corner, I saw him. He was standing on the steps of the store front church, going through his sack. I stopped and looked, feeling both compelled to speak to him, yet wanting to drive on. I parked, got out and approached the town's newest visitor. "Looking for the pastor?" I asked. "Not really," he replied, "just resting." "Have you eaten today?" "Oh, I ate something early this morning." "Would you like to have lunch with me?" "Do you have some work I could do for you?" "No work," I replied. "I commute here to work from the city, but I would like to take you to lunch." "Sure," he replied with a smile. As he began to gather his things, I asked some surface questions. Where you headed?" "St. Louis." "Where you from?", "Oh, all over; mostly Florida." "How long have you been walking?" "Fourteen years," came the reply. I knew I had met someone unusual. We sat across from each other in the same restaurant I had left earlier. His face was weathered slightly beyond his 38 years. He removed his jacket to reveal a bright red T-shirt that said, "Jesus is The Never Ending story." Then Daniel's story began to unfold. He had seen rough times early in life. He'd made some wrong choices and reaped the consequences. Fourteen years earlier, while backpacking across the country, he had stopped on the beach in Daytona. He tried to hire on with some men who were putting up a large tent and some equipment. A concert, he thought. He was hired, but the tent would not house a concert but revival services, and in those services he saw life more clearly. He gave his life over to God "Nothing's been the same since," he said, "I felt the Lord telling me to keep walking, and so I did, some 14 years now." "Ever think of stopping?" I asked. "Oh, once in a while, when it seems to get the best of me. But God has given me this calling. I give out Bibles. That's what's in my sack. I work to buy food and Bibles, and I give them out when His Spirit leads." I sat amazed. My homeless friend was not homeless. He was on a mission and lived this way by choice. The question burned inside for a moment and then I asked: "What's it like?" "What?" "To walk into a town carrying all your things on your back and to show your sign?" "Oh, it was humiliating at first. People would stare and make comments. Once someone tossed a piece of half-eaten bread and made a gesture that certainly didn't make me feel welcome. But then it became humbling to realize that God was using me to touch lives and change people's concepts of other folks like me." My concept was changing, too. We finished our dessert and gathered his things. Just outside the door, he paused. He turned to me and said, "Come Ye blessed of my Father and inherit the kingdom I've prepared for you. For when I was hungry you gave me food, when I was thirsty you gave me drink, a stranger and you took me in." I felt as if we were on holy ground. "Could you use another Bible?"

You never know who you will meet in you life at the WaWa, or at the Christian Caring Center. We would like to invite you to meet someone new and to make a difference like this fellow did. It can change your life & lives of everyone in your family. Why not give us a call at 609-893-0700, between 10am.-3pm or stop in for lunch at 378 Lakehurst Rd. Browns Mills. We serve lunch at 12:00- 1:30pm, Mon.-Sat.

Abiding in Him

Madelyn C. Mears-Sheldon, Director