



The New Gate

Mess to Message



Christina went from having a full scholarship at Oklahoma State University to a life of homelessness, addiction, and despair. After being incarcerated for 3.5 years for meth usage and distribution, she came to Exodus House Oklahoma City and was able to turn her life around. Now she has steady employment, a home, a car, pays her own bills, has custody of her three children, and is about to celebrate nine years clean and sober.

Since graduation, Christina has also found her true love and wanted to get married for the very first time. She has scheduled her wedding for a date/time that she'll always remember, are you ready for this.....3-23-23 at 3:23 pm. Her wedding was conducted by Rev. Tiffany Nagel Monroe, the director at Saint Paul School of Theology at OCU, at the home of CJAMM's Executive Director Keith Dobbs.

Along with Christina's family and friends, she had special guests Robin Wertz, Exodus House OKC, and Estelle Turbyfill, another Exodus House graduate and her support sponsor.

Christina has traveled with Dobbs to several churches to share her testimony of how God is leading. She says her story and her love story are a story of hope and wants others to know they can overcome addiction and incarceration to enjoy a meaningful life. Her apartment sponsor was the Yukon United Methodist Church Men's Group, a place she continues to return to and attend their meetings.

Thank you, Exodus House OKC Friends

Recently, Exodus House Oklahoma City sent out an SOS call for assistance in getting some unbudgeted funds. The CJAMM insurance carried had issued provisional coverage until work could be done getting some electrical issues up to code, and some safety-issue repairs in the parking lot. After a request for help went out to apartment sponsors and friends of Exodus House, the dollars came in immediately.

Thank you to the loyal Exodus House family and a generous donation from the Woodworth Estate for brining closure to this project. A special thank you to Exodus House graduate Shane Vaugh for volunteering to serve as general contractor for the repairs. We are officially back to full coverage insurance!



Board member, Michele Ireland and Site Director, Robin Wertz standing in front of new parking lot.

PLANTING SEEDS



Left to right: Chris Taylor (left), a graduate from Exodus House OKC, came to a planting at Exodus House. He's pictured by Robin Wertz, Site Director, and Kathy and Mark Sewell, members and apartment sponsors from New Covenant United Methodist Church in Edmond, who host a flower planting day with the clients each year.

Spring is often associated with planting seeds – something that will grow throughout the summer and be harvested for food later on or turn into a flower to enjoy its fragrance and beauty.

The Exodus Houses are in the full-time business of planting seeds that will grow and be harvested in God's timing. Let me tell "seed planting" and germination stories.

- When Avery was 14, she came to live with her dad at Exodus House Oklahoma City. Site Director Robin Wertz became a second mom for Avery so much so that a few years later when Avery was graduating from high school in Tulsa, she wanted Robin to be there as part of the family celebration. Seeds of respect, discipline, and structure were planted during an impressionable time in her life and harvested as love when it was time to reflect on important people in your life. (CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

REQUEST FOR A SPONSOR: Family Retreat for Exodus House Clients

What do you get when you mix laughter, tears, games, contests, community service, swimming, hiking, campfire, s'mores, worship, singing, and dancing all together? The answer: CJAMM's first-ever, weekend retreat for Exodus House and Parsonage House clients and their children.

Last year, CJAMM hosted a weekend retreat for all current Exodus House clients and their children – probably one of the most memorable milestones in their tenure in the program. It was held at Canyon Camp, west of Oklahoma City. Clients arrived on Friday and immediately got acquainted with clients from the other facilities.

After a day of bonding, the clients started to share their story and testimony of how God was leading in their lives and being a part of the Exodus House program was all part of God's plan, certainly not by accident.

Many of the clients had never been in nature, hiked up a canyon wall, or sat around a campfire making s'mores and singing silly songs.

Even students from Wesley Foundation at Southwestern Oklahoma State University came to camp to lead music and worship services for the clients.

"It made a difference in my life," commented Sandi, a client who attended along with her daughter.

Canyon Camp defrayed a portion of the cost for the weekend since the retreat guests performed service projects around the camp. "I think other sponsors and churches would enjoy being a part of these projects and being with the clients," shared Kristi Johnson, an apartment sponsor from Blanchard United Methodist Church who attended the retreat.

"It's interesting how the simple things in life can be the most meaningful and put people in touch with our Creator," said Keith Dobbs, CJAMM Executive Director.

Cost for all the clients to attend the weekend was approximately \$5,000 last fall. CJAMM is looking for a donor(s) who might be impressed to sponsoring a retreat for fall 2023. To explore sponsorship opportunities, reach out to either Keith Dobbs (keith@cjamm.org) or Lesa Rhoads (lesa@cjamm.org) or call (405-525-3522) to explore opportunities.



PLANTING SEEDS

CONTINUED...

- Mickell actually didn't complete the program at Exodus House Tulsa because of a relapse. A series of events happened after he left the program causing him to lose his job, his housing, and his car. When winter weather hit and it was below freezing temperatures, he showed back up to Exodus House, hungry and cold. Georgia, the case manager at the time, prepared a hot meal for him, found him warm clothing, and secured housing for him. When he was desperate, he returned to a safe place where seeds of love and hope had been planted.
- Marianne was deeply saddened when the client elected to leave the apartment she and her church sponsor at Exodus House Tulsa. She'd gotten emotionally attached to the client and took it as a personal blow when the client wanted to leave before completing the program. Just recently, that previous client reached out to Marianne and asked if she'd consider picking her up and taking her to church services again. That was a place of peace, comfort, and acceptance and she longed for that safe haven.

CJAMM and the Board of Directors wishes to thank those on the front line, the volunteers, and the donors for being used as God's sowers. "The sower sows the word." -- Mark 4:14 NASB

Two New CJAMM Board Members

Two new board members have been named to the Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries (CJAMM) board of directors, according to Scott Davis, chairman.

"Meredith McGinnis Monaco and Michele Ireland are both highly skilled and accomplished individuals with a genuine passion for criminal justice," stated Davis.

As an attorney, Meredith (pictured left) comes to CJAMM with over ten-years' experience in corporate, defense, employment, civil rights, and personal injury experience. While at the University of Oklahoma College of Law, she was the President of OU Law's American Civil Liberties Union and earned the Justice Grimes Civil Libertarian Award and Scholarship.

Michele (pictured right) has been an executive in a host of businesses including the oil/gas industry and real estate. Most recently, she was worked with Buchanan Productions LLC in Edmond, Oklahoma. Throughout the years, Michele has volunteered in Oklahoma Department of Corrections facilities and is known for her passion for helping the underserved.



An American Guy!

Dawson Tittle (right) looks like an all-American guy.....with good looks, southern manners, a baseball, and some apple pie. Instead, he's 24 and already spent about five years in an Oklahoma correctional facility.

Upon release, he came to be part of the Exodus House Oklahoma City family where he's done a major course correction and earned the trust, love, and respect of his fellow clients, the staff, apartment sponsors, his employer, and his family.

Dawson is scheduled to graduate on May 18. "He's one of those that you hate to see leave," stated Robin Wertz, Site Director. "He's just become such a valuable member of our Exodus House family."

Dawson works at M-D Building Products like many of the other clients. He's active in sobriety and attends extra classes to help him stay focused.

Hurray to Dawson!



Keith Dobbs, CJAMM's
Executive Director with
Dawson Tittle



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Cover Photo: Family, friends and church sponsors from the Church of Saint Benedict in Broken Arrow circle around Exodus House graduate Angela to offer prayers of blessings and hope for her future.

NEW DAY CAMP NEEDS VOLUNTEERS -- A Road to a Brighter Future

When I was a youngster, my dad put me behind the steering wheel of an old hay truck, put it in compound, and said, “stay between the rows.”

If I ever got off course, he or one of the hay hands would reach in the open window, and guide my steering wheel along the right path.

I taught my son to drive at an early age. When we lived in Los Angeles, he did practice driving in the parking lot of Griffith Park Zoo which was the forerunner to the Los Angeles Zoo. Many times, I had to offer suggestions on the best way to drive a stick shift.

Now my son has a son who is eager to drive. He loves standing behind the steering wheel when the car is parked in the driveway. Obviously, he’ll need direction as he gets older and actually get to make driving decisions.

New Day Camp is a similar concept. It’s our chance as a society to offer some direction and help give young people some early course corrections to make different decisions than perhaps their incarcerated parent may have made. However, as the old saying goes, “it takes a village” and we need volunteers to step forward to help with staffing New Day Camp.

Camp Day Camp is scheduled for June 5-9 at Cross Point Camp on Lake Texoma. It’s when children from ages 8-14 come to camp to just be normal kids, not kids with a mom or dad in prison. They get to have discussions on bullying, do ropes courses, enjoy swimming and boating, and learn about Christ through worships and songs.

Would you consider being a volunteer...making a huge impression on the road these young people will take? Reach out to Kristin at 405-525-3522 or email at office@cjamm.org. The number of volunteers will determine the number of campers we can accept. Call today! -- Keith Dobbs, CJAMM Executive Director

