

# BRINGING CHRIST'S SALVATION MESSAGE TO ABUSED WOMEN AND CHILDREN

## HISTORY OF HOPE BAGS

The following is a brief history of the "Hope Bags". The actual statistics of abuse (both women & children) is not known, as many victims never report the abuse. However, the reported cases just for 2018 are in the hundreds of thousands. We are trying to help as many as we are able to reach in our own back yard, (Maricopa County).

The idea for the "Hope Bags" was birthed in 1985. It began with the hope of bringing a little joy, and most of all, GOD'S WORD to abused women in Green Bay, WI. The ministry in that city continues to grow, and there are now two safe houses being supplied with these little bags.

The "Hope Bag" ministry began at PWCC in 2004. We are Now supplying Phoenix Dream Center, Phoenix Rescue Mission and Neighborhood Ministries. The response from our fellowship has been overwhelming. We praise the Lord for the generous giving of both the items to fill the bags, financial donations, and the donation of material and time to sew them, the beautiful quilts, which have been so loving made, wooden toys, etc. God truly has His hand on your hearts.

Some statistics since we started in 2004 that you may find interesting:

1. The number of bags that have been given ..... 9,580
2. The number of items in the bags ..... approx. 230,140
3. The number of Bibles ..... 6,230
4. The number of children's literature ..... 84,110
5. Approximate number of quilts ..... 1,840

We collect year round, (a red plastic container in the back of Hoover Hall, marked "Hope Bags" is where items are placed as they are brought in). We fill the bags once a year in March.

Our mission is to provide each woman with a Bible, in which we insert the Salvation message. **Only as a woman comes to know Christ and accept Him as her Lord and Savior can she truly understand how to become free from the abuse in her life, and the lives of her children.**

Many have asked: "Why do you only want **NEW** items?" The answer is: these are women and children who have been treated so poorly for so many years, in their minds they have no self-worth. Presenting these beautiful, colorful bags to them as they enter a safe house, instills in their hearts and minds that they are worth having something **NEW**, something special just for them to keep. Put yourself in their place for a moment and think how you would feel receiving one of these bags, and for the children a quilt of your very own. You just came into a safe house with nothing but the clothes on your back, and now are given these items that reflect that someone cares and loves you. Isn't that a wonderful introduction to learn of the love of Jesus?

Your gifts and donations and time given to make this mission possible are deposits you are making in our eternal home in Heaven. May God bless you for being so generous and touching the lives of those we may never meet, but, who need our help and expression of love.

In May of 2015 we added 350 small bags (Kid's Kits) for inner city children in Phoenix to be used in their two-week Bible Camp. Then in 2016 we added 200 bags for homeless women. In 2018-2019 Bellevue Church in Sun City made and filled 200 bags for homeless men. Our goal is a total of **1,700** Hope Bags this year.

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## WHY WE WALK ALONG SIDE THESE THREE MISSIONS

**CHANGING LIVES CENTER:** So many times we think of the homeless as being rough, street hardened men. Today that demographic in our society is changing. The following story is just one example of how, through the Phoenix Rescue Mission (Changing Lives Center), you have helped a mother and her three children. Through your donations of items for the **Hope Bags**, clothing and financial support, women and children are being rescued from the streets in Maricopa County and given help.

Sheena and her children were homeless. Sheena is 27 and her children are three years old, 18 months and three months. She was walking down a street in Phoenix when a volunteer from the Hope Coach (a Phoenix Rescue Mission program), saw her. *"She was pushing a beat-up looking stroller with a little boy inside fast asleep and curly-haired girl perched on top. Hesitantly she asked us if we knew of a place where she and her three children could stay the night."* Confused, the volunteer looked at the stroller then back to Sheena to see if she had missed something. *"Three kids? I only see two."* That's when Sheens pointed to the area under the stroller. In the bin used to store diaper bags, a three-month old baby boy was curled up in a ball sleeping.

Summer temperatures were already in the triple digits and women like Sheena and her children are in serious danger. In fact, summer heat can be twice as deadly to children as adults. According to researchers, a child's body can heat up three times faster than an adult's in the same environment. Sheena was fortunate, as the volunteers were able to help her through the *Changing Lives Center* program.

**41% of homeless people in Arizona are now women. The Women-with-children homeless numbers are increasing each year.**

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**NEIGHBORHOOD MINISTRIES:** Our joy comes from the Lord! We recently had the privilege of attending a celebration down at Neighborhood Ministries. What a thrill to see God's work through the hands of the volunteers and staff. Souls are being touched through this ministry that seeks daily to bring the Good News of the gospel message to those who may never hear it in their daily lives.

Hearing some of the testimonies of how Christ has changed their lives and seeing the joy radiate from their faces, confirms we are ambassadors for our Lord. The mission of Neighborhood Ministries *"To be the presence of Jesus Christ, sharing His life-transforming hope, love and power among distressed families of urban Phoenix to ignite their passion for God and His kingdom"* tells the story of why PWCC walks along side the people to be lights to the hurting.

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**"HOPE LIVES HERE"** for pregnant women in crisis and victims of human trafficking at the *Phoenix Dream Center*. The programs are designed to help these women become all God intended for them. They are required to attend classes for 20 hours a week, (which include life skills, child care, cooking, Bible Study, etc.). They also must work 20 hours a week to learn skills which can be used throughout their life.

The PDC also had developed a program called: **"THRIVE"** to help poor families keep their children in the home. Beds, refrigerators and food are provided to help them through a rough time. PDC also has a new program for "aged out foster children". The law in AZ states that a foster child must move out on their own at age 18. Most have not finished school, and have no place to live or food to eat. the PDC takes these children in and provides for food, shelter, clothing, and a means to finish their education. All the programs at the PDC are Christ centered, and are designed to help those in need make a decision that will turn their future into a bright tomorrow. Aged-out Foster Children is a new program meeting with wonderful success.

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Perhaps God is tugging on your heart to work along side Claudia and the Hope Bag Teams in this mission. We would be happy to discuss openings where you could serve these missions in our own backyard.

If anyone is interested in touring any of the three Missions we support with Hope Bags, (we also collect Clothing, furniture and household items), please contact Claudia Smith and we will be happy to arrange a time to take you. Seeing the joy and happiness on the faces of the children and women who are no longer afraid of being abused, but now are feeling safe and secure, helps all of us to know it is worth the time and effort and expense of joining together to help stamp out abuse and poverty here at home.

*"...truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me."* Matthew 25:40b