

Willow Tree Missions 2017 Annual Report

Achievement and Accomplishments for 2017

WILLOW TREE MISSIONS

2017

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2017 was a big year for the mission! As I reflect back on it, it is hard to believe all this happened in one short year! I wanted to take some time to highlight some of those accomplishments for you all.

Shop: Our resale shop continues to grow and develop constantly to meet the needs and demands of our donors and shoppers. The heavy influx of donations is a huge blessing that keeps us on our toes! Some highlighted achievements for the shop this year include:

- New donation dock was built – This change impacted things in many positive ways, streamlining the flow of donations-to-processing and eliminating cross-traffic between donations and shopping. As with all major changes, this new system will constantly keep evolving to make it as efficient and beneficial as possible.
- Created an outdoor area for furniture – Although this is still evolving, moving furniture out of the shop opened up more space for clothing and housewares and made the loading/unloading of furniture much easier on the dock staff.
- Several electrical upgrades/improvements made – We are always working to make the shop as safe as possible while meeting the needs of shoppers and the team.
- New windows installed in workrooms – This allowed for window-unit air conditioners to be used instead of portable units. This made a major impact in the working conditions for the team in the heat and will continue to impact our energy efficiency.
- Shelving replacement – Thanks to the generosity of Monticello Drug, we have been able to eliminate most of the old and bulky wooden shelving, replacing it with metal commercial shelving. This change created more floor space and more shelving space for display, which increases sales capacity.
- Additional days added – We increased the potential business days for the shop from 240 per year to 300 potential days by adding Mondays to the schedule and eliminating two weeks of shop closures every year.
- Added two full-time positions to the shop staff that were previously dependent upon volunteers – Having a solid team of paid staff at the shop is necessary to be operating six days per week. The paid staff provide a stable and consistent labor base and also help train volunteers, therefore making their time more effective.

Domestic Violence Program: We have seen some really great things happening in the Domestic Violence arena this year, some within our program and some within the DV community at-large. Some of the most exciting developments are:

- Hired a live-in staff member for the shelter – Carol moved into Neighbor House in August. This step:
 - Increased shelter capacity drastically without draining administration
 - Increased depth and quality of care we can offer those in need rather than just a focus on safety
 - Eliminated the short term stay limit that we had to follow previously
 - Added a great spiritual/Pastoral care aspect to our mission
 - Made the house into a HOME!
- Revamped Domestic Violence services structure:
 - Flipped model to rely on paid staff for crisis and volunteers for supplemental services
 - Created a prevention team to create and share programming with teens and adolescents (program building in progress)
 - Created a legal advocacy team to train more deeply on legal issues to provide clients higher-quality assistance in the legal needs
- Increased community collaboration: THIS IS HUGE!!!! We have broken huge ground the past few months in collaboration among Piatt County entities in the DV arena.
 - Now working jointly with the courthouse victims' advocate, DOVE, and Courage Connection to ensure availability of an advocate for every victim seeking an order of protection.
 - Increased collaboration with the Circuit Clerk's office with emphasis on the importance of advocacy and how to help those seeking OP's connect to an advocate
 - Attended training with City Police, Sheriff's Department, State's Attorney, and other social service agencies to discuss best practices and protocols in response to DV
 - This training sparked the formation and first two sessions of the Piatt County Community Collaborative Response Team for DV, both of which were highly attended and had great participation.
 - Increased collaboration and communication with the State's Attorney and Assistant State's Attorney to help serve victims better and increase abuser accountability

- Built a victim's resource room in the courthouse to allow privacy for filling out paperwork as well as help victims become aware of the assistance available to them
- Created and distributed new promo materials of higher quality and hopefully increased effectiveness for making others aware of our services offered
- Set up and implemented an answering service for the 24/7 hotline to avoid passing a phone around weekly. This allows any available advocate to answer a crisis call at any time.
- We provided Direct Services to 12 victims of Domestic Violence this year in the form of Shelter, Crisis Counseling, and Legal Advocacy.
- Dozens of others were served via indirect services such as speaking events, awareness and education materials, and prevention efforts.

Administrative: 2017 brought us some great growth and accomplishment mission-wide that have increased the professionalism and longevity of Willow Tree for many years to come. Some of those highlighted achievements include:

- We had a 77% increase in funding streams outside of shop sales from 2016 to 2017. These funding streams included individual donations, fundraisers, church support, and business donations.
- We held a very successful Fun Day/10 year anniversary celebration with approx. 350 attendees and 30+ volunteers participating.
- Attended Human Resource and Payroll Law training which has increased our compliancy and professionalism organization-wide and reduced potential liability
- Increased public speaking events from 3 in 2016 to 9 in 2017
- Transitioned to QuickBooks Online, a more stream-lined way of keeping our books accurate that provides better records with less time spent
- New and more professional website was built with greater capabilities to:
 - Take online donations
 - Publicize events
 - Educate the public about our mission and services
 - Highlight fundraising efforts
- Researched, acquired, and built a donor management software for Willow Tree. Benefits:
 - Captures info automatically when donations are made online
 - Generates a receipt letter immediately for online donations
 - Streamlines the process greatly for sending out receipt letters monthly
 - Makes it easier and much less time consuming to send out mass mailers, fundraiser info, etc. to everyone on our mailing list

- Allows more accurate tracking of donations/support trends, managing campaigns, etc.
- Increased media coverage
 - Huge newspaper article ran in August
 - CI Living appearance in September
 - Mahomet newspaper interview
 - Upcoming article about fundraising campaign to pay off mortgage
- Successfully recruited new board members to strengthen and develop board
- Transitioned to long-time goal of having an Executive Director position versus intensive working board
- Added our new business office. This:
 - Gives us a better public spot that people can approach us for help
 - Gives the Director of Operations an office rather than “floating”
 - Gives us presence near the courthouse for further increase in collaboration
 - Increases security and compliance for our record keeping
 - Removes the business office out of the shop where it is high-traffic, busy, and hard to focus

2018 will be another exciting year to look forward to! While we have many goals we hope to achieve this year, the two biggest goals are:

- 1) Pay off the remainder of the mortgage on the Neighbor House: This balance is approximately \$36,000. Paying this off will make us debt-free as an organization and will create some great breathing room in our monthly budget.
- 2) Increase awareness and utilization of our DV services: An enormous amount of energy in 2018 will be invested into increasing awareness of these various services in order to serve more people in need.

Thank you all for the part you have played in making this mission so incredible! Lives are being touched and changed! Without every single donor, shopper, staff member, volunteer, and board member we could not do what we do. And, MOST IMPORTANTLY, thank you to our ALMIGHTY GOD who continues to bless and provide for this mission in ways beyond what we could possibly think, dream, or imagine!