



Hearts for Care: Year-in-Review Reflection

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Hearts for Care/DRCO

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Hearts for Care is a ministry of Disciples Retirement Community of Oklahoma (DRCO) in the Oklahoma Region. Launched in June 2015, our mission is to be a one-stop resource for members to access services and programs that will empower them to remain independent in their homes and communities as they grow older.

The ministry has experienced continued growth as word spreads of the work being done to assist individuals aging in place. Our greatest success was the launch of Hearts for Care and its reception within the Enid community. We received numerous referrals from organizations such as the Long Term Care Authority and Adult Protective Services. We continue to grow at a consistent rate and receive great feedback from our volunteers and members.

And we continue to adjust as new needs are identified. We are working with community organizations to serve those needs as effectively as possible. Our greatest service area is with sitter services. Several of our members have dementia or Alzheimer's, and many caregivers appreciate our volunteers sitting with their loved one so they can have some time to themselves.

Hearts for Care has several generous individual and congregation donors. However, fundraising remains a challenge. Many of our members are low income and come to us as referrals. These are individuals who are in the gap—they cannot qualify for services but also can't afford to pay for services, such as home healthcare. The majority of our low-income members contribute to Hearts for Care, but at a much lower giving amount than anticipated. Meeting basic needs is a challenge.

I'm told that one of the biggest issues impacting fundraising for Hearts for Care is the fact that we are only in Enid, OK. I'm told that individuals and organizations are less likely to give when they see little benefit to their own communities. Our goal is to expand into Ponca City, OK, in 2016, which I hope will encourage giving from individuals and organizations outside the Enid area. If lack of giving is impacted by the fact that we only serve one community, then I hope that expanding into Ponca City will encourage individuals and organizations to give to allow for further expansion. This pilot expansion is a process that will require learning from all involved. We expect challenges, but we also look forward to building relationships in the community, such as engaging Community Christian Church in doing ministry outside the church walls.

As Hearts for Care continues to grow, I hope to utilize what I have learned in regards to fundraising and transformational leadership to create a positive and nurturing environment for staff, volunteers and members. I look forward to the recruitment of new board members, and I am thankful for the opportunity to learn from a nonprofit consultant.



The goal is to recruit new board members who have knowledge in specific areas, such as nonprofit management, accounting, business law, etc. I anticipate another year of rapid growth for both DRCO and Hearts for Care.

Over the next three years, we hope to continue to grow our membership and volunteer base, expand into at least one new community each year, and have greater financial participation from Oklahoma congregations. To do this, we must work to better communicate our vision for Hearts for Care as a ministry that reaches out to individuals in the community to minister in new and innovative ways.

The NBA incubates new ministries, supporting social entrepreneurs of faith who are serving their communities in a variety of innovative ways and empowering these Disciples-led health and social service projects to focus on growth, impact, and sustainability. Learn more at nbacares.org/incubate or by contacting Rev. Ayanna Johnson Watkins, Director of the NBA Incubate Initiative, at awatkins@nbacares.org.