



Christian Help stays flexible to help the community—with no proof of need required

Neighbors helping neighbors, whatever that may be; that's Christian Help in a nutshell.

Whether it's volunteers wanting to connect, clients who require support or direct aid, or donors sharing items or funds, the focus is on people. The community-supportive and -supported organization was founded to help individuals in need and provide opportunities for improved outcomes in Monongalia and Preston counties, West Virginia.

"Christian Help reflects the best of community generosity and ownership," says Executive Director Colleen Lankford. "It adjusts to whatever the community needs happen to be at any given time."

How its people help

Christian Help facilitates five budget support and career services programs: a free store, emergency financial assistance through vouchers, a food pantry, a career closet and development courses, which include the work readiness program Jobs for Life, and personal finance and nutrition classes.

It also provides budget support for annual activities such as back to school, holidays and prom, which can stretch an already tight budget. And with no overarching restrictions, the organization has a lot of flexibility, taking people at their word without unnecessary questions or paperwork.

"We don't try to make it difficult to help somebody; one of the worst things you can do is make someone prove they need help," Lankford says. "We can facilitate the person's needs, as opposed to what a government or agency requires."

She says the organization is founded on the model of neighbors helping neighbors.

"It is community generosity and interconnectedness that adjusts to whatever the community needs happen to be," she says. "We respond to emergency situations with the simplicity of respecting the dignity of all persons in the spirit of Jesus Christ."

And while it does require a copy of a utility shutoff notice, or proof that a landlord will accept a voucher, "when it comes to interacting with individuals and dealing with the free store, we don't go there."

A connected community

Christian Help is an advocate that listens closely to its clients, whose income levels tend to be limited or fixed.

"Very few people who come to Christian Help anticipate being in a crisis," she says. "They didn't expect to be here, and more often than not, they say, 'I've always been a donor. I never expected to come here for help.'"

The organization's inner connectedness among its volunteers, clients and donors is key to its success.

Huntington has contributed by supporting Christian Help through grants, championing the career closet and volunteering.

"Huntington has been a wonderful financial institution for us, and they have employees who volunteer here on a regular basis," Lankford says.

About the organization

Name: Christian Help

Website: motownchristianhelp.com

Regions served: Monongalia and Preston counties

Phone: (304) 296-0221

Mission: To respond to situations of emergency and need, with immediacy and simplicity respecting the dignity of all persons in the spirit of Jesus Christ*.

How you can help: Christian Help is always looking for monetary and product donations as well as people to donate time. To learn more, visit motownchristianhelp.com/volunteer.