

*NARRATIVE REPORT
2020*

THE GRACE CENTER OF SOUTHERN OKLAHOMA



Mark Stratton is a Grace Day Center client. Stratton visits the Grace Day Center several times each week to shower and pick up his mail.

PREPARED BY
Laura Eastes Akers,
Executive Director



Mission:

TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS AND INCREASE SELF-SUFFICIENCY FOR ALL PEOPLE. THE CENTER PROVIDES EDUCATION AND RESOURCE ASSISTANCE IN A CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, ENCOURAGING, AND CHRIST-CENTERED ENVIRONMENT.



Kimberly Parker, Grace Day Center client

The Grace Center of Southern Oklahoma is a safety net for poor families and individuals, including the least of these. Grace Center programs provide a stabilizing force for the chaotic lives of those we serve. For the mother whose son was returned to her after 18 months in foster care, it's keeping the electricity on. The electricity keeps the groceries from spoiling and ensures the lamp turns on when her son begins his homework. For the U.S. Army veteran who suffers from mental illness, it's the cup of coffee served with a smile of support from our staff. Our services play a critical role in providing stability, relieving toxic stress, and inspiring self-sufficiency. The mother, who was awarded financial assistance on an electric bill, is now a better parent, cooking dinner and helping her son with his homework. She is still poor, but stable and less stressed, and for her son, that stability means being prepared for school the next day. The veteran, who visits the Day Center, is now giving back by sorting donations. He is contributing to a place where he belongs after a night sleeping on the streets.

TEAM

Laura Eastes Akers, Executive Director

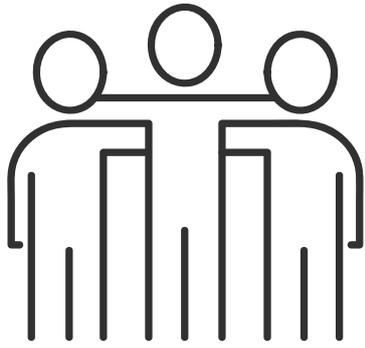
Marcia Gentry, Grace Resource Director

Karlie Harper, Grace Day Director

Leslie Groven, Office Manager

Connie Applegate, Financial Literacy Coordinator

Anthony Garringer, Grace Day Assistant Director



Grace Center Impact 2020

THE NUMBERS

2,895 unique individuals served in 2020

When the Grace Center changed leadership in 2019, it was apparent that past evaluation methods did not include gathering data on the numbers of unique individuals served in a year. Therefore, clients who received multiple points of service were counted multiple times. Current leadership revised the evaluation method. Efforts continue for establishing better use of evaluation to understand and improve Grace Center programs.

582

Households stabilized by the Emergency Financial Assistance Program

The Grace Resource Center provided emergency financial assistance to 582 families, impacting 850 adults and 585 children. Through rent assistance, 114 families remained in their homes. The Resource Center kept vital utilities on for families and seniors, which resulted in the payment of 299 electric bills, 194 water bills, and 20 natural gas bills. Of those 582 families, 56 received assistance through the COVID-19 Emergency Fund, a specialty fund created through the support of foundations, faith groups, and private individuals to benefit neighbors directly impacted by the pandemic and its economic recession, such as illness, employment, loss of childcare, and drop in income.

EDUCATION

29

**Parents graduated
from the Nurturing
Parenting
Program**

150

**Lives enriched by
the Financial
Literacy Program**

MORE

Viewed as a line of defense against homelessness, the Emergency Financial Assistance Program covers low-income households' temporary gaps of income during a financial crisis. The program seeks to assist those who are experiencing a one-time financial crisis in their lives. It is for unforeseen emergencies. However, households may receive emergency assistance twice in a 12-month period. In 2020:

44 3

**Households received
assistance twice**

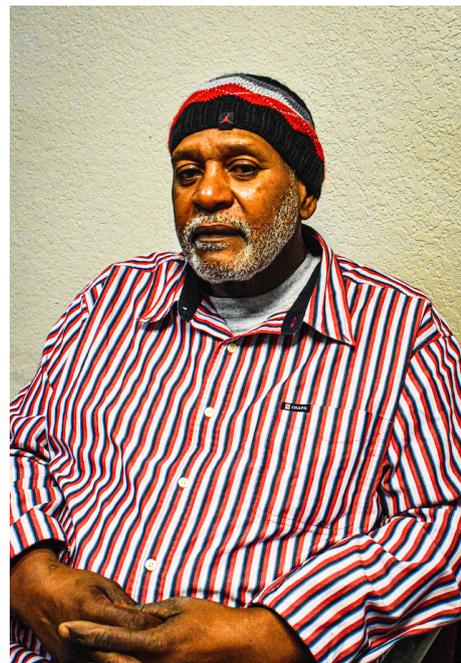
**Households received
assistance three times**

GRACE RESOURCE CENTER



HOMELESSNESS

At the Grace Day Center, where the most vulnerable rely on us, services ensure that basic needs are met. As a drop-in program, it offers a warm or cool place to sit, a clean and safe bathroom, and a way to get online to complete a job application. On average, the Grace Day Center serves 31 people each day. A majority of which are sleeping on the streets, in their vehicles, and, at times, in abandoned buildings. Our clients are broken, trapped in their unique, complex webs of circumstances, and the center provides the space and opportunity to put themselves back together. Relationships are built because that's when change happens, like entering treatment, accepting a mental health diagnosis, or reconnecting with a loved one. A partnership with Lighthouse Behavioral Wellness Centers brings a caseworker to the center each week. In late September, the Grace Center added a staff member to the Grace Day Center, which began opening six days each week. The Grace Day Center is now open from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturdays.



Tommy Mitchell, Grace Day Center client



ARDMORE HOMELESS COALITION

Mission:
PROVIDING DIGNITY, SAFETY, SHELTER,
AND HEALING TO OUR HOMELESS
NEIGHBORS.

Vision Statement:
THE COMMUNITY WORKING TOGETHER TO
PROVIDE SOLUTIONS-BASED REMEDIES TO
END HOMELESSNESS.

The Grace Center provides the leadership to oversee the Ardmore Homeless Coalition, a collaboration of community leaders working together to provide solutions-based remedies to end homelessness. In the fall 2020, the coalition created a four-goal plan to reduce homelessness in Ardmore.

Core Leadership:

Laura Akers, Grace Center

Karlie Harper, Grace Center

Sabra Emde, Ardmore City Schools

Puddy Agans, Mercy Ardmore

Ellen Roberts, ABHC

Capt. Allan Grimes, Salvation Army Ardmore

Roxanne Logan, Together Oklahoma

Misty Apala, Impact Ardmore

Pastor Ted Clark, Jr., Children of the King
Baptist Church

Mayor Doug Pfau, City of Ardmore

Kori Thompson, I Sell Houses

Johnny Bruce, Outcasts Under Transformation

Crystal Douglas, Resorting Lives

Goal: Increase options for transportation

Objective: Provide access to services for the homeless to change lives

Goal: Develop a central intake point for services

Objective: Provide access to services and to identify initial needs

Goal: Develop plans for safe shelter and transitional living to meet current and future needs

Objective: Provide available shelter or living space when needed

Goal: Raise awareness in the community regarding the challenges of homelessness

Objective: Gain support, educate, advocate, understand, communicate the plan, and be factual.