

Austin Hill Testimony HR No 299

The Refuge is tireless in its desire and passion for changing the lives of those affected by addiction. We believe that the change first starts with an individual's understanding of their need for a relationship with Jesus. True life transformation happens only when we understand that we need a community around us to sustain that change. That is what the Refuge is all about -- Changing the lives of men so they can go seek and bring about positive change in their families, churches and communities.

One of our graduates who is currently on staff serving the men in the Refuge, Nicholas Meadors, reflected on his journey saying, *quote*: "After 13 months of hard work, concentration, and perseverance I completed my commitment to The Refuge and to God...The struggle with addiction is incredibly hard. That's why Jesus Christ has made it so easy to give our lives over to him.... I use to think I was an addict. Now I know I'm a child of God."

Another graduate of the Refuge, Craig Smith added, *quote*: "The Lord has also blessed me with the opportunity to give back and serve the Refuge and my community. I help facilitate bible studies on Tuesday nights at the Refuge. I am approved to start volunteering with the Suicide Prevention Hotline, and I am also life coaching some of the men currently in the ministry. God has blessed me so much, and has absolutely changed my life. None of it would have been possible, if I didn't get to come to the Refuge, and develop my relationship with Jesus, and learn the importance of relationships, hard work, and accountability that the Refuge teaches."

The Refuge is excited for the opportunity to partner with the public sector in our shared desire for life transformation in our communities. The men of The Refuge are living testimonies of what real life change looks like -- not just for themselves, but for the community that they live in and love. Just like the individuals who succeed in our faith based ministry, we cannot do this alone. It is not solely the *private, non-profit* or the *public sector's* responsibility to solve this problem.

This is a *shared responsibility* of these three sectors to work together to find solutions that DO something to stop this dangerous situation in Ohio. We must model the men and women who have defeated their addiction by being interdependent on one another. Our shared goal of healthy, strong communities will only be realized when we see that your success is our success.

At The Refuge we have learned something very important; and that is that real and lasting recovery goes *beyond* treatment -- it is about building a new, complete life. And at The Refuge we are seeing some of our men investing in building communities in a program we call "Project 614."

We are actively investing in the Westside through this community development organization. Project 614 is more than our area code -- it is based off Isaiah 61:4, which says "They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations."

The Refuge not only strives to rebuild the ruined lives of individuals who struggled with addiction, but we are now watching many of those same individuals rebuild our ruined communities. So far, The Refuge is has purchased 2 duplexes in the Hilltop and Franklinton, remodeling them into safe, decent homes our men and the community.

But we are just getting started.

Our goal is to have 25 completed homes by 2025. We are on pace to add 3-4 more completed properties in 2018. The homes, and more importantly, the people inside of them are an asset to an area that needs rebuilt.

We are honored to watch men who have finished our 13-month Ministry take the opportunity to become homeowners. These men have a second chance and they don't take that lightly. They are becoming homeowners that care deeply about their neighbors and their community. They are homeowners who love deeply because they were first loved by a community and a Savior that saw more than just an addict.

Those of us who work at The Refuge are watching lives become transformed. Men who complete the ministry leave The Refuge with a good job... they have connected or re-connected with their families.... These are men who were once broken are on a path to become leaders in their communities and their churches.

Often times The Refuge is the last change for a broken person seeking freedom from addiction. But, more and more we are seeing desperation turn into transformation. On the Westside of Columbus people are finding freedom from addiction because of the love of Christ.

We invite you to join us in our daily fight against this epidemic that has a dangerous grip on our state. Thank you.