

What's Brewing|Prairie Bluffs Thrift Store

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

food pantry, Council Bluffs, thrift store, food, clothing, ministry, assistance, service, mission, families

SPEAKERS

Carla Long, Ken Juel

Carla Long 00:27

Hello, and welcome to the *Project Zion Podcast*. I'm your host, Carl Long, and today you're listening to "What's Brewing". It's a series all about amazing missional activities that are happening all over the Church, and today I'm with a new friend, Ken Juel. Did I say your last name right, Ken?

Ken Juel 00:44

Yes, you did.

Carla Long 00:45

Okay, great. So, hi, Ken.

Ken Juel 00:46

Hi, Carla, how you doing?

Carla Long 00:48

Good. Thank you so much for being here, Ken. I am looking forward to learning more about the ministry that you're providing. But before we jump into that, could you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Ken Juel 00:58

Sure. We're located in Council Bluffs. I'm born and raised here. I spent my last 30 plus years in meeting and incentives of business for two different corporations in Omaha and then it came to a point where it's time for Ken to get off the road, so to speak. I traveled more than 100 days a year, for the most part. So, this opportunity popped up, the board of directors for the Thrift Store and Food Pantry had created an executive director position, and after 30 some years of traveling, I decided to stay home and take this position on, and I was fortunate enough to be hired by the board. It was, one of my main motivations for that was that I wanted to do something to give back to the community where I had grown up, and this was a great opportunity for me to try to reconnect. Even though I was born and raised here in Council Bluffs, I felt like I didn't know the city anymore, or the community, and this was a great opportunity for me to do that.

Carla Long 01:59

Oh, that's wonderful. And 100 days on the road, that's a lot of time.

Ken Juel 02:03

It is a lot of time but get to see, it was a very fulfilling in a lot of ways as well as able to see and do a lot of things that I otherwise wouldn't have been able to do so. I personally believe it made me a more rounded person and, in some respects, helped me in taking on this new position, because of the diversity and some of the things that I was able to see while I was traveling.

Carla Long 02:28

Oh, absolutely. I have been really, really lucky to travel, mostly for the church, some volunteer positions, some paid positions, and it has completely changed my outlook on everything, my entire life. And so, I think getting to travel and being able to see how other people live and how other people are, it's pretty important. It was a really important for me, at least.

Ken Juel 02:49

It opens you up. It makes you think things differently. There's no doubt about it.

Carla Long 02:53

It really does. I love that that's where you came from. I think that's really cool. So, your ministry is called, and let me make sure I get this right, the Community of Christ Caring Ministries Thrift Store and Food Pantry.

Ken Juel 03:04

That is correct. Absolutely.

Carla Long 03:07

That's a long name. So, can you tell us a little bit about the Community of Christ Caring Ministries Thrift Store and Food Pantry. Just give me a little overview of what it is?

Ken Juel 03:15

Sure. It's located right in the heart of Council Bluffs and we're right in the downtown area, which is a great location for us, because it makes it very easy access for a lot of our customers and clients both. It was formed back in the '70s as an outreach for that. The thrift store part of it is to allow us to generate revenue, so it helps us fund our outreach. And the store itself has four basic areas of outreach. We do food pantries. We provide clothing vouchers for people who are in need of clothes. We have household vouchers, which I'll get to in a minute, describe those, for people who need household items. And then every year we do what we call a holiday care basket project and along with the Christmas season, in terms of that, where we provide both food and gifts for individuals and families in need. So, there, our food pantry works up where you're open Monday through Friday, 9 to 11 in the morning. We kind of do a signup thing. There are certain requirements that we're supposed to follow in terms of, meeting the guidelines for USDA and so forth, but we don't require a whole lot of terms of the people who are in need, that once you get food pantries, basically just have to show up and have an ID, and we just confirm that they meet the USDA income guidelines and we provide them a pantry. We suggest to them that they come once every 30 days in terms of that, but if they're short in between the times or something happens, we also make sure no one goes hungry at the same time.

Carla Long 04:59

Ken, that sounds like a really big responsibility. You have a lot going on there. How did this whole ministry get started? And how long has it been going on?

Ken Juel 05:09

Well, it's been going on since the mid '70s. It was formed by what would be the predecessor to the Mission Center, in terms of that, so it was created locally, which we would have been the stake back, that is using old terms, and it was founded, I'm not sure all the individuals who originally were involved in founding it, but it started in, and created then. And it's kind of grown over the years in terms of both its scope of serving clients, and, as well as the size of the store, the outreach that we've been able to provide people in the community to where it is today. Let me digress just for a second, if I can. When we run the thrift store and food pantry, we look at everyone come through the door as a client or a customer. There's customers that come in, and they just want to shop because they think our shop is cool, and there's a lot of things, want to come in and take a look at. And the clients are the ones that we're provided the outreach, or the ministry to, in terms of either the food or the clothes, or the household items. But some of our clients are also customers, because they recognize they can come here, because you know, we're essentially a secondhand store, and the pricing is very much in line with that. Good example, that would be our, if you look at our clothes, we're very, we're very picky about the clothes that we put out, where we get a lot of clothes to display in the store, and we're basically pricing, garage sale pricing. It makes it very affordable for people in need, that need to get clothing, whether they can pay for it or if they do it through a voucher. And it helps them kind of tie things over. The last year or two especially, we've seen a quite an increase in our clothing sales. I relate this to the pressure of the inflation that's going on right now. I think people are trying to find ways to make ends meet. They have figured out that maybe we can go and look at a second hand shop and pick some things up that are nice, but don't have to be necessarily brand new. It's been pretty interesting to see how that has grown over the last year or two.

Carla Long 07:17

How wonderful. What a wonderful ministry. You know, like, in some ways, when you think about people who are in need, you think about food immediately, right, because everybody needs food every single day, but you don't really think about the clothing part. And you don't think about all the other things that come about when you just are in need. So, I'm really grateful that you're doing all that for the wonderful people of Council Bluffs.

Ken Juel 07:37

Right. And one of the things that we've developed over the years, we have what we call a Regional Correctional Facility that's located here in Council Bluffs, and they provide a voucher for people that are ready to get out of that facility and either start a job again, or get back on their feet and that. And they send them down to us to get clothes for them, so they can kind of get started off on the right foot after they are released from the correctional facility. So that's kind of a unique opportunity. And it's interesting to see the impact that that has on some of the people. You can tell there's a lot of them really genuinely appreciate because they're starting a job again, or they're going to an interview, or they need a specific clothing requirement. Grocery store requires them to wear black pants and a white shirt and they get to come here to be able to do that so they can start a new position after being released from the correctional facility. It is, it has a good impact. It really does.

Carla Long 08:37

I have no doubt it has an amazing impact and how amazing that it's been happening since the '70s.

Ken Juel 08:42

Right. It is grown. In some ways, we're kind of one of the best kept secrets here in terms of that. But in other ways, the words get down. Our impact and the number of people that we're serving continues to grow and has since I've taken over five years ago, it's when I started here as the executive director position. And we've been tracking to see what kind of impact we're having with our clients, and those numbers have steadily increased across the board. So.

Carla Long 09:09

So, just out of curiosity, what happened during COVID? Did a lot of it go down? Did food needs go up?

Ken Juel 09:16

That's a great question. When COVID first hit back in March of 2020, the World Church made the decision that we had to close the thrift store itself. We weren't allowing customers to come in, but we continued to keep the food pantry open because there was going to be a need for that, and the World Church gave the permission to do that. In the month of March of 2020, we had a huge number of families that we served and the number of food pantries in that first few months after COVID hit really spiked. It was because of all the businesses closing and jobs being shut down and, and then there's a corresponding sense of needing help whether they really needed it or not, but they were looking for it. And we serve, it doesn't sound like a big number, but it was a big number for us, was over 130 families in those three weeks after we first, things really hit the fan there in mid-March. And we had set up some structure in place to kind of keep the social distancing thing going, so we did individual appointments in 10 minute increments. And so, we were serving 13 families every day, and that went for like three weeks straight. We may schedule an appointment a day or two in advance now. We were scheduling appointments four or five days in advance because we were filling up all of our time slots. But we were trying to follow what we were asked to do at that time, which was the social distancing thing. And then we figured out that was the best way for us to be able to do that. And so, that was kind of the immediate impact. And then it slowed down when things started to calm down a little bit, and then it also somewhat slowed down when the, the federal government started issuing the stimulus checks because they had money. I don't mean to sound negative when I say this, but there was agencies at all sorts of different levels that were throwing money at our clients left and right and that. And it was a good thing, but at the same time, it probably hurt them at the same time because when it started to wean off, we started to see a huge increase in demand for food pantries again. And so, it was just kind of interesting to see the reaction. But you could tell immediately when they started because they had increased, the federal government had increased the SNAP number, in terms of the amount of money they were getting in their SNAP program, plus the stimulus checks, plus some other local or state level aid. And it was a lot of money that they were throwing at them to use to help them get through, which was good, but when you start to wean that back off, they needed to come back us right away, in terms of to help them meet the ends, that they couldn't do otherwise.

Carla Long 12:01

Ah, gosh, like COVID has just changed everything and just turned it on its head, so.

Ken Juel 12:07

Yes, it has. It was an interesting year plus, in terms of getting through that. And our store itself, we were closed for two and a half months and then we had permission to open back up again, because we basically built the business case that we have people that are needing other things that we provide besides the food. They need the clothing, is a good example, and we kept having people call in and asking, and, and we were saying we couldn't do it this time. But it was a good thing when we were able to do that because it helped start to meet those needs. Because again, in spite of the assistance they're getting, there is still people that weren't able to get clothing items they needed or they needed, or food or even household items in terms of that. So, it was good for us to be able to get back open. It's almost, at some kind of weird way, it was like a boost to their soul a little bit, to be able to come and, come to a place they're used to coming to to get help when they could still. So, in spite of getting all the money and stuff, still there were things that were missing, and we felt like we were filling that gap, if you will.

Carla Long 13:17

Which is why the word ministries is in your title. It's really, really important.

Ken Juel 13:21

Really important.

Carla Long 13:23

You've mentioned about the thrift store and the food pantry. You also mentioned something else in your introduction about a voucher, or something like that, a housing voucher. Is that what you said?

Ken Juel 13:31

Yeah, one of the things do, we work primarily with other agencies in the Council Bluffs area that are helping homeless people get back on their feet, and get back into a home or an apartment. And what we do is that we will provide them necessary, or we call essential items, for them to be able to do that. And we define essential items as beds, if we have them, dressers, tables, chairs, pots, pans, dishes, sheets, bedding, etc. And it's mostly aimed at, like I said, people are trying to get off the street, get back up. And we work with Heartland Family Services, which is an agency here in Council Bluffs, that helps people transition off the street and then into apartments. But it also plays a role of some other areas. A good example be, is a couple three years ago, there was pretty significant flooding here in the Midwest, in the March/April timeframe, and we had a lot of people along the river that lost their homes, didn't have any flood insurance, were looking to try to get back into a new property, and they would come to us and we would help them get those essential household items so they can start over again, and save what little money they did have to use for other things. We don't really have a limit on that, in terms of how much assistance we give them. We do kind of a three-step process with them. We meet with them. We ask them to sit down and make a list of essential items that they need. We have a lot of people who come in and say, "Well, I need everything." But no, I want you to think through it. Because it was getting very overwhelming when they would come in, and we would tell them, "Yes," and then they would walk around the store and it just was overwhelming. And so, to help them focus and make sure that we could meet their needs the best way possible, we asked them to make a list and then we meet with them and

go down the list with them and say, "We have this. We don't have this." This probably isn't an essential item." Everyone will put a flat screen TV on, but we don't really consider flat screen TVs a necessity. We work with them in terms of that, helping them understand that. And then we'll set up an appointment, make sure they have transportation in place to be able to haul all the stuff we're gonna give them. Because you throw a couch, and a bed, and a dresser, and a table and chairs, you know, they need something, a pickup or something, that they can haul this stuff. And we make sure they've got that in place, because we really don't like them showing up in a Volkswagen and wanting them to tie all this stuff on the top of their roof of their car. It just defeats the purpose. And we do offer, if they could scrape together \$25, we'll deliver it for them afterwards, if we make the arrangements and they could come up with that money, because that's usually what we charge for delivering on anything that we either sell, or if they pick something out. We do that for the families. We say, "It's once in a lifetime." Because we want them to be able to feel ownership on the stuff that we're giving them, so they take good care of it, and they understand that it's truly a gift that they're receiving. And then people do. There's a lot of people that are really touched in terms of, we've got them off to a running start on a new life when they get in a home, or new apartment and they have stuff that they can furnish it with, at least partway. So, that's what our household voucher is. That's a big deal. For clothing vouchers, that works kind of a similar way. When they come in, they can pick off \$30 of clothes off the rack, based on the price on the tags, and we do those by appointments as well, and we do that 11-4 Monday through Friday. And all they have to do is just call in and schedule. We don't really have any requirements. Carla, you could come in and say, "Hey, I need clothes," and we'll schedule a time you'd go through and pick off \$30 of clothes off the racks. All of our clothes, probably garage sale priced, for the most part, you know, very few things aren't. And they can walk out of here easily with two or three outfits. And that includes things like purses, shoes, in addition to physical clothing, belts, if they have one their size, and so forth. So, four times a year, if they are people that are in need, and they really need the assistance, they could come in every 90 days and pick out \$30 of clothes. So, they can manage through the seasons if they time it right.

Carla Long 18:04

That's really, really wonderful. That's really wonderful. And, did you mention, maybe I missed it, where do you get your clothes from?

Ken Juel 18:11

We are donation driven. So, we take donations off the street. We encourage it. We have a Facebook page. We're always asking for it. We also work with a lot of people that they may be having an estate sale, or they have an estate they manage with, and we will receive a lot of merchandise, if you will, from those type of arrangements. We're one of the few entities in Council Bluffs that'll actually do pickups. We will go out and pick up large items, if someone has a large item they're willing to donate. We will go and get them. We, all we ask is that the stuff's in good condition. We don't want to put something in someone's hands, if we're helping them, that's stained or torn. We want them to feel good about what they're receiving. We're not picky, but we do manage it appropriately so that stuff they see on the floor, whether they're here to buy it, or if they're getting it through one of our vouchers, is stuff that they will be able to wear right away. So, nothing stained, clothing wise, nothing torn, all the buttons are there, no holes, unless they're designed that way, like some of the jeans are nowadays. It's, so that it gets them a good sense of confidence that they have something that they could put on that they look nice in. And

that's always really important with the clothes. But we take pretty much everything. I tell people, "No," very rarely. Very rarely do I say "No". It's kind of funny. The only two things we absolutely don't take, we don't take tube TVs, absolutely cannot give them away. And we don't take, believe it or not, the old style entertainment centers that tube TVs go into. We don't take those anymore. I'd put, "Free to a good home," and put them outside, and they sit there. No one's interested in some of those items. There's probably about two or three things that we don't take. We're very picky on any bedding or beds that we would receive, that want to get donated. We don't want bedbugs in the store. We don't want people to get stuff from us that has bed bugs in it, as example. So, we manage that pretty stringently. But we've been pretty fortunate. It kind of gets streaky, in terms of, we'll go for a while, we may not have any beds, but like, in this next two weeks, I'm going to get four different sets of box springs and mattresses just from either estates, or something that people are looking to donate. And with us being one of the few agencies that do come and do pickups, it really gives us a competitive advantage, vis a vis, some of the other agencies in town, in terms of that. So, there's basically 100% of our merchandise is donated to the facility. And a lot of people do, they'll come and tell us this, because they know what our mission is, and know what, we're a non-profit, what we're here for. And they will tell me when they come and drop stuff off, "The reason you're getting this is because of what you guys do, and how you serve the community," which is great.

Carla Long 21:04

That's exactly what you want to hear. Go ahead.

Ken Juel 21:06

Exactly what you want to hear. And one of the things I should mention is we are a volunteer driven organization. There's only two full-time paid employees, if you will, me being one of them. We have a couple part-time people and everything else are volunteers from within the community. The median age of our volunteers is probably, like 75, but they work harder than a lot of young people do in terms of, they have a great sense of ownership and pride into the facility and what our mission is, and as a result of that, we have a good product that we put out there. It's fun to see that emotion. One of my best volunteers is a woman who's 86 years old, but she has a great background in decorating and flower arrangements and stuff like that, and she works primarily with our boutique area where we get some vintage items, and she sets stuff up and displays them like that. She's crazy good, makes stuff look wonderful, color coordinates, just does a wonderful job. And she gets compliments all the time from people that come in and see some of the things we do. Twice a year with her we do like a spring open house where we have spring items for Easter and some like that, and then we do a Christmas open house in November, the first weekend, where we display all of our Christmas stuff that has been donated, and have a big sale, and kind of kick off the Christmas season. It's amazing how successful that has been for us in terms of attracting customers, at the same time being able to serve the clients as a result of that.

Carla Long 22:44

Absolutely. That sounds so wonderful. That's really, really cool. I want to hear a little bit more about the food pantry side of it. How do you get the food for the food pantry? Where does the money come from for your salary? I have lots of questions.

Ken Juel 23:57

That's fine. Well, let's attack the food thing first. Okay, so the food, we work with the local food bank, which is Food Bank for the Heartland. And they, we could order food off of their website, and, and it's delivered here. It's first come, first serve, so you're competing with western Iowa and majority of Nebraska, with other pantries, to get food from them to put in your pantry. So, it's sometimes, it's a feast or famine thing. It's been very difficult over the last year, because the demand has really gone up because of the impact of inflation, and with the, the subsidies that have been weaned off from the COVID era, the demand for its food has really gone up. Their supply has not been able to keep up with that. So, in addition to that, we're always asking for donations for food. And we try to work at like, at the holiday time, we try to work with a couple of different schools to have food drives in their local schools to get us some food. There's a couple of neighborhood associations around us that will do the same thing as well. And then throughout the year, sometimes people will just drop some food off for you. Recently, we just received a very nice check from the Southwest Iowa Realtors Association, had raised money for the Council Bluffs Pantry Association, which we're one of the pantries of that, and we will receive a portion of that sum of money. We work on trying to get grants and donations as well and, of course, Community of Christ Church members, through their local operated envelopes, are able to donate to our food pantry through there as well. So, we work multiple different areas to try to get food, whether it leads to actual donation drives or for cash that we'd turn around and use, and then supplement what we can get from the food bank from going out and purchasing food from one of the local grocery stores. So that's where the food part comes from. To pay for my salary and keeping the lights on, and making sure we got heat and air conditioning, that's the revenue from the store itself, for my selling the items that we sell here. But that's one of the purposes of the thrift store part, so that we can fund our organization to be able to keep that running.

Carla Long 25:22

Yes, well, that sounds awesome and a little bit complicated too. No wonder that they need an executive director to get this going and keep this running, Ken. That makes a lot of sense to me.

Ken Juel 25:33

Well, when I first took the position, I'm one of the board of directors for the thrift store, we're looking for was to be able to try to drive the increase in outreach and working with local charities, or whatever, to try to receive additional grants, funding donations, and try to drive that. I don't want to brag, but we've made some inroads. And we're coming on and doing that, and at the same time, working individual donations to try to make improvements to the facilities. So after about my first year here, our parking lot used to be gravel, and was not the most user friendly parking lot in the world, so we had an individual that come forward, was willing to make a significant donation, and we bankrolled that donation with a matching grant, from what is called the Iowa West Foundation here in town. And we were able to pave our parking lot with those funds, with a matching grant. It was \$50,000 investment in total, but made a huge difference in terms of, we were able to have real parking spaces. We could have a handicapped spot that's actually marked with a sign and painted. And it was kind of underneath the quote/unquote "beautification project" for the area. And I thought that was kind of tongue in cheek, but I'll take it because it made a significant difference in terms of the curb appeal of our facility, and the ease of use for people coming in. A big chunk of our clients are elderly, low income, retired people, and having a parking lot that is safe for them to walk in is very important, and we were able to do that. That's one of

my main reasons for taking the role on in terms of what I was charged to try to drive that kind of stuff more. So going forward on that.

Carla Long 27:24

I love hearing stories like that. Thank you, Ken, for sharing that. So, I want to ask another question, but I feel like we need to make sure we're finished with this part first. I want to ask you about lives that have been changed by people that you've been working with. But before I do that, is there anything else you want to talk about the food pantry or the thrift store or anything like that, something that I've missed and haven't asked you about?

Ken Juel 27:44

I guess I can do a little bit of the economic side of things. And from the standpoint of, that we serve between two and 3000 families a year. We probably average between 75 and 100 families a month for food pantries. We probably average between 50 and 75 families a month on clothing vouchers, just because of the size and the way things work. There's not nearly those kinds of numbers for the household vouchers, but between 25 and 50 families a year on the household voucher side of the fence. This past Christmas, for our holiday care baskets, we served 332 families, which was a total of 595 people in that. We served families that are size from one to size of 12. With that they get both the food, so you're have a nice Christmas dinner, a food pantry on steroids, because they get extras that you wouldn't normally receive because it is the holiday season. And then we also work with the local Toys for Tots. And we make a request in and get toys for the kids, and all the kids under the age 14, we'll have toys for them. And for that matter, everyone who signs up will get at least one or two gifts that they get to open during the holiday. It doesn't matter if they're 75 or seven, they will have something. All the adult gifts, which is basically 18 and up, we wrap all those ahead of time, so it's kind of a surprise for them. And most of it is basically focused on socks, gloves, mittens, hats, scarves, books. I mean, it's all over the board, but just some basics that they wouldn't otherwise take time to get for themselves. We get quite a bit of satisfaction out of that basket project. It's a week long project for us. We start on a Sunday on setup days, and Mondays and Tuesday we spend basically assembling all those packages together. Wednesdays we do delivery, so if they are a family that have no children or anything, we'll deliver those to the home. This last program we had over 250 deliveries. And then we had 80 families that came on Thursday to do the pickups, which would have included the gifts for the children and stuff like that. During COVID, we had to stop allowing them to come in. We're going to try to open it back up this year. We let the parents come in and pick out their own toys for their kids as a part of the holiday care basket project. No one else really does that. They usually just give them items and call it good. But we used to let them shop before COVID, and now that COVID is truly calming down, this next year, we're looking at starting that back up again. And that really touches those families that are getting to pick out toys for their kids at a big time of year.

Carla Long 30:35

It makes such a difference, rather than someone giving you something versus when you get to feel in control. That makes a huge difference, a huge difference.

Ken Juel 30:42

Huge difference.

Carla Long 30:44

That all sounds so wonderful, Ken. Thanks for telling us about all of that. That's really, really exciting stuff that's happening in Council Bluffs. Can you tell us a few stories perhaps? Everyone loves to hear a story about how lives are changed and how the ministry is helping people?

Ken Juel 30:59

Yeah, there's two or three that come to mind to me. The first one would have been back in 2000, and, I think it was 2019. This would have been one of the individuals that came from our regional correctional facility. He had come down and he had gotten some clothes because he had a job interview, and he got the job, which was great. And then once he was released, he was set up in an apartment, and we helped him furnish parts of that apartment for him. We did a household voucher for him as a result of that, and got him on his feet. And he asked us what he could do for us to help us out as a result of that, because he felt so good about trying to get his life back on track. He suffered from some addiction issues and had worked with fighting through that and getting basically back up right. We used him as a testimony at one of our fundraising events, where he actually came, got up on stage, talked a little bit about himself and what kind of an impact that he made. And you know, it really touched a lot of hearts at that fundraiser. And at the same time, the other thing he was doing is that he was telling all his other friends that were in similar situations that they can come and hear and get some assistance as well and basically sold our services that we offer. You know, that's one of those feel good X 10 type of deals because not only did we help him get back on his feet, but then he, in turn around, was telling others so they could help get themselves back up on their feet. That was really great, not only giving to them, but then to pass that on to others as well. It helps our circle of influence. He was helping us expand our own circle of influence, in terms of trying to help others that were in need. It was kind of cool to see that. He felt like he could come out here and, and could have them come out to us because he knew we would take good care of them and help them get on his feet like he did. Our Christmas basket program, there was a nurse here in town that had a fairly large number of kids that she had either adopted or were fostering, and she had come to us a couple of years in a row for assistance at the holiday time. She was a single mom, worked full time as a nurse, she had a total of eight children that she was taking care of, between her fosters and her own children. We set a couple of things aside for her that was kind of special, unique because of her situation. And you know, she was pretty emotionally touched by the whole deal. We were fortunate we had a couple of bikes that we had received that we're new that we could channel her way for her children that really made a difference in their lives, and picked them up at a tough time of year. She's good people and she comes to us every holiday season and signs up and gets assistance from us. And it wasn't like she was working, because she was just full time, but because of her circumstances needed the assistance. And we felt like we really made a difference in her life. Those are two that really pop out to me, and over the last five years, that I can point to and say, "This is the reason why we do what we do here, and why we offer the ministry that we do."

Carla Long 34:24

Because the goal is always not to have them come back and come back, but to find a new way to live their lives and hopefully blossom and flourish on their own, with assistance and help too, right? That's always the goal. And so...

Ken Juel 34:35

We don't want to get them from month to month. We want them to be able to grow and take care of themselves at some point. Those are two examples of where I think that we have probably succeeded in doing that.

Carla Long 34:47

Well, that is awesome and amazing and wonderful stories, Ken. Thank you so much for sharing those with us, and thank you for doing such amazingly good work for the people of Council Bluffs. I'm astounded when I hear stories like this, and it makes me feel so good to hear them. So, thank you for doing that. I know you probably hear, "Thank you," all the time, and I have no reason to thank you, but I'm so grateful that people like you exist and are working so hard.

Ken Juel 35:09

Well, thank you. I appreciate the time. I enjoyed our conversation. And if I can make a shameless plug, if anyone's interested in learning more about us, we have a fairly active Facebook page. You can search Community of Christ Thrift Store and Food Pantry and it should pop up and you can see everything that we have either going on or featuring. We use it for multiple purposes. We use it for communicating our different outreaches that we're doing or something special that we need. But then at the same time, we also will use it to feature something that was unique that we have received as a donation and put it out there and let people know that there's something they could come down and take a look at. Serves multiple communication purposes for us.

Carla Long 35:54

I hope that you get a lot more people on your Facebook page. So, thanks again, Ken. This has been a wonderful podcast and I'm really, really excited to hear about all the wonderful ministry that's happening there.

Ken Juel 36:04

Thank you, Carla. So nice to meet you.