



What a year!

COMMUNITY HELPING PLACE ANNUAL REPORT 2020



Outside the box

When we began 2020, the phrase we had adopted for our leadership team was “Think Outside the Box.” We hoped this motto would help us look more closely at the work we were already doing and consider new ways to help more people. God knew that this motto would become more and more important as we faced a global pandemic. Beginning in March, like many of you, we were forced to look at everything we did in light of new procedures and protocols. Our thrift store (which had always been the largest source of operational support for CHP) was forced to close during the “shelter in place” phase of Covid-19. Our free clinic was also forced to close except for patient visits through Zoom. Many of our volunteers had to step away temporarily, due to their age or pre-existing health conditions. Against all odds, we were able to keep the Food pantry open throughout the entire duration of this crisis. The volunteers who felt safe continuing their duties made it possible for us to feed thousands of hungry and needy families. Literally everything we did for several months was accomplished with the theme of Thinking Outside the Box. Necessity led us to make some changes, and with the gift of a passenger van from St. Paul UMC, we were able to begin transporting clients to specialty medical appointments and deliver food pantry items to the homes of our most vulnerable clients. Emergency grant funds were shared with CHP, allowing us to purchase food at retail prices when demand made it difficult to purchase items at wholesale or cost-sharing prices. New volunteers stepped up and showed up to serve in place of those who needed to safely remain at home. And we can’t say enough about the churches! We simply would not be here without our church partners who came together to provide tangible help for the less fortunate at every turn. In spite of a pandemic, God blessed CHP!

Here is a list of new programs and services we now offer at Community Helping Place:

- **Transportation Program:** With the passenger van that was donated by St. Paul UMC, we now offer free transportation for our clients who need to see a medical specialist or who need a ride to or from our food pantry.
- **Food Delivery Program:** Beginning in March 2020 during Governor Kemp’s “Shelter in Place” order, CHP was blessed by the help and support of The Torch Church, Dahlonega Assisted Living and Papa’s Place Restaurant to offer fresh meals to shut-ins and those unable to visit our food pantry. With the help of the Georgia Mountain Food Bank, this program has continued and now involves deliveries of food pantry items to those who lack basic transportation or those who need to remain in their homes due to health or age.
- **Public Shower:** After a number of calls by those facing homelessness and needing a place to shower, CHP added a public outdoor shower with plenty of privacy, towels, and bath products

for those in need, restoring a little bit of dignity to our vulnerable neighbors in need of running water.

- **Community Garden:** Thanks to a local group of scouts, the Dahlonega Master Gardener’s Club and especially Melanie Segalla and Betty Petrie, CHP now has its own vegetable garden, right outside the Food Pantry! In the spring of 2020, this new addition began providing fresh fruits and vegetables, especially cucumbers and tomatoes.
- **Resource Hotline:** When the spread of COVID-19 made it difficult to gather for our Lumpkin Matters resource fairs, we transitioned to a 24-hour resource hotline to help those in need connect with all the helping agencies in our area. As word of the hotline spread, we were able to assist those with urgent needs to connect to valuable resources like the domestic violence shelter and employment opportunities.
- **Resource Kiosk:** Another great addition brought about by our partnership with the Two Georgia’s Initiative, our user-friendly interactive Resource Kiosk made its debut in the CHP Free Clinic in December 2020. The Kiosk will soon be traveling around to other local gathering places such as the ER waiting room, public library and the waiting areas of other public agencies.
- **Intensive Case Management:** When a local FSU grad school student approached CHP about completing his MSW internship with CHP, it opened the door for many other online learners who needed a site to complete their program as well. With the addition of these clinical interns, CHP has been able to expand our services and offer intensive case management and greater outreach and follow up for clients.
- **Free Firewood:** Thanks again to the hard work of the Torch Church and Rev. Casey Caine, CHP now offers free firewood for those in need during the winter months.
- **Childcare Assistance:** As part of the 2020 Strategic Plan, CHP Board member Dr. Bob Saba organized a task force to identify service gaps in our community. They discovered a huge need for affordable childcare options to assist families in time of hardship. Short term assistance with childcare is now available through CHP as part of our emergency assistance support.

As you can see, our goal has been to not only to keep our doors open, but also to remove barriers that keep our neighbors from accessing the resources we offer. Thanks to each and every person, club, class, church, troop, neighborhood, family, foundation and business that has allowed us to continue the work we do and much more. You are worth more than gold to Dahlonega!

With thanks to *The Dahlonega Nugget*, we at Community Helping Place decided to share this year’s annual report right here in the newspaper where we hope to reach all our wonderful supporters, volunteers, clients, customers, friends and potential friends! We are abundantly grateful for Dahlonega and Lumpkin County—a place where you hear a lot about “gold” in the hills. At Community Helping Place, we know where the real gold is: in the hearts of people. Long ago, those hearts of gold came together to start something for their neighbors in need, a partnership, a collaborative effort of people in different fields, congregations and walks of life. Because of the efforts of so many, Community Helping Place has not just survived 2020, we have thrived during the last challenging year. In this special annual report, we hope you will celebrate the work that has been done in the past, and join us in looking forward to another great year helping those facing poverty and hardships.

For a complete list of our partners, Board/Staff Members, Upcoming events, and other service statistics, please visit the CHP website: www.communityhelpingplace.org

What’s New in the CHP Free Clinic:

By: Paula Payne, Director of Development and Operations

45 year-old John* recently moved from Kentucky to Dahlonega to take care of extended family, found work painting houses for a large builder, and with it, received health insurance. But by mid March, he joined 26 million other Americans who lost their jobs because of COVID-19. With the job went his health coverage, and the money to pay for medications to control his diabetes and cholesterol. Insulin alone would cost him \$600 a vial. John’s savings would be sunk without the free clinic program. Every week since Covid hit, the clinic has had to re-evaluate protocols. “We were determined to stay open as much as possible but also to make it a safe environment for patients and volunteers” explained Donna Wright, RN, new Clinical Director of the free clinic. CHP’s clinic staff secured PPEs from some charitable organizations, and with the help of many faithful volunteers, they kept the doors open. Our current mission is “to help people stay as healthy as they can during a scary time,” Wright added, “Without our clinic to provide access to medications and care, our patients would be going to the ER, and during this pandemic, it’s not an option”. By the end of the year the clinic managed to provide 1,644 medical visits, 433 lab visits and dispensed 936 free medications through their prescription assistance program. A highlight of 2020 for the clinic was the launch of the mobile medical program.

With the participation of many local churches and UNG’s Nursing students, mobile medical reached 111 patients by taking the clinic into many areas of the community. Paula Payne attributes the outcome of the clinic’s outreach to the committed effort of all our volunteers. Many of them continue to volunteer regardless of the risk that Covid presents They are the true heroes of our clinic.

*all names have been changed to protect individual identity



Stats/Success stories:

2 clients received vehicles donated by CHP supporters!
3 clients went from homelessness to independent living
2 client’s vehicles were restored to running
297,443 pounds of food distributed through the CHP food pantry
2,776 number of families receiving food from the CHP food pantry
166 new patients in the free clinic
Over \$48,000 was provided in emergency assistance funds
79 patients receiving free dental care
54 clients received transportation for specialty medical care
344 families received personal care or baby care items
98 families received in-kind support of household goods
111 Mobile Medical patients treated or evaluated outside the clinic

Client Stories: Transforming Lives

By: Melissa Line, Executive Director

On an unusually warm summer day during the Pandemic, Kelly* called our offices to ask for some help with a pretty basic need. “I don’t have any running water, and I live in a camper with no electricity.” As it would turn out, CHP had just been gifted with a passenger van. There were no hard and fast policies about how the van would be used, so we addressed this pressing need by dispatching DT Smith, our logistics manager, with about 10 gallons of drinking water to give us time to access the situation. As is the case with many of our clients, the lack of water was only the beginning. Kelly was not only facing a recent cancer diagnosis, but she was living alone in a camper with very few resources and little to no support system. Kelly’s car was unable to be driven, and although she had the parts needed for the repair, she did not have the money or means to hire a mechanic. When DT, a retired law enforcement officer returned from delivering the water, he shared about the crisis Kelly was facing. He and our Client Services Director, Debi Holloway, pulled together basic necessities to help Kelly. In a conversation with Kelly a few days later, staff learned that this client was depressed to the point of despairing for her life. We reached out to local DUMC minister and CHP board member, Rev. Robin Parr who connected with Kelly to offer her some counseling and mental health support while DUMC youth minister Chris Davis offered to make the necessary auto repairs.

As a community pulled together to offer support, the dark cloud over Kelly’s life began to dissipate. Over a month later, a joyful and newly energized Kelly drove her personal vehicle to visit and thank

the staff of CHP. With help and referrals, Kelly found a safe place to relocate her camper where she would have water and power and with a newly repaired and running vehicle, she was able to safely travel to her chemo appointments.

Kelly’s story is an excellent example of how we truly desire to live out the newly adopted mission statement, created by the 2019 and 2020 Board of Directors: “To address with care and compassion the needs of the people of Lumpkin County by delivering services that strengthen and transform lives.” For many years, CHP has been operating with a goal of providing basic human necessities like food, water, electricity, fuel and medical care. Today we are more focused on transforming lives. And we know that transforming lives doesn’t happen quickly, and it doesn’t happen when you only address the most urgent and pressing need. In the New Testament story of Jesus feeding the five thousand, we see the concern that Christ had for urgent and pressing needs. In this case, the need was hunger, and the need was great. When Jesus saw that all his followers were hungry, he used what was available to meet that most pressing need at the time. But we also know that the ministry of Christ is about transforming lives and helping the helpless, grieving, lonely, insecure, sick and poor to find hope and strength to face other challenges that might not be immediately apparent. Sometimes it is the very act of love and compassion that changes someone, and other times it is through intentional, strength-focused and difficult steps that challenge us and eventually transform our lives.

