



MANNA MATTERS



JUNE 2021



© Photographer: Rachael Hickman

CONNECTING THE DOTS

The Manna Cafe team pulls together to help a young couple make a fresh start

Last winter, Scott and Brianna, who are from the Nashville area, were living in their small, battered car in the Manna Cafe parking lot. When the weather turned frigid and the emergency warming center opened, they came inside, and the staff and volunteers started getting to know them and their story.

Each morning, Scott would leave the center early to catch the city bus to work. Team member Tanya says he was "hard-working and persistent. He also set goals; he and Brianna were saving money even while living in their car." Of Brianna, Tanya says, "She was endearing and loyal, and she always focused on

"She always focused on his needs versus her own, even though she had virtually nothing."

Scott's needs versus her own, even though she had virtually nothing."

The more the Manna team learned about the young couple, the more they were convinced they just needed a little assistance to "connect all the dots." Manna Cafe's caseworker, Claudette, began working with them, and when a monetary gift became available, Scott and Brianna were chosen as recipients. They were overwhelmed with

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DOTS, CONTINUED

gratitude: finally, they had the down payment and first month's rent on an apartment—a place of their own.

Meanwhile, some of Manna Cafe's most dedicated volunteers pooled their own resources. One couple provided Scott and Brianna with several pieces of furniture. Other items that the couple needed were collected from donations. Combined, these resources allowed Scott and Brianna to set up their new place.

Since then, the couple has regained custody of their three-year-old son. They've

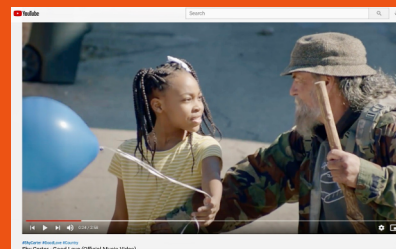
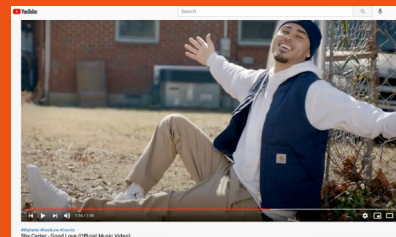
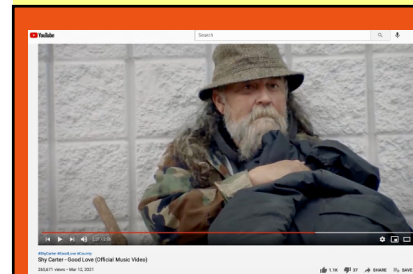
also acquired a better car and are grateful to be living a normal family life. Scott continues to work overtime to make sure he can provide for his family. With the continued help of their new friends at Manna, the couple is committed to keep moving forward.

"Sometimes," says Tanya, "you see someone who's really trying, and you get the feeling that it's 'their time'—and you say, 'Let's give them that extra help.' We're here for them, and we'll continue to be here for them."



Our sincere gratitude goes to our generous supporters, including the following:

- CMC Community Health Foundation
- CFMT (Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee)
- Walmart (Dover Rd. and Madison St.)
- Sam's Club
- Food Lion Feeds Charitable Foundation
- LG
- Bank of America
- Nashville Predators Foundation



Check it out:

Our very own Kenny York is featured in Shy Carter's newest video "Good Love (Official Music Video)."

Go give it a listen—and a thumbs-up!

THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVICE

by Dr. Carlo Serrano

When my wife Jaemi and I were first married, there were occasions when I'd get super-motivated to surprise her by doing something like washing the dishes or helping with our newborn son ... but then she'd ruin it by beating me to the punch and asking me to do it! I was fine changing a diaper or cleaning

the bathroom when I *wanted* to do it. But when she asked me, it became work because I *had* to do it. Suddenly, I was serving with a *have-to* mentality instead of a *get-to* mentality. Have you been there?

When I *have* to do something, I think about what it's going to cost me. I conserve my energy, try to get through it as quickly as possible, and probably look for a way out of doing it again. When I *have* to do something, my sole focus is *me*. This is true regardless of the task.

I've also discovered that the more stressed out we are, the more selfish we become.

We're stressed about so much lately that we turn on each other instead of helping each other. We're afraid of sickness, so we go into



Together, a Manna staff member and client plant flowers to brighten up the Refuge community center.

self-preservation mode at the expense of what's best for the collective. We're so driven by our rights—and our right to be right—that we forget humanity while protecting our opinions. None of this alleviates stress, but all of it leaves people in need of our service.

What's the solution?

I think gratitude is what helps us move from a *have-to* mentality to a *get-to* mentality. It's hard to think about the

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Dr. Carlo Serrano has served Manna Cafe since 2012 and currently serves as Chairman of the Board of Directors. Carlo is also the teaching pastor for oneChurch.tv.



© Photographer: Rachael Hickman

Our eleventh annual Grits & Gravy was so much fun! Sincere thanks to everyone who made this year's big Southern breakfast event a success.



SERVICE, CONT'D.

blessings of God while also maintaining a bad attitude. It's hard to complain about my rights and opinions when I'm face-to-face with people who have much bigger problems than my mild inconveniences. It's hard to be selfish when I think about the sacrifices others have made so I can live in peace. It's hard to feel chained down by obligation when I consider the free gift of salvation that Jesus gave me.

I encourage you to serve others because it's the least you can do. Serve with your time. Serve with your money. However you do it, serve others because you *get* to, not because you *have* to. When we view serving people as a privilege and a pleasure, our problems begin to shrink, and our stress fades away because real life begins when we lay our lives down in service to others.



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Volunteer Tommy helps keep the Manna Village tidy and clean.



THE POWER OF PURPOSE

JABE MARS, A FORMER VOLUNTEER, TELLS HOW MANNA CAFE CHANGED HIS LIFE

When I first started volunteering at Manna, I was on the tail end of some of the worst years of my life. I had no friends and had just been granted visitations with my two youngest children after not seeing them for almost two years. I had no self-esteem and thought of myself as a failure.

My earliest interaction with the crew at Manna was total acceptance. They helped me focus on my goals and realize that all the negative situations I'd been facing could be used by God to help others going through similar situations. They accepted me in all my brokenness and showed me true friendship for the first time as an adult. I felt like I had a family again. For the first time in many years, I had purpose. I reentered my relationship with God. I became a better man, a better father, and, ultimately, a better husband.



Manna showed me love and compassion and made me realize that God utilizes our experiences—good or bad—to carry out His instructions. The love and friendship I experienced at Manna molded me into the man I am today. I have always said that Manna saved my life, and I truly believe that. God brought Manna into my life, and I cherish every moment I spent there.

*Top photo: Jabe unloads the Love Bus during Combat Hunger day.
Bottom: All decked out for Manna's annual Pirate Fest*