

MANNA MATTERS

AUGUST 2020



Manna Cafe driver Stacey Rowell-Westerman



IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Recently I spent several hours accompanying Manna Cafe driver Stacey Rowell-Westerman, 53, on her route. Like many staff members, Stacey started out as a volunteer. "In 2018," she told me, "I still didn't have a

full-time job after moving to Clarksville from Fort Knox. I realized that, if nothing else, I had time I could contribute, so I started volunteering by jumping in wherever there was a need." At first she worked two days a week, then more and more, even filling in for six weeks during a full-time employee's temporary absence.



In the summer of 2018, Stacey found a job, and soon after, she got married. "Fast forward to January of 2020. My husband had told me he had the finances covered, so I went back to Manna to volunteer. The first afternoon I was

there, two employees asked if I'd be interested in driving because they were shorthanded. So here I am, six months later." Laughing brightly, she adds, "I don't need to be here per se, but I'm a terrible housewife, and Lord knows I need to do something with my time!"

A mother of two, Stacey grew up in Oregon. She and husband Mike are bikers. "He rides a Harley, and I ride a Victory," she tells me. It's clear during her Madison Street Walmart food pick-up that she's thorough and efficient. She works quickly, stacking everything by category so that each pound is accounted for. Like so many at Manna Cafe, Stacey spends her days behind the scenes, carrying out tasks that are crucial to the mission. In fact, because Manna's main focus is food, and because more than a million pounds of that food is "rescued" from stores and restaurants (due to being mislabeled, surplus, etc.), it's safe to say there would be no Manna without our drivers.

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MISSION STATEMENT:

"Manna Cafe serves people in need in Clarksville/Montgomery County through a soup kitchen on wheels, food box distribution, and other vital resources. Propelled chiefly by volunteers, Manna Cafe strives to restore hope, dignity, self-reliance, community, and the love of God through Jesus Christ."

DRIVER'S SEAT, CONT'D.

"What's your favorite part of the job?" I ask Stacey (who, by the way, carries a bag of giveaway goodies for any homeless folks she might spot during her route).

"It's knowing God has me in a place where I'm needed," she answers. "That's the best feeling on the planet. Working here puts things into perspective. Even on a bad day, I can still say, *You know what? God blesses me beyond anything I can imagine.*"

And what's her least favorite part? "It feels like we have the smallest budget for the things we need the most: vehicle maintenance and drivers. Our trucks are our bread and butter. We can't do what we do without them. It frustrates me. This vehicle we're riding in needs repairs, but we don't have the funds. God is heaping blessings on Manna in so many ways, but I still pray, 'God, please find us more drivers and more trucks.'"

As we head back to Manna, Stacey defers to veteran driver Craig Groomes, who's been a part of Manna almost since the beginning. "He's our core driver," she says. "While I'm buzzing around town doing the lightweight stuff, he's doing the big jobs, the heavy lifting." Later, I catch up with Craig, who tells me, "This is how I see it: my world is my family, my friends, my neighbors, my city—the people I interact with. On a day-to-day basis, that's my world. Driving for Manna Cafe lets me make the world a better place. I change *my* world, and I've changed *the* world."

COVID-ready and (allegedly) smiling behind their masks: drivers Craig Groomes (below) and Mike Price (R).



"Your prayer has been heard, and your gifts to the poor have been noticed by God!" (Acts 10:31, NLT)



We'd love to hear from you! Submit your Manna-related story for publication to Vicki@MannaCafeMinistries.com.

Many thanks to all our donors, who have helped us provide services during this unprecedented season. As we all move forward with the "new normal" and the needs of our neighbors persist, can we count on your continued help?

Go to MannaCafeMinistries.com and click on the Donate button to make a one-time or recurring donation.

Mail checks, payable to Manna Café, to 1960-J Madison, #312, Clarksville, TN, 37043.

Text GIVE to 931-542-4772.

THE MICROPHONE AND THE BROOM

Something I've seen over the years is that there are a lot of very creative people with very creative ideas about how God is going to use them. Sometimes they've either had a dream or gotten a prophetic word from someone to confirm this idea.



Then they come to those of us who are in leadership and ask, "How do I get my own ministry? How do I create my own nonprofit?" In other words, they are wanting to jump straight into leadership. They want "the microphone."

"I've seen people leave my office discouraged, and some never return again."

There are also those who are certain they're going to be used by God but don't yet know how He'll do it. So they come to me and want a job, but not just any job; they want to be in charge of something.

There's nothing wrong with these people; their questions show that they have hope and energy, and the looks on their faces can be contagious.

But the excitement often changes to

disappointment when I answer their questions by saying that they need to start by serving, either with Manna Cafe or another ministry.

Whether you have a ministry vision or you're searching for it, the answer is the same: first, serve in a ministry where you can learn. Do whatever they need (and sometimes that will mean with a broom).

I've seen people leave my office discouraged, and some never return again. They were asking for a microphone, but instead they got a broom. Sometimes they go ahead with the vision they have, but if they do it under their own steam instead of waiting for God to refine it, they burn out because it was man-made.

In the Bible, the disciples argued over who would be the greatest. Jesus answered, "Those



Recently, as the Refuge Community Center opened and COVID-19 erupted, Manna Cafe launched its **shower program** for our homeless friends. Program coordinator (and Board of Directors treasurer) Shawna Spigner says, "We also treat small wounds and offer hygiene items, clothes, an ear, a kind word, dry socks, clean underwear, cold water, and hot coffee. I think we truly underestimate Manna and the lives it touches and the difference it makes—one shower, one meal, one kind word, one person at a time. I'm humbled that Kenny trusted me to handle this and honored that the Lord picked me to get to touch these friends ... even at 6 feet apart."



Troy Brown, 58, says, "This program helps me to be healthy, clean, and acceptable in society. Cleanliness is next to godliness!"



who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant" (Luke 22:26, NLT). Essentially He was saying that the way to the microphone is through the broom.

That's definitely the way it worked for me. I was 42 years old when I went into full-time ministry. I had been a father, husband, business owner, and I'd worked a lot of different jobs. I had a lot of ideas about how God was going to use me. Instead, He handed me a broom. My job was to clean out two huge warehouses of rat-infested inventory. I also became the cook, the janitor, and the general "Hey you." Part of the reward of this work was getting to play bass twice a week

in a worship band, but I was still manning the broom. For a couple years, my idea of ministry had been getting my sound business up and running again. It wasn't until almost the full "year of the broom" had passed that I started realizing God had a different plan, one that involved me serving the poor. To make a long story short, today, after the 10-year journey of Manna, I have many opportunities for the microphone, but it started with — and it'll always include — the broom.

And I wouldn't have it any other way.

Peace out.

— Kenny



You're invited!

Join us join us as we celebrate 10 years of service at Manna Cafe's Anniversary Gala!

When: Friday, August 28 at 6 p.m.

Where: The Madison Room * 2231-T Madison St. (The City Forum) * Clarksville, TN 37043
\$55 per person. Tickets available on the Manna Cafe FB event page.