



the connection

Fall 2022



Serving with We Care



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Serving ...Through Hospitality

Interview with Omer and Sylvia Petersheim



When did you begin to serve with We Care?

March 1, 2017

Tell me a bit about your journey to We Care.

We sold our property and business in Pennsylvania in April of 2016 and purchased a motor home. We were planning to travel around, spending time camping and relaxing in different parts of the country. In January of 2017 James Smoker, the recruitment director, called us to see if we would be willing to serve as host couple at We Care for three months. Due to some camping reservations with deposits that we held at different campgrounds, we saw God working in some amazing ways to get those moved and make it very clear to us that this invitation to come to We Care was a God thing. Since God seemed to be clearly directing our path, we decided to come and serve for those three months...and we are still here.

What are your main responsibilities as hosts?

When guests arrive at We Care, it is our responsibility to make them feel welcome and comfortable throughout their stay. We are also responsible for the meals during events such as ReNew Hope. Sometimes we prepared around 200 meals per day for a week. Of course, we had help during the larger events. The outreach events like ReNew Hope and the Softball Outreach are a lot of fun, but they are also a lot of work. Not only do we prepare and serve the food, but then we also clean up after everyone is gone. Some of the responsibilities other than outreach events include vehicle maintenance, property maintenance, keeping the entire headquarters building clean and stocked with supplies, and hosting staff events, as well as assisting with the returning citizens who live in the home next door.

What are some things you have enjoyed during your time of serving?

We enjoyed the time when young adults were here in the Discover program before COVID. We also enjoyed seeing the beauty of Christians coming together from different walks of life as they served with We Care. During part of one winter, three families were here serving through the ReFOCUS program. They lived in their RVs, worked at the Thrift Stores during the days and then hung out with us playing games in the evenings. It was great to get to know those families and interact with them. We can't forget the evening of Christmas caroling in a local prison and handing out goodie bags to the inmates. That was a very special time. We also really enjoyed the Donut Days outreach. When it took place in Atmore, we served from the headquarters, but when it was in other parts of the state, we would often go and serve in those locations too. It was a highlight of ours to serve snacks to the chaplains as they came in and out and to hear their stories of how God is at work.

What are some of the bigger challenges you experienced while serving?

One of the challenges was when we first started working with the returning citizens who live next door. We hosted them each Thursday evening for a meal and shared a devotional with them afterwards. It was during these times, as well as when we would drive them to and from work, that they shared things from their past, including the hurts and the life style they lived before they were in prison. It was amazing to hear of God's mercy and forgiveness and to see how He worked in their lives.

After we worked through how to handle what they shared with us, relating to them got better, and it became a very special blessing to be able to share life with them. Initially, however, it was hard for us to work with them.

Is there anything else you want to share about your experience?

This position offers a lot of freedom and flexibility in the work schedule. We really appreciated the way We Care worked with us as we regularly took time away to attend family events. It was very interesting interacting with people in the grocery store as we shopped for large quantities of food, and we enjoyed the conversations that came out of those interactions.

Why would you recommend this to other couples?

Serving here is a great opportunity for a couple nearing retirement. It really is a lot of fun to meet so many different kinds of people, and it keeps life interesting. It is a growing experience to open yourself to work with people who might not have experienced life like you have. It is definitely a

people-oriented position, so for those who enjoy people it is a great opportunity. We would also recommend it because We Care feels like one big family, and as you learn to know the people who serve with We Care, you feel like your family just keeps growing. If God is nudging you to serve, you should do it.

How have you been impacted personally by your service with We Care?

It has been a blessing to us to see the compassion that the chaplains have for the inmates, both inside and outside the prison walls, and to see how they walk with them in the midst of their pain, helping them understand God's mercy, grace, and forgiveness. It has helped us develop our personal faith as we were continually reminded how much God loved us. It has also challenged us to share our faith more and tell others about Christ.

What should the next host couple know before they come to serve?

We Care has been like family to us. It is a well-balanced Christian organization.

Needed: Host Couple

Initial two-year commitment

Paid or volunteer position

Target Start Date: May 1, 2023

For inquiries, please contact James Smoker at james@wecareprogram.org or call **251-368-8818**



Thank You!



We want to say THANK YOU to all those who have participated in our 2022 Read-a-thon fundraiser! Our readers did a wonderful job reading, raising funds, and even spreading the word about our ministry. To God be the glory! Many t-shirts and prizes have been shipped all over the U.S. to thank those who took part by reading books and finding sponsors. We Care has truly been blessed by your donations, and we're looking forward to seeing how your contributions will help impact the lives of those in correctional facilities. We're looking forward to what God has in store for our next Read-a-thon in 2023!

Serving...In Work Projects



Maxx Hostetler

I am very grateful that our youth group had the privilege of going on a mission trip to We Care this summer. The staff team there was awesome and provided us with everything we needed, and we ate like kings and queens all week long. We did various projects around the buildings, but the one that I was a part of was grinding the old paint off a metal railing and repainting it.

This trip really brought us closer together as a youth group. We worked hard but also had some really fun times together. Personally, this trip was a huge blessing to me and helped me see that attitude is everything. We were able to have a grand time getting covered from head to toe in tiny paint flakes, even though it could have ruined the trip if we would've allowed it to. However, we didn't and had a wonderful trip because of it. Also, a huge shout-out to our youth sponsors who led us so well and helped make the trip a success. I look back on the trip with fond memories and would gladly choose to do it all over again if given the chance.

Maddi Yoder

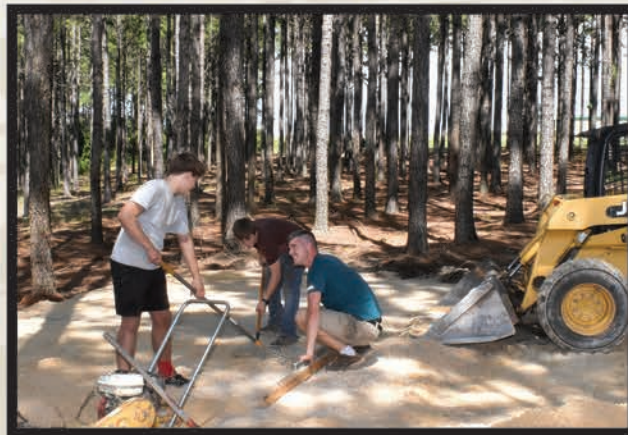
My week at We Care with my youth group was one of the best weeks I've had! We went to Alabama to serve and work hard, and we did just that. I was so proud of the work

we got done, and we all felt a sense of accomplishment by the last day. While at We Care, we were also served. We felt so taken care of. From the clean sleeping quarters to the delicious hot meals prepared three times a day, we were treated like kings and queens! I came away from the week feeling so blessed. I had the opportunity to work at the Atmore Thrift Store one day, and it was so fun getting to know the ladies who work there. It was obvious they took pride in their work and enjoyed every minute of it. That's something I hope to bring to my workplace

at home. Overall, it was a fantastic week filled with lots of good memories and even better people! We Care holds a special place in my heart!

Holly Mullet

Our youth group had the privilege of spending about a week at the We Care facility. The staff put us to work on painting the porch railing, cleaning windows, laying pavers, and some other odd jobs, and then fed us like royalty for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. During our time there I gained a new appreciation for this ministry and their service to their community. In many ways I walked into this trip expecting to serve, yet walked away feeling full from the hospitality shown to us and the importance of the work that We Care is doing.





Patrick Stoltzfus

Recently, my youth group had the opportunity to go to Alabama and help out at We Care for the better part of a week. I didn't know much about the ministry before this trip, but I was excited about being able to help out around the facility. We worked on a few different projects throughout the week. The biggest project was grinding down and refinishing the metal railing and steps around a deck. We were also able to do a few other things for the mission, ranging from laying pavers for patios to pressure washing, and even sorting donations at the thrift stores. Our group immensely enjoyed the food and hospitality provided by the host couple, Omer and Sylvia. Each meal was delicious

and done with excellence. They took good care of us. It was easy to see the life of Christ in each of the staff members as well. God has blessed the work of We Care. Hearing stories of redemption from a former prisoner made that clear.

I went into the trip expecting to be an encouragement to the people there, and I think our group was able to accomplish that. But I came away feeling like I was the one who received the most blessing and encouragement. It was honestly a little tough to leave at the end. It's incredible to think that we can interact with people we've never met, in a place we've never been to, and build up and encourage each other. The family of God is a beautiful thing. I am reminded again how grateful I am to be a part of it.



Young Adults!

A four-month mission experience of serving inmates while discovering God and how He has gifted you.

Applications due by Nov. 30, 2022

For more information email
james@wecareprogram.org

From the Field

Daniel Earley

Santa Rosa Corr. Inst.
Milton, FL



On Mondays, Chaplains Dave Landis, Eddie Miller, and I spend hours doing cell-to-cell ministry at Santa Rosa CI. The second time I was at SRCI with We Care, an inmate called from a 6' x 8' cell, "Chap! Pray for me." I went to the cell and saw Rashad drenched in sweat due to the Florida heat. There is no air conditioning at SRCI. Rashad has been confined there for a long time.

Rashad told me, "My young nephew died, and I can't see the family. Pray for us."

As we stood on the cement and spoke through a crack in the door, I said to Rashad, "I would love to pray for you, but it would be great for you to be able to pray powerfully too. God must take away your sins so you can come to Him boldly. Has He ever forgiven you?"

Rashad answered, "Yes. That's what happened when you were here last week. I've been praying all week."

Rashad's roommate came to the window. "He's not joking. He's been praying all week."

I responded, "I'm sorry. I talk to many people, and it's hard to remember who's who. Let's pray."

After we prayed, Rashad showed much gratitude. He also asked for a Bible and expressed interest in spiritual growth. Thankfully, another We Care chaplain had a Bible to give him. Since that day, Rashad has met with me each week, is reading the Bible, received a study course, signed up for baptism, and continues to pray. Glory to God! Pray for Rashad!

Dave Bucher

Donaldson Corr. Facility
Bessemer, AL



Chaplain Dave, you heard about Dan?!" This unusual question from the Sergeant.

"No, what about him?" (I've known Dan 19+ years.) My face was quizzical.

"Dan goes home today!"

My expression changed to incredulous surprise. "Today?? Dan goes home...today?! Where is he now? I want to talk to him!!" Looking down the hall I saw a resident sitting on the bench. It was Dan.

"Dan, you getting out today?!"

"Yes, Dave, after 28 years I go home today!"

I asked, "Did you know it was today?"

"No, Dave, they just told me a few hours ago...pack your stuff, you are going home today!"

"Wow, Dan," I said, "28 years and suddenly today's the day! How do you feel?"

"Well, Dave, I feel good, scared, anxious, and happy. I believe God will take care of me!" Dan's sentence had been commuted and a judge granted him freedom.

"Hey, we need a stretcher down here in M dorm, now!! The man is blue; he's unresponsive!!" The radio in my hand crackled; the officer's voice was desperate. "The inmate's name is 'Trigger.' He ain't lookin' good!"

I said to Dan, "Wow, what a contrast! Here you are on this joyful day, going home! And Trigger, well, he might get out of this prison in a different way today." I knew that Trigger was an older man, used a lot of drugs, and had told me he was so tired from his 30+ years in prison. He had been using drugs to try to leave this life before God's time, hence his unresponsive state on that occasion. (Trigger survived that day, but did pass away later.)

Laying my hand on Dan's shoulder, I prayed for Jesus to be with him, guide him, protect him, and reveal Himself to Dan and in his new life outside. I wished Dan well and said goodbye. I haven't heard from him since. Please pray for Dan!

Steve Stoltzfus

Staton Corr. Facility
Elmore, AL



Though it may look like a very small thing, mentoring eight men in a Bible study is where God has me right now. We are going through the book of Ephesians verse by verse, seeing what He is doing in our lives and asking Him to change us, especially me, into His image. Here a little and there a little, someday may we find fruit. In the waiting may I find rest in Him. As we grow in Christ, may we help each other through the storms and seasons of life and may we be there for others too.

The men in the class encourage me in my walk with God. They are my fellow comrades. They are growing in Christ too and are thinking of how they can help in this kingdom work. We prayed for some that are sick, two men who are struggling with cancer, and others in need of salvation. It is so neat to see God working in their lives—men who at one time were filled with hate and thought



DIRECTOR'S CORNER

James Smoker, Recruitment Director

Recently I was reminded that people are watching; others take note on how we are living life. I was visiting with the guys on Death Row. "George" walked up to me and said, "Chap, your presence here

makes a difference. Even though not everyone talks to you, your visiting with us reminds us that God is here and has not forgotten us. Thank you for what you do."

Of course, his comment was encouraging to me. It was also a reminder of the importance of the role of a chaplain. While we all should be bringing hope and reflecting the light of Jesus to those around us, prison, in particular, is a very dark environment. There is a great need for more people to join the efforts in sharing the light of Jesus to incarcerated individuals.

We are grateful for the open doors to serve with the Department of Corrections. Many opportunities are available in Florida and Alabama prisons, whether for one day a week or full time. Mentors, teachers, evangelists and

chaplains are all needed. We are also gearing up for a new term of Discover, our young adult program with a dual focus of discipleship and service. Participants will be impacted and grow spiritually as they spend time sharing Christ with those incarcerated.

In the spring of 2023 we will be needing a host couple at the headquarters. This role involves property and vehicle maintenance, hosting of various events, cooking, cleaning, etc. While much of it is "behind the scenes" work, it very directly impacts the ministry efforts inside the prison. In addition, we are always open for volunteers in the ReFOCUS program. ReFOCUS is for anyone wanting to serve for a few weeks or months, assisting in the various needs around the headquarters and thrift stores. We can also arrange for ministering inside prison as well, if someone has that desire.

For more information on any of these opportunities, please get in touch with me. I would love to explore the possibilities with you. No matter where the Lord leads you in life, someone is watching. Ask yourself this question, "Am I letting the light of Jesus shine in and through me so that others will be drawn to Him?"

only about themselves now allowing God to change them and caring about others' destination in eternity.

On a recent day when I was walking through the dorm, Terry called to me from his rack. Terry is suffering from stage four cancer. I went over and we chatted a while. He asked, "Chap, do you love me?" When I replied that I do, he said he knew it and there are many people who care for him. Just the evening before, my family and I had prayed that he would truly know God's love for him before he dies. In this conversation he asked me to baptize him. He also asked if I believe God can show Himself to us and then continued to tell me about an incident when he was sitting in the yard with two other guys. As they were looking up into the sky, the other two saw a rainbow, but he saw the face of Jesus!

Another time I sat on a bench beside Kenny. The time he has served and his upcoming parole hearing seem to weigh on him, yet his faith in God is sustaining him. He knows that resting in the hands of the Father, whether in prison or out of prison, God's will is best and His grace is sufficient. Kenny is a blessing to me and an encouragement to the men in our class too.

Each changed life is a miracle of God. Please pray for these men and lift them up to the throne room of God Almighty.

NEWS



Vienna Kate Nolt

CONGRATULATIONS!

It's a girl! Vienna Kate made her appearance on Sunday, June 26th. Thrift Store Assistant Director and Chaplain, Ben Nolt, and his wife, Tirzah, are quickly adjusting to life with three beautiful daughters. Both Sabina and Olive are loving their new little sister!



BLESSED BY YOUTH

A MESSAGE FROM DON METZLER, PRESIDENT

don@wecareprogram.org

Hot, muggy, dusty, loud, hard to reach places, and challenging is how I would describe the working conditions for the members of the Foothills Fellowship youth group who were sanding down the railing on the back deck of the We Care building in August. However, they persevered without complaining. The youth accomplished an amazing amount of work in just four days. They not only sanded and repainted the back deck railings, but they helped out with many other tasks. These young people served the ministry of We Care in the name of Jesus, and the work they got done was a huge blessing to this ministry. See article and photos inside for more details.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR 2021 CORPORATE SPONSORS

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We would love to have your business partner with We Care as a Corporate Sponsor for 2022. To qualify you need only to donate a total of \$5,000 or more during the year.

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