

Celebration Journal

Rising Hope Mission Church

Spring 2014

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Meet DeAndre

Greetings Saints of the Most High God! I am DeAndre Whitestone. I serve as the Coordinator of Youth Ministries at Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church. It is my hope to develop the youth of this ministry into biblically astute and dynamic disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am excited to be a part of this great church and the future growth of this ministry.

The Right Place at the Right Time

Between studying Childhood Education at Northern Virginia Community College, assisting with youth programs at Harvest Assembly Church, serving as a Rec Center Facilitator for the Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services, and providing remedial instruction in reading and math to Walt Whitman High School students, DeAndre Whitestone always makes time to give back. While volunteering with the hypothermia shelter at Rising Hope, a friend eagerly alerted DeAndre to news of the Children's Ministry Coordinator's retirement, gave him a contact name, and suggested that he inquire about the position. In the following weeks, he found himself consistently "in the right place at the right time," carrying an undeniably contagious enthusiasm, and on November 11, joined Rising Hope's leadership team.

DeAndre designs activities to help children see Scripture lessons come alive. "I am a big advocate for social justice," he explains, "so I'm very community services driven and oriented." He is committed to sharing those values with the Rising Hope youth and leading them in volunteer projects throughout the Route One Corridor. "It is my hope that the love and joy of knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ would continue to excite and motivate us for the days that are to come." We are excited to see the growth that DeAndre is bringing and grateful that the right place and the right time is here and now.

Calling All Supporters!

The Children's Ministry back-to-school drive is approaching! To donate school supplies or find out other ways that you can help, contact DeAndre Whitestone at dwhitestone@risinghopeumc.org.

Save the Date: Friday, October 3rd!

Plan to join us for a fun-filled evening at our annual fundraising gala at the Waterford at Springfield! For event details or to donate goods or services, contact Sharon Emory at stemory@aol.com.

A Spiritual Beacon Shines after Prison

At Rising Hope, two ex-offenders embark on new life journeys.

By Ed Simmons, Jr.

His first day locked in solitary confinement, David Hudgens, 48, serving two-and-a-half years for four nonviolent felonies, discovered a Bible under his mattress. Confused, raging, he hurled it against the wall. It fell to the floor of the narrow, cramped cell.

Three days later, his fury ebbing, with no one to talk to, nothing else to read, he picked it up. Looking back, he recalls his motivation, "I'm going to read this like a John Grisham novel just to pass the time... but God had a whole different purpose."

He found himself identifying with Joseph in the Book of Genesis, whose misfortunes aligned with a destiny serving God. He realized in his own life, in his own discovery of the love of the Lord, "Everything had to happen just like it happened."

While incarcerated, he read the Bible cover-to-cover six times. Upon his release last May, Hudgens found himself at Eleanor U. Kennedy Shelter on Route 1, where he first saw the Rising Hope van picking up shelter residents for Sunday morning service. Volunteer driver, Marlon White, suggested he join them.

"My first impulse when I got there was 'I am home.' It was the true Word that they were bringing, the realness, the openness, the true compassion for the downtrodden," Hudgens recalled. He's been attending ever since.

Another ex-offender who found a spiritual home at Rising Hope is Jeff Lisanick, 48, who served 20 years for drug-related involuntary manslaughter. Homeless and fresh out of prison, he too boarded the van from Kennedy Shelter, and was greeted with open

arms. "I really like [Rev. Keary Kincannon's] inclusiveness, his reminding us



David Hudgens teaches Bible study on Sundays.

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that the love of God excludes no one. It's a very welcoming message, it's what people

who are struggling need to hear," said Lisanick.

Today, both of these ex-offenders have found purpose in helping others. Lisanick, empowered to be a disciple of the Lord, now volunteers as Sunday van driver, picking up residents from Kennedy Shelter, and sharing his message of faith. "I believe when God blesses you, it's your responsibility to bless others in return," said Lisanick.

Hudgens applies his newly-discovered gift for speaking by teaching Sunday morning Bible Study. He finds fulfilment in standing alongside Pastor Keary and Rising Hope to support "the true mission of Jesus: to seek and save the lost."

Through service to others at Rising Hope, Hudgens and Lisanick have re-entered society building meaningful, successful new lives.



Jeff Lisanick, who served twenty years in prison, is now a volunteer driving the church van.

Help us grow

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