



The Mustard Seed

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants and grows into a tree where birds can come and find shelter in its branches”. Matthew 13:31

The True Story that was the “Seed” for this venture:

I was meeting with a fourteen year old girl, “Sara” (name changed to protect confidentiality), in therapy one day. She is an only child of separated parents, both of whom have mental health challenges. Her father isn’t really in her life, except for the self-written “religious” documents he sends her about aliens coming to earth and invading humans. Sara’s mom has struggled with depression on and off since Sara was five.

They live off the meager amount Sara’s mom gets on UI, because Sara’s mom’s mental health has made sustainable gainful employment unachievable to date. Sara lives a hard, poor life. One day, she was talking about how difficult it is to listen to the students in her high school complaining about how the economy is affecting their lifestyle – things like not flying to the Dominican for Christmas. Sara said, for her and her mom, it means they can’t buy meat.

Sara went on to express her amazement at the fact that those same kids had families who could spend more on groceries in a week than she and her mom could spend in a month. She said, “you should see what I can do with \$25. I could make \$25 stretch so far – I could make it last longer than my mom can”.

So I asked Sara, “if you had \$25, what would you do with it?”. Sara didn’t miss a beat. “First, I’d buy my mom a box of tea. Then, I’d get some cold cuts, because they last for quite a few meals. I’d also get some fresh produce”. I listened to this fourteen year old girl answer me, and I was saddened by how her life experiences, through no fault of her own, have robbed her of the chance to be carefree.

Then, Sara got a mischievous grin on her face and said, “...and, I think I’d get a little something for myself too”. At this point, I felt some relief at the prospect of there still being a shred of youthful abandon left in her. “What would you get for yourself?” I asked with a smile – already expecting to hear something frivolous like make-up or junk food.

“Mustard”, Sara answered. “Mustard?” I asked. “Yes, mustard. I would get myself some mustard. It is so embarrassing to have to ask to borrow from the neighbours all the time. I’d buy myself some mustard”.

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What IS The Mustard Seed?

The Mustard Seed is a volunteer run resource for the clients of Catholic Family Services of Durham. New items (toiletries, daily essentials, school supplies, clothing items, toys etc.) that are donated are logged and a running list is regularly updated and sent to the counselors of Catholic Family Services. When a counselor feels that there is a client in need, they are able to access the resource and provide it to the client. A form is filled out by the counselor so that the type of client need being responded to is recorded and can be provided to the various donors who request it.

People want to make a difference in the lives of others. They want to feel that their personal contribution actually impacts someone for good. The Mustard Seed allows for people who only have a small amount to give, feel like it makes a big difference...because it does.

For example, \$25 can make a tremendous difference. It can be the difference between someone eating that week...or not. It can be what enables a kid to go on the school trip they would normally have to miss because of the cost. It can be what makes it possible for a parent to get their child a birthday cake or small present. It can buy a brand new pair of shoes, or some other needed article of clothing.

\$25 can make a VAST impact in the life of someone in need. In fact, \$25 spent on ‘End of Season’ clearance items can be the exact perk/gift in the life of someone really struggling, that encourages them to keep on pushing through...it gives them the hope that things will get better.

The Teachings of the Church Connecting with Counselling Theory:

In James 2:15-16, it says, “If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled’, and you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?”.

Maslow is renowned for his development of the famous, “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Need”. This triangular framework postulates that meeting of basic needs forms the foundation for all other areas of life to be built upon, and that clients must have their basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and safety met, before they can move up to other areas of need in their lives, like emotional and relational issues.

At Catholic Family Services of Durham, we regularly encounter clients for whom their basic needs are their primary concern. They may have abuse issues to address, but they can’t even begin to heal from that when they are worried about their next meal, or their child who has no winter coat. The Mustard Seed offers a chance for those basic needs to be addressed, on a small, discrete scale, to be a practical source of encouragement and hope to the clients we serve.

Logistics

- Only new items or gift cards will be stocked in The Mustard Seed (TMS).
- Any money donations given will be put in a separate designated fund and the money will be spent in response to client need.
- Only counselors who intimately know the situation of the client will be allowed to provide the resources to them, and it is for Catholic Family Services clients only.
- A list of donors will be kept and quarterly reports will be sent to those interested in knowing where/how the donations have been used.
- Counsellors will fill out a form saying what was given to whom ie. backpack given to single mom of school aged boy who couldn't buy it because she needed to buy groceries for that month.

Volunteer Job Description: The Mustard Seed Co-Ordinator

What is Expected of the Volunteer:

- Submission of records check, recent within six months of beginning position.
- To oversee the collection of donations for TMS.
- To assist where able in the acquisition of donations.
- To maintain a list of donors & their contact information so quarterly reports can be sent (if requested).
- To maintain a list of donations to be regularly circulated to staff.
- To maintain the records of donations given by counselors.
- To provide necessary information to the Executive Director to prepare the quarterly reports.

What the volunteer can expect from Catholic Family Services:

- Emotional support during service.
- Practical support to fulfill responsibilities ie. materials, resources, space.
- Access to agency resources necessary to generate and maintain the required lists.