

Making an **Impact**



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A Leap of Faith: Grant Helps Domestic Violence Survivors Heal

"Thank you for taking a chance on us!" That's what Antonia Clemente wanted to shout when The Healing Center co-founder and executive director spotted Wheat Ridge Ministries President Rick Herman at the Lutheran Services in America (LSA) leadership conference earlier this year.

"The first time we met, our office was the church kitchen. I covered up the sink. I know how precarious we looked," Clemente says of that day in 2000 when Herman visited the fledgling Brooklyn, New York, ministry inspired by the need to assist women struggling with the devastation of domestic violence.

Fourteen years later, instead of risks, Clemente bubbles over about rewards—the rewards of extending a faith-based helping hand to more than 1,500 women who have turned to the center since it began with the support of a Wheat Ridge grant.

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Maria Santiago, right, The Healing Center educator and family worker, counsels a client at the Brooklyn, N.Y., ministry inspired by the need to assist women struggling with the devastation of domestic violence.

Bypassing Burn-Out: A New Incentive for Ministry Sabbaticals

A recent study found that 1,500 pastors leave the ministry each month due to factors such as spiritual burnout.¹ This scary trend has implications for our leaders and our ministries—but there's hope! A sabbatical is a vital tool in encouraging and sustaining organization-wide health. Now, the sabbatical process has become even more accessible through www.WeRaise.us, Wheat Ridge Ministries' Christian crowdfunding platform.

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A Leap of Faith (continued)

“We wouldn’t be here without Wheat Ridge,” Clemente stresses. Women are alive today, she says, because they found “a place where they are believed, safe and protected.”

Clemente was leading workshops at a Brooklyn shelter when a woman confided that she felt more abused by her church than by her husband who had threatened to kill her. The woman had told her pastor about the abuse, but he doubted her. Lacking training in domestic violence issues, the pastor eventually spoke with the husband but made the woman’s plight worse.



Rose (whose name is changed) found an ally in The Healing Center after years of abuse by her husband. Since its founding in 2000 with the help of a Wheat Ridge grant, the Brooklyn, N.Y., center has extended a faith-based helping hand to more than 1,500 women struggling with the devastation of domestic violence.

That heartbreaking story motivated Clemente to urge her own congregation to do more to help women who often suffer in silence. From that church kitchen, The Healing Center has grown into a multi-faceted ministry, linking women with counseling and referral services and providing workshops to empower survivors and educate church and community leaders. One monthly program brings together clergy and service providers to collaborate on confronting and ending domestic violence.

Over the years, the Brooklyn district attorney’s office and area police precincts have directed many a frightened wife, mother and girlfriend to The Healing Center—women like Rose (whose name is changed), who was abused by her husband for more than a decade. “They had built a successful retail business together. He told her no one would believe

her,” Clemente says. “When she finally left, she didn’t know how she could make it alone.”

But Rose found a life-changing ally in The Healing Center. She filed for an order of protection and applied for custody of her children. Through the center’s support group for Spanish-speaking women, Rose gained another strength—friends.

“I am in a much better place in my life than what I was when I first came to the center,” says Rose, who now has a part-time job and participates in Healing Center activities to help sister survivors.

After years of serving solo, Clemente now has “a wonderful” part-time staff. Serving as spiritual adviser is the Rev. Paul H. Knudsen, pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, a Brooklyn congregation that embraced The Healing Center as a mission in 2008.

The Healing Center is now a social ministry organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and an LSA member. “Just as the church ministers to the hungry and the sick, the church cares for domestic violence victims, too,” Clemente says.

The executive director hears plenty of gut-wrenching personal stories, but she also sees hope. She is proud of Daughters of the Lotus, a newer initiative helping young teens build healthy relationships, handle peer pressure and prevent dating violence.

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Each time a woman of any age turns to The Healing Center, Clemente calls it a step toward changing a life for the better. That Wheat Ridge seed money, Clemente says of the grant some 14 years ago, has blossomed in many ways.

Thank you for your partnership that enables Wheat Ridge to provide crucial support to start and grow more ministries like The Healing Center. Because of your prayers and resources, domestic violence survivors are building more healthy and peaceful family lives . . . and working toward a more abundant future.

Donors Find Joy in Their Giving

Since connecting with Wheat Ridge Ministries more than 12 years ago, Dave and Jane Kretzmann have been faithful supporters, experiencing true joy in seeding new efforts for health and human care projects and providing those projects with resources. And as the Kretzmans continue to increase their involvement, Jane likes to focus on what Wheat Ridge does for them.

"We are not tremendously wealthy people with the deep pockets of established foundations," she says. "Our giving to Wheat Ridge is how we can reach out and do things that we couldn't do on our own."

Dave likes to say that he was "Lutheran before he was born"—especially in terms of giving. "I learned as a child that everything is a gift from God and our lives are enriched by what we share with others," he says. When Jane first met Dave, the idea of tithing was a relatively foreign concept for her, but she soon understood the gratification of setting aside a percentage of income for donations every year and then sitting down together to decide where it would go. Their bottom line: financial support should always be used for the glory of Christ.

Married for more than 31 years, both had careers in the federal government: Jane is retired from a civil service position in the Department of Defense and Dave is a retired Navy commander. Jane is active in music at their church, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Salinas, California, playing hand bells and the recorder. Dave serves on the church's Stewardship/Finance team and was recently elected to the position of Congregational Treasurer.

In 2004, the Kretzmans were invited to the President's Circle Retreat, Wheat Ridge's annual gathering that brings together individuals and families whose generous stewardship includes significant support of our mission. Since then, they've enjoyed attending nine retreats, where they have made new friends and connected with grant recipients.

"I always come home so excited about our involvement with Wheat Ridge," Jane says. "This year [2014] we toured the Christ Cares Clinic in Phoenix, Arizona, which provides healthcare and counseling for the community's working poor. We are really drawn to those types of organizations—I was very impressed."



The couple is interested in what their support can do right now, making unrestricted gifts to Wheat Ridge as part of their annual budget. "It makes more sense for us to provide financial support during our lifetimes than as part of our estate," Dave says. The couple recently opened a donor-advised fund that allows them to direct their giving and have named Wheat Ridge as a contingent beneficiary of that fund.

Dave's election to the Wheat Ridge Board of Directors in 2009 came at a time when he wanted to be more deeply engaged. He continues his involvement because he feels Wheat Ridge is at a pivotal time in its history with a new strategic plan, including the initiation of www.WeRaise.us, its new crowdfunding website.

The Kretzmans appreciate Wheat Ridge for its entrepreneurial outlook and its innovative and forward-leaning thinking. "They take risks for the sake of the Gospel," notes Jane. "And they learn from both successes and failures," adds Dave. "We have faith in Wheat Ridge's ability to assess and determine which organizations are most worthy of funding."

We remain inspired by the Kretzmann's passion for giving and their dedicated partnership with Wheat Ridge. With their support—and the support of faithful donors like you—Wheat Ridge continues to seed innovative health and human care projects around the world. To learn more about how your gifts are making an impact, please visit www.wheatridge.org.

Bypassing Burn-Out (continued)

A ministry sabbatical can be a strategic and financially manageable option, thanks to crowdfunding. Here are three common concerns that are easily addressed by using WeRaise for sabbatical support:

- 1 Funding and Buy-In:** Tight budgets can make something as necessary as a sabbatical seem like an impractical luxury. Crowdfunding for a sabbatical allows the church to raise additional funds for the sabbatical, calling on the many networks connected to the leader and their ministry itself. It also creates a rallying point for the community that allows everyone to participate in the vision of health and a spirit of thankfulness around the ministry.
- 2 Sabbatical Coaching:** Wheat Ridge has invested time and resources into understanding what makes a refreshing, successful sabbatical (and no, it does not require extravagant European holidays). Armed with that research and years of coaching experience, Wheat Ridge

has a sabbatical coach who is available free of charge to any ministries that are interested in his assistance. This seasoned ministry coach provides a confidential space to assist the ministry leader as well the rest of the organization in preparing for what can be a smooth and successful experience.

- 3 Financial Incentive:** Here at Wheat Ridge, we believe sabbaticals for ministry leaders should be a priority and are a wise investment in the sustainability of any ministry. To that end, we are providing a \$500 pledge to all sabbatical projects posted on www.WeRaise.us.

A ministry sabbatical should and can be a refreshing, encouraging experience for all involved. It may seem like an individual investment, but it is truly a team effort that benefits everyone involved. Learn more about WeRaise and how you can support your ministry leaders with a sabbatical at www.WeRaise.us.

¹ www.leadershipresources.org/blog/christian-ministry-burnout-prevention-signs-statistics-recovery/

African Orphans Encouraged by Your Signed Bookmarks!

A special thanks to the Wheat Ridge donors who signed a bookmark and returned it, along with a gift of support, for Bloom Africa! This wonderful ministry, which received a Burst grant from Wheat Ridge, was highlighted in a 2013 mailing. In February, Andrew Steele, founder of Bloom Africa, delivered the bookmarks to the orphans at their Community Learning Centers in Lesotho, Africa.

"Seeing the incredible generosity from Wheat Ridge donors was amazing," Steele said. "Each child attending one of the Centers received a signed bookmark, many with personal notes of hope and encouragement, along with new school supplies. The bookmarks were what sparked the idea to use www.WeRaise.us to raise funds for school supplies, something incredibly important in Lesotho. And now, over 400 children received one of the colorful bookmarks,

affirming them as beloved children of God who are never forgotten, not even by people half a world away!"

Bloom Africa provides resources to orphans

in Lesotho in support of their basic life's needs through sustainable projects, educational programming, and financial support by collaborating with the people of African nations. With the grant from Wheat Ridge, Bloom Africa was able to make the Community Learning Centers fully functional to provide educational programming.



Thank you for your support that enables us to seed many new and exciting ministries ... ministries like Bloom Africa. To learn more about this project and all of the projects being seeded by Wheat Ridge Ministries, please visit www.wheatridge.org.



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