

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

BUFFALO DREAM CENTER | WINTER 2017



PASTORS ERIC & MICHELLE JOHNS

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BUFFALO DREAM CENTER

Worship Service  
Sundays at 11:00 AM

Located at:  
286 Lafayette Avenue  
Buffalo, NY 14213

Mailing Address:  
Buffalo Dream Center  
P.O. Box 934  
Buffalo, NY 14201

Phone: (716) 854-1001  
Fax: (716) 829-7390  
information@buffalodreamcenter.org  
www.buffalodreamcenter.org

## A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM PASTOR ERIC & MICHELLE JOHNS

This is not the normal "front page article" in our newsletter. Instead this is a message from our hearts. If there was ever a time the Buffalo Dream Center needed you it is now. We are entering the most exciting season in our twenty-three year history.

Our church enjoyed two decades at the Buffalo Christian Center in downtown Buffalo. We had to move when the building was purchased by a developer. But we always knew God had a plan.

It is hard to believe that we had our first service at our new location on Lafayette Avenue nearly two years ago. It took volunteers ten weeks, working day and night, to renovate and clean the space that would be occupied by the church. There was still a lot to do, but we celebrated our first Sunday in the rented space of our new location on Mother's Day of 2015.

After ten weeks of installing dry wall, painting, cleaning, and other work projects, we decided to give the church members a break from the work on the building and begin to reach the neighborhood with the love of Jesus.

Since that time, after hundreds of outreaches to children, refugee families, the homeless, and others, the Buffalo Dream Center has grown. Many people now walk to church from the surrounding neighborhood. The bus route has been changed to include families who have given their lives to Jesus and need a ride to church.

Then it happened. The current owner offered to sell the building to the Buffalo Dream Center.

We are excited, because we know that this was God's plan from the beginning. Purchasing the building will enable us to continue to reach out to the people of Buffalo for many years to come. It will also send a message to Buffalo that we are here to stay!

The property was offered to us for \$175,000. This is an amazing price for the size of this historic building. As Buffalo makes an economic comeback, the cost of real estate is skyrocketing. Properties surrounding the Buffalo Dream Center are selling for

twice to three times as much as they did just fifteen years ago. With this price, the dream of owning our own building is within reach.

For the past twenty-three years, the Buffalo Dream Center has been able to reach thousands of people because of our partners. You believe in what we do. In reality, we have done it together.

Together we have been able to see the lives of people changed. It is amazing to think about it, but it is true. There are people serving Jesus at the Dream Center today because someone paid for the bus to pick them up when they were children. We know people who would not be alive if it were not for Jesus. Many discovered Jesus at ministries like the mobile food pantry, Kidz Club, and Boxes of Love. You have been a big part of that.

We need you more than ever for this next step in our ministry. Would you consider giving something to make this dream a reality?

Currently we are paying \$1,500 per month in rent. But, if we raise \$60,000 to use as a down payment on a bank loan, our monthly mortgage payment will only be \$940.00. With the monthly savings we will be able to manage the utility payments and other costs. This makes the goal of owning the building very realistic.

If 200 people reading this newsletter each give \$300.00, we will have the down payment needed! If 120 people give \$500.00 each, that will also give us the needed \$60,000 for the down payment.

The Buffalo Dream Center has always been unique because it has taken many people from across the United States to join hands with us to reach the people of the inner city of Buffalo. As we have filled buses with kids, fed homeless people, mentored youth, and even built orphanages – you have been there to make sure people hear about the love of Jesus. We need you for this too. Thank you for standing with us. We look forward to many more years of ministry in the city of Buffalo and around the world.

# BOXES OF LOVE HELPS 2,500 FAMILIES

As Pastor Eric crawled in his sleeping bag to spend the night outside, he watched the snowflakes fall and thought about the first year he lived with the homeless. That was eighteen years ago.

When you add it all up, Pastor Eric has lived on the streets for eighty-seven days. When he began nobody wanted to go with him. His friend, Keith, who used to be homeless, watched out for Pastor Eric during the day, but he was alone at night, under the Michigan Street overpass. Over the years things have changed. He has been joined by pastors, community leaders, and every member of his family. His wife, Michelle, now leads a day for women each year. Her story was highlighted on the show "LifeLine" with host Neil Boron on WBEN Radio this year.

The week on the streets began as a way to draw attention to the needs in the community and raise funds for Boxes of Love. When the program first began the Buffalo Dream Center was able to help two hundred children with toys for

Christmas. Now Boxes of Love includes food for families too. This year the ministry helped two thousand five hundred families with food. Four thousand children received wrapped Christmas gifts. The effort took eight hundred volunteers. They assembled bags of groceries, wrapped gifts, and helped distribute Boxes of Love at sixteen sites throughout Buffalo and Niagara Falls. The Dream Center was even able to give enough food for four hundred families to Word and Worship Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Each year the Buffalo Dream Center relies on community partners to donate space for wrapping gifts. This year 716 Ministries donated the use of one of their properties located on the west side of the city. Toys were donated from many different sources including The Teacher's Desk, West Buffalo Charter School, churches, and families. The Johns family also used financial donations to shop for toys, often filling up fifteen to twenty carts at Walmart.

The food operation took place at the BDC Outreach Center. The non-perishable food items were donated from Feed the Hungry, the

Bank of Western New York, individuals, families, schools, churches, and businesses. The Buffalo City Mission made sure the Dream Center had all of the paper grocery bags needed. Hearts for the Homeless donated large boxes to hold the groceries on each pallet and also provided a truck to transport the food to two of the sites. A forklift from Dobmeier Lift Trucks made it possible to load pallets of groceries onto the trucks heading out to distribution sites.

The largest distribution site took place at the Buffalo Dream Center. Three hundred fifty families were served that day. Many of the families were refugees who did not speak English. Interpreters from the Buffalo Public Schools helped translate to guide families through the process. Social workers from the schools also helped register more than two hundred families they knew needed the help. Public School 45, an international elementary school on Buffalo's west side, registered families. The food and toys were delivered to the school. The staff helped the students get the Boxes of Love back home to their families.

Something new happened this year. There was an evening set aside to give away special gift bags to the



homeless. More than fifty volunteers gathered at the downtown bus station. Working in cooperation with the NFTA division of the Buffalo Police Department, many homeless men and women received blankets, toiletries, hot apple cider, and other gifts. A choir sang Christmas carols as the Boxes of Love were distributed throughout the bus station. The entire atmosphere of the bus station changed as people sang along with the choir, received prayer, and opened up their gift bags.

Although Boxes of Love helps thousands of people, it was the individual stories of people that touched the hearts of volunteers. At one of the distribution sites a woman walked more than one mile to get food for her family. It was cold and she was dressed in flip flops and a summer dress.

Someone gave her a ride home, walked into her house, and saw that the family did not have anything at all! The next week a vehicle was loaded with household items, toiletries, food, and many other things. A team delivered it to the family. When they walked in the house with the items the mother fell to the floor and began to weep with joy.

It was amazing to watch the families walking home from a distribution

site. Moms, dads, grandparents, and children could be seen walking in all directions with their arms filled with toys and food. The smiles on the faces of people made it worth the effort.

Thank you to everyone who gave their resources and time to make Boxes of Love a success! Once again lives were changed through the simple act of giving.



# CHRISTMAS EVE LASAGNA DINNER FEEDS HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE

Each year the Buffalo Dream Center and Hearts for the Homeless make Christmas Eve an exciting event for the homeless and families in need. The annual dinner has been a partnership between the two ministries for twelve years.

For ten of those years, when the Buffalo Dream Center was located downtown, many of the homeless men and women walked to the church every Christmas Eve. For the past two years, buses have been rented to transport people from soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and bus stations to the Dream Center.

The new location has also created the opportunity to invite families who live in the neighborhood to the event. This year the meal attracted three hundred fifty people. Many families walked from the surrounding community. For the second year, Muslim families attended and were served

Chicken Biryani – a special Halal meal for Christmas Eve!

The guests attending the meal were fed in two shifts. After the downstairs room was filled, people were seated upstairs. Each group enjoyed a delicious lasagna dinner prepared by Lou and Joanne Williams, who have prepared the meal every year since the dinner began.

Special music, games, and prizes were enjoyed by the crowd. Many responded to the invitation to receive Jesus as their Savior.

All year-long people talk about this event. The Buffalo Dream Center and Hearts for the Homeless plan on continuing the annual celebration for many years to come.





BUFFALO DREAM CENTER  
P.O. BOX 934  
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