

Emerge Founder and Director, Terri Dietrich with her husband David.

Terri was asked some important questions about EmERGE ...



### **1. How did you decide to work with this particular population and how have you been able to reach those in need?**

I kept meeting moms navigating their journey alone – and began to research available support for them, and there just was not much available. I also began some extensive research and found that sadly it is a rapidly growing group. In fact, **Oklahoma is #8 in the nation with the most single moms!** So, I decided to do something to try and make a difference. I could see pretty quickly that these ladies really need some encouragement and a support system. If we can offer a hand up, some hope in God’s love, it could change generations.

At different community events, such as the Broken Arrow Back to School event and other local school events, I have set up an information table, sharing about the support group. We also participated in community food giveaways, Christmas Event for Single Moms as well as advertising on social media.

I also kept having James 1:27 cross my path in all kinds of ways! “Pure worship that The Father seeks is this: to remember and care for and help the widow and the orphan in their time of need...”. These moms have been widowed in every sense of the word, and their children orphaned. There is nothing more important that I could do with my time, but to help bring The Hope and Life of Jesus and help meet a need in His Name.

### **2. What has been the most challenging aspect of the work with single mothers? Something you didn't realize before?**

I think one unexpected challenge has been the amount of trust building that needs to happen as moms enter EmERGE. Most have been hurt deeply, and sadly some by a church. It has been a beautiful thing to see that over a short amount of time, in a safe place, where they can be real and open, much healing comes.

### **3. What have you been able to learn about the challenges of living as a single parent in Oklahoma?**

There are many challenges for these families. A big one is safe affordable housing. My dream is to have some transitional housing cottages, and also begin to purchase houses that will become lease to own options for families willing to put in the work improve and invest in the future for them and their children.

Also, the child support system is really a mess. Most of our moms are truly carrying the load alone.

Another big challenge is transportation. If the car breaks down, it is not only the sole means of transportation, it is an expense that is very unreachable for many. This causes a domino effect for prioritizing finances, ability to get to work, etc.

The required distance learning is another big issue. These moms have to go to work, most don’t get to do that from home. It is a really hard situation for many.

#### **4. How have you been able to help these families rise above their challenges, especially in the past year?**

We have been able to help with car repairs, new tires, rental assistance, etc. We also invited the moms to come receive weekly food boxes throughout this summer. Especially this past spring, when many were furloughed or laid off, we were able to help with groceries.

Each fall we have a huge community wide garage sale. All of the proceeds help us fund these hand up assistance, as well as help cover the meals and free children's programming that we provide at our support group nights.

Also, at the beginning of winter, we held a free car care clinic. We were blessed to have a couple of local automotive repair services give us discounts so we could help fix issues that were discovered. We provided oil changes, car winterizing, and just overall check over, to help make sure these families are safe. We provided packets of info with an ice scraper and tire gage 😊

We also had an "Emerge Christmas Tree" this Christmas. People were invited to take a card from the tree that anonymously listed a need and a want from one of the Emerge children. There was also a card for each mom that could be sponsored, to help us provide a gas card and /or a Walmart card to help with Christmas. It was a beautiful outreach of love and hope – that even in these crazy times we are in, God will work through His children to help those in need.

We aren't able to provide for every need, but we try to offer a hand up where we can. This year has caused moms to decide between food or prescriptions, choosing to get the oil changed or paying the gas bill. A little help where we can, helps them know God loves them, and they are not alone.

We also try and help with counseling when needed, job training and resume help when needed, financial stewardship training, even cooking, meal planning and shopping tips. We also provide groceries, car winterizing / car care clinic, Christmas help as I mentioned, and much more.

#### **5. What is the most rewarding aspect of the work you've been doing?**

The most rewarding thing about Emerge to me, is seeing moms truly go from just surviving to thriving! Those that really apply themselves, even in the midst of such busy schedules and juggling work and kids, when they apply the principles they are learning, amazing growth is happening. Freedom from bitterness and feelings rejection, the ability to forgive and move forward into the beautiful future God wants for them.

For example, one of our moms went from contract work, to being hired at her company. She has been faithful to attending group and applying the principles we have learned together. She grew in her self-respect and belief in herself and her value! 😊 She applied for a management position and got it! She has done amazing! She recently was able to purchase her very own home for her and her children! This is a great example of what keeps me going and why I do what I do. Single mom is not their identity, it is a season. Future seasons can be brighter and are full of hope – we just need to let more moms out there know that they don't have to navigate all of this alone!

Another super rewarding part of this is to see the children connecting and making friends. I also see them blossom and grow, and even become more at peace in a safe environment. Families with older children have even started getting plugged into youth group and making new connections with young people their age. It is beautiful.

## **6. How can the community help with the program?**

People can partner with us in lots of ways! They can donate items for our moms and children, donate services like an oil change or counseling time. We are in need of a storage space to help house items that come in. I would love to have a place that when I receive a donation of a twin bed or a kitchen table, I could take it right away – and then have things to give a mom who has to leave a dangerous situation quickly and needs items.

People can also make tax deductible donations to help us reach more moms with hope and help. It's amazing what a Walmart or Gas Card can do when you're deciding between groceries, or gas – prescription or diapers. Donations go to meals or children's programming for our support group nights, to the provident funds that help cover the light bill, rent help to prevent homelessness or groceries, etc. Every little bit helps in huge ways.

**Our vision for the future is to have land with little cottages for transitional housing, when moms and kids need a safe place quickly. Unfortunately, there really isn't anything like that in the Broken Arrow area – and sadly it is a need I run into often. Eventually, I also have the dream of opening a coffee house that can provide income for moms at different hours than most jobs allow, and tutoring for their children while they work.**

## **7. Where can we learn more about ways you help families connect to resources?**

Emerge is launching out city wide. Emerge support group meets at Abiding Harvest Church, 4407 S. Olive Ave (129<sup>th</sup> just North of 111<sup>th</sup>) in Broken Arrow. We meet the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of each month at 5pm with free meal and children's programming provided. We would LOVE for more moms to join in !

To find out more, contact Terri Dietrich at [Terri@abidingharvest.org](mailto:Terri@abidingharvest.org) or Call her at 918-906-7305