

#1 GREENHOUSE FOR PEOPLE

IN THE BEGINNING I WAS CONFUSED. WHAT'S A GREENHOUSE FOR PEOPLE?

I wanted to clearly know what we do. I wanted to know so I could clearly explain to others what we do. I wanted to get so good at the what that I would never have to immerse myself in the why. I was so focused on what that I missed the significance of the why; which I have come to learn time and time again is the most important.

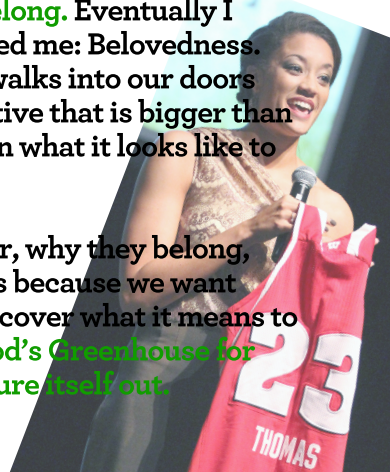
It is important to understand who you are and why you are doing what you are doing in order to have the most impact. Hope Street has been a faithful presence on the corner of 26th and Capitol since 1999. What we have always been is a safe place for vulnerable people to be loved and cared for. How we have gone about that, or more clearly, our why has not always been as clear.

In 2011, staff members and board members sat in a living room and were asked to draw what it is that Hope Street does. There were several different drawings, again furthering the notion that while we believed we were doing good - what that good was was not entirely clear. The pictures were narrowed down to two distinct images. A Sailboat and a Greenhouse. The room was split at this point in regards to which of the two we were. The sailboat showed life savers being thrown out to people who were drowning. In this picture we saw the need being to rescue people who were in dire need. Our job was done once we had "saved them." The Greenhouse showed a huge vine going in and out of the building connected to people as they got on the bus, walked down the street, went into stores etc. This paradigm expressed the importance of people seeing their part in something bigger; furthermore, it addressed the need of being equipped to eventually be transplanted out of Hope Street. The end goal being transformation.

Nearly ten years later Greenhouse for People has become more than the catchy phrase we use to describe ourselves. It influences culture, our space, our expectations and most importantly it sets the precedent for the organization. It answers the why.

Hope Street is a place people choose to come to. It is a place where people choose to be vulnerable and real. A place where everyone is accepted. A place where you can tell your hard story but not be defined by it. It is a safe place to come undone and figure out how to be put back together. Over six years ago I walked through Hope Street's doors with a need. A need to know my worth and my value didn't come from the number on my back. A need to know that relationships can turn toxic and leave you hurting but it doesn't mean you can't trust again, love again and be with others again. **I wanted to know what Hope Street did because I wanted to know if I could belong.** Eventually I accepted the invitation to belong; and the why completely humbled me: Belovedness. Simply put, every man, woman and child, including myself, who walks into our doors discovers what it means to be the beloved. To be a part of a narrative that is bigger than any one person. To receive grace and extend it. Most of all to learn what it looks like to be in community.

So what do we do? We continually remind people why they matter, why they belong, and why we want to know and be known by them. We do all of this because we want every man, woman and child who comes through our doors to discover what it means to thrive and not merely survive through this thing called life. **At God's Greenhouse for People on 26th and Capitol we start with why and let the what figure itself out.**



NOW WHAT?

Our hope with producing this mini documentary series is that conversations would be sparked; but also that people would feel confident as they take next steps to engage. That people would have an opportunity to hear about our small part in seeing our city flourish and be encouraged to explore what their part is. The following are questions and practical next steps as you discover what it means to cultivate a nurturing community; a Greenhouse for People in your own context.



Where in your life have you seen the benefit of being a part of a safe and nurturing environment?



What is one area in your life you are hopeful of growing in? Who is helping you in that area?



When you hear the word broken what comes to mind? How do you see yourself as broken?



Why is the Greenhouse for People a space where people flourish?

NEXT STEP(S)



Visit our Hope Street website at www.HopeStreetMinistry.org and check out the “About Us” page - there we have member stories, staff reflections and a great video.



Community is at the core of our being. If anything from the video, this article or any other interaction you have had with Hope Street has sparked questions, ideas or even concerns - we would love to hear from you. Please contact info@hopestreetministry.org - we would be happy to set up a phone call or in person meeting.



Ashley Thomas
Executive Director



2522 W. CAPITOL DRIVE
MILWAUKEE, WI 53206
414.445.5404
WWW.HOPESTREETMINISTRY.ORG