

CLIENT PROFILE

Mike Kendrick: *Responding to God's Call*

When Mike Kendrick decided to support a homeless ministry, he knew what he didn't know. He had little knowledge of this type of ministry—didn't know the various services offered, how they worked, the leaders, or the reputation or style of vastly different organizations.

He felt led of the Lord to help in this area, but beyond that he was at a loss as to where or how—or what was at stake.

BIBLICAL COMMANDS

The decision to make a long-term commitment to helping the poor and disenfranchised had its roots in Mr. Kendrick's study of Scripture. As he read God's word, he kept coming across commands—in both the Old and New Testaments—that tell God's people to help take care of the needy.

He was struck by passages like Zechariah's ancient message to Israel, "This is what the Lord Almighty says, 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor'" (Zechariah 7:9,10). Jesus' own brother echoed these words, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress" (James 1:27).

A successful businessman in the financial services sector, Mike Kendrick was giving generously to God's work. But he also felt a prick of conscience: he wasn't yet following those biblical commands to help alleviate the suffering of those at the very bottom of the ladder.

SOLVING THE PROBLEM

So he decided to commit ten percent of his giving to this type of need, and to make a sizable "catch up" gift to jump start his involvement. At this point he called in Calvin Edwards & Company to conduct a ministry search and evaluation.

The Firm's task was to locate the best homeless ministry in Atlanta with a Christ-centered approach to helping its clients. We went to work. First we compiled a list, from many sources, of organizations that appeared to be providers of services to the homeless. There were over 290 of them at first blush.

Careful scrutiny to eliminate ones that appeared to have no Christian basis and removal of duplicates resulted in a "clean" list of 69 candidate organizations. How was one to pick?

We were also talking to leaders in the community, and soliciting input from those who work in the field—to ensure that the initial net we had thrown out had in fact captured all the viable candidates. Through this process we added eight more candidates, yielding a total of 77.

GATHERING INFORMATION

Next we surveyed these organizations with six simple questions to verify that they qualified as *Christ-centered*, homeless ministries serving Atlanta. It is important to avoid creating excessive work for charities that are already overworked as they serve those in need.

We received 38 replies by our deadline, 27 of which met Mr. Kendrick's criteria. The rest, we assume would not qualify on the religious criteria, or were not in fact functioning organizations (a good number of nonprofits organize but never commence formal operations, others represent the single work of an individual with a tiny budget).

DESIGNING CRITERIA

More detailed evaluation criteria were developed with Mr. Kendrick, representing the type of organization he wanted to support. Then we surveyed the 27 candidates with an in-depth 4-page questionnaire designed to get at these criteria and the heart of what the ministry did, and how they accomplished it. This was the first point where we were asking for significant effort or information from the organization, so we told them that we were in the process of selecting a recipient for a large gift, plus ongoing support. This approach resulted in 19 responses.

Each ministry provided materials such as financial statements and descriptive brochures, and completed the questionnaire covering programs, finances, staff, legal & board, funding, Christian belief, strategy and needs.

Analysis of the data we received indicated that eight ministries qualified on the criteria to which we'd agreed. These included: annual income over \$250,000; Christ-centered program that required participation in explicitly Christian activities; not primarily funded by government agencies; and other items.

IDENTIFYING FINALISTS

Mike Kendrick and the Firm reviewed the in-depth information from the questionnaires of the eight qualifying organizations, and three were selected as finalists.

We continued to pray about which organization God wanted to receive this additional support. These were tough decisions, and we had to find our way through the options to a finalist.

A day was chosen for on-site visits. We toured facilities where the lives of men and women were being



Kendrick at his Atlanta, GA office.

changed, and listened to the stories of how God had called these daring pioneers into such thankless work. We saw clients first hand, talked to staff, observed how things operated, heard from board members, and reviewed plans for future expansion. We heard testimonies of people given a new chance in life when they met someone who cared. It was utterly inspirational.

It was clear that not all homeless ministries were created equal. One was a long-term program for addicted men; another was a day program focused on witnessing and referrals for both men and women; another was a large day shelter for women and children. Each was excellent in what it did, but their strategies were fundamentally different. Not that one was right and the other wrong, but one could not miss the fact that God had called these men and women to very different strategies.

SELECTING THE GRANTEE

Mike Kendrick selected two of these finalists for more research—conversations with board members, review of some legal documents (one had multiple real estate transactions that appeared unusual), and checking what “smart money” had preceded his gift. These calls and research led to a clear winner. One had some serious organizational weaknesses that were not evident in their program or through an on-site visit. The other came through well.

“I wanted a thorough process because I was making a significant commitment. I knew little about homeless ministries but desired to make an impact in this area. I also wanted a place where my children could visit and volunteer as they grow up,” says Kendrick. His selection of the Atlanta Day Shelter for Women and Children is one with which he is very comfortable.

GIFT DESIGN

Our final step was to notify the Executive Director, Ruth Schnatmeier, and design the gift. This rewarding process resulted in the purchase of Bibles for the shelter, funding the set up of a job placement center with a matching grant, establishing a full-time on-site Christian counseling service, and supporting general overhead expenses.

These terms and requirements to report back were put into a *Gift Agreement Letter*. This documented how much Mr. Kendrick would give, when it would be given, any conditions for receiving the scheduled contributions, and some requirements to briefly report back to us as the funded projects were implemented.

Schnatmeier commented, “We feel so blessed to receive Mr. Kendrick’s gift, it will make a real difference in the lives of thousands of women we help each year. I was impressed with Calvin Edwards’ approach—it was thorough, but his company did not create excessive or unnecessary work for us. I believe we need to accommodate this type of research as donors become more analytical in their giving decisions.”

A GIFT THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Mike Kendrick enjoyed the process and knows he is supporting a solid organization. Without careful research and planning it would have been easy to support a much less worthy ministry. Now he knows that there is a direct spiritual impact on needy women and children in Atlanta due to his giving.

BENEFITS TO THE DONOR

- ✓ *Comprehensive review of alternative ministries to support.*
- ✓ *Criteria-based approach to identify an organization matching the donor’s requirements.*
- ✓ *Thorough “due diligence” of finalist ministries to ensure gift will be used effectively.*
- ✓ *Carefully designed gift to maximize its impact for needy persons.*
- ✓ *“Negotiated” agreement with ministry re designation of gift and accountability steps—in writing.*
- ✓ *Independent perspective based on research and evaluation of alternatives.*

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