

DANA GOLD: PASSIONATE ABOUT SERVING OTHERS

Dana Gold '87 has followed a rewarding path of service to her current position as director of programs for The Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania. Her list of previous job titles is inspiring: director of Homeless Men's Shelter at East End Cooperative Ministry, founder/executive director at Sojourner House, president at TLC-USA, and founding director of program at Infinite Family.

Clearly, Dana is passionate about helping others. So we asked Dana what prompted her to devote her life's work in these areas, and why she chose to focus on mentoring, international orphanages, and homeless ministries. Here's what she said:

"My understanding of faith is to enter into the lives of others without judgment, fear, or hesitation. Peoples' lives are messy and oftentimes quite painful. To be with people authentically is to come to them offering whatever you can. Sometimes that is help. Sometimes it's presence. Sometimes it's witness.



When I ran the homeless shelter I was 22 and basically stupid. I offered help through a safe place to sleep, a bag of groceries, and a sympathetic ear.

When I worked at Sojourner House I was a little less stupid and more capable of offering a wider array of support for recovery from addiction, finding a job, and creating a home where children could thrive.

When I transitioned into running an international non-profit supporting orphaned youth in Africa (TLC-USA), I was just crazy. It was in South Africa that my help often took the form of witness. Seeing the ravages of HIV/AIDS and poverty, and then giving people all over the world the opportunity to enter into that painful situation to bring hope, joy, and comfort—all through technology and without leaving their living rooms—was pretty crazy and pretty wonderful, too.

My work has always been a response to people who were at points of deep pain. I chose to respond not out of expertise, but out of a belief that we, as Christians, are called to 'be there' wherever the need is greatest.

My M.Div. program at PTS helped me learn to communicate in a way that motivated and inspired normal people to see themselves from a God's eye view. I think preaching helps us give people an elevated sense of their own purpose. At PTS, learning how to understand the Bible through rigorous study and then communicate that understanding from the privilege of the pulpit helped me connect with people and encourage their response to enter into the pain of others.

Now, working on the Mayor's Committee on Equity in Education and at The Mentoring Partnership of SWPA allows me to make an impact on youth in Pittsburgh.

My life is definitely richer because of all the people I've met along the way. I run into guys who are working and used to live in the shelter. I am Facebook friends with the young girls who used to hide under my desk at Sojourner House. I get text messages from the youth in South Africa who are struggling to stay in school and still eat. It feels like I have a very wonderful family. Kind of looks like God's family, I would say."

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