

Please allow me to present facts about the **Clothes Closet for Homeless Men's Ministry**. We are looking for volunteers.

**What is the ministry all about?** Volunteers collect, sort/size clothing and distribute the clothes to homeless men on Monday mornings - about 35 homeless men per Monday.

**Who benefits?** I guess you could say all of us benefit. Those receiving have a need fulfilled and receive a blessing from friendly men handing out the clothing. The volunteers benefit because it is heartwarming to have your efforts appreciated by those who receive the clothes and now you feel it is a ministry and not a job. The fellowship with these volunteers is FUN.

**Where is it located?** The "operation" is located at 7<sup>th</sup> and Neches. It is part of Austin Resources for the Homeless, also known as Front Steps.

**How did it begin?** In 1999 a member of Austin Area Interreligious Ministries approached Ralph Eckwall, Austin District UMM President at the time. Ralph was asked if the Methodist Men would consider operating a clothes closet for homeless men. Ralph received a favorable response from several men and agreed to the request. On October of 1999 the closet was in operation.

Churches, mostly Methodist, and a synagogue have been donating used clothing, new underwear and socks and monies. The Austin District United Methodist Men Meetings collect socks for homeless men that results in a very good supply. The Austin District United Methodist Church has given a grant to supply the new operation with needed furniture and fixtures.

**What would I get out of it if I volunteered?** It is like anything, in that, you get out of it in proportion to what you put into it. There is great fellowship. There is a sincere sense of appreciation of those receiving clothing. There are "repeat" customers and you learn something about their challenges and thank God for your situation and condition. It will lead you into a closer walk with God in your daily life.

**How often would I need to serve?** This request for volunteers is intended to change the serving need to every other week or even more. Currently we have six volunteers. It requires a minimum of four to operate the closet on Monday. With more we can be much more flexible. You chose the Mondays you want to work.

**What job would I do and what would it be like?** The jobs available are: Inspecting the clothes to use only those in good enough condition to hand out, sizing the clothes and hanging them on clothes hangers, stocking the distribution clothing racks, and serving the customers. The job for you is your choice and you will

want to change around some. All of the jobs are important to overall operation of the clothes closet.

**Would I need any kind of training to do the job?** The answer is yes. There are inspection criteria, measuring techniques and labeling guidelines that work best for this operation. You will have On-The-Job-Training and be working side by side with those who will be training you.

**Can I come and check it out before I commit?** The answer is yes. I would encourage you to check it out. We want you to know what is going on and feel comfortable before you commit. There is plenty for everyone to do. We think you will find the atmosphere and working conditions excellent. The hours are from 9:00 AM to noon on Mondays.

**What happens if we don't get anymore UMM volunteers?** This a disturbing situation. Two thirds of the current volunteers are charter members of this ministry. The "business" has increased. If we do not have more volunteers we will be forced to "turn-over" the operation to the staff of ARCH. We will remain in some form of a support role, but will not be serving the homeless men and it will become a job and not a ministry.

**Who do I contact?** There are a few who would be glad to visit with you. To "keep-it-simple" contact Ralph Eckwall - H.phone 452-4933. email address is - [Eckwall@gbronline.com](mailto:Eckwall@gbronline.com)

Prayerfully consider this ministry - you will be blessed. We can say that because we have and are.

The Volunteers of the Clothes Closet for Homeless Men.

Ralph Eckwall