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Dear Friend,

Hi and post-Seasons Greetings. I hope you and your family had a great holiday season. Thanks to you, so did I, and I am hopeful those you helped me serve through the Santa Monica Christmas. Because you helped make it possible, I wanted to share about the trip.

As planned, I spent most of my days at the homeless access center at Ocean Park Community Center. I had a wide variety of things to do, from handing out clothes to the homeless to monitoring a computer lab. I also had an opportunity to work in the kitchen as well as triage. I was there most of the weekdays of the 21 day trip.



In amongst that, I worked with a variety of volunteers – some were high school students who were completing mandatory community service for school – or senior projects. Some were “clients” who were also volunteers. Others were court ordered community service, while yet others were members of the community “lending a hand”.

It was during a Christmas dinner outreach that I met Charles Hill, the executive director of a non profit called “United Steps” which does outreach and advocates for the homeless. He invited me to a few outings.



The first outing was accompanying a homeless man from the Ocean Park Community Center to the downtown Staples Center where we had, courtesy of United Steps, 2 tickets to the LA Clippers vs. Houston Rockets basketball game. This was a great chance of getting to know someone on a 1:1 basis. It didn't hurt that we were in Sec 109 near the floor. As he shared his story, it turned out he was on parole and searching for a job as a truck driver where he didn't have to leave the state. It reminded me of how complicated people's situations can be.

The next outing was reaching out to the homeless on Venice Beach at 11pm at night. It's a different culture there at that hour, where they roam the streets or set up shelter at bus stops.

The third outing was Christmas morning. I wanted to go where people don't want to go and do something that would be truly of the heart, so I accompanied Charles to LA's Skid Row to meet the homeless there. I'd been warned to be careful, that it was unsafe and I took those warnings very seriously. None the less I spent Christmas morning talking to prostitutes, alcoholics, drug users, families, children, etc. Skid Row is like a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country and another aspect of homelessness.

Overall this trip allowed you and I to serve the homeless during a difficult season – from handing out clothes, preparing meals – to simply being there Christmas morning on the streets to be a warm spirit.

I wanted to thank you for your willingness to donate towards this unique effort. It truly was the best Christmas I believe we could have had together. I truly am hopeful our service brightened some people's holiday. Who knows, maybe next Christmas we'll do it again.

Best,

Ron