

A young boy with short dark hair and black-rimmed glasses is shown from the chest up. He is wearing a grey hoodie and has his hands clasped in prayer. He is looking slightly to the right with a gentle smile. The background is a warm, blurred gradient of yellow and orange.

PRAISE AND PRAYER LIST

We are grateful for God's enabling By The Hand to serve the needs of our families and children during the pandemic. Our children had been able to move forward despite the disruption and hardships they've experienced due to COVID-19.

But now we face another challenge. Just as Chicago was beginning to reopen after months of closure, widespread rioting, looting and fires have brought a second wave of devastation upon the South and West Sides—areas hit the hardest by the virus.

To help our children and their families continue to move forward, we will have to heighten our response. We are asking for God's continued wisdom, protection and provision—and the ability of our children, staff and organization to rebound stronger than ever.

Love didn't stop for the global crisis. It won't stop because of the riots. Our mission is so important that we cannot slow down or cut back. We must press forward, helping kids from under-resourced neighborhoods to experience abundant life.

Please pray with us. The following is a list of challenges, praises and prayer requests—all having to do with our ability to provide the holistic wraparound services that our kids need.

Thank you!

BY THE HAND CLUB MINISTRY OVERALL

Challenges

With the closures of Illinois schools and businesses, By The Hand pivoted to a virtual out-of-school program model. And while our kids have been able to move forward, there is no substitute for in-person interaction.

May 29 was the beginning of phase 3 reopening of summer youth programs. Sadly, it was also when riots erupted throughout Chicago, devastating the South and West sides. There will need to be healing. The killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis by police has ignited deep-seated anger at racial injustice. And the destruction from the riots have wiped out small businesses and stores in the areas we serve.

Our goal is to open in July. We are asking God for wisdom on how to address the devastation as well as the guidelines for opening. There are extensive state and city guidelines that are applicable for each club and each age group. We need to ensure that enough personal protection equipment (PPE) is on hand, that children follow the guidelines, and everyone involved is safe—and feels safe. We also want to continue innovating and leveraging the robust virtual club we developed. And we must heighten our response for the children, families and communities affected by the riots.

Finally, planning, staffing and budgeting for next year will be a challenge. We need to begin interviewing and hiring staff in July for the opening of the new By The Hand—Moving Everest middle school in August, and our district clubs in September. We will have 90 new students attending By The Hand—Moving Everest next year, and we want to continue following God's vision by serving more kids—mind, body and soul.

Praises

- Supporters gave generously and sacrificially to ensure that we could continue serving our children and families during this crisis.
- The government helped us keep our staff on board and engaged with a payroll reimbursement loan that is likely to become a grant that won't have to be paid.
- Our robust technology-enabled learning program enabled us to continue providing the academic support our kids need.
- Our daily staff prayer time on Zoom has brought about great unity, fellowship and answered prayers for our children—and By The Hand.
- Connie Giere, our managing director of operations and a registered nurse, has spearheaded our reopening plans. We thank God for her leadership and the entire staff's commitment to keep our children safe.

Prayer Requests

- For God's vision, wisdom, protection and provision as we move forward and begin the process of reopening during late June and early July.
- That we will have the resources to respond to the heightened short-term needs while continuing to focus on long-term systemic inequities in education.
- That supporters will trust God and By The Hand will be able to help more—not fewer—kids have abundant life—next year and the years to come.
- Wisdom, faith and obedience for our board of directors during this time of uncertainty.

- For our supporters' health and well-being—and for their faith, financial blessing and giving as we all continue to navigate through COVID-19.
- For our staff's unity, faith and spiritual vitality as well as their health and peace of mind as we begin to reopen our clubs for in-person programming with students.
- For continued innovation to leverage technology, improve communications, increase family outreach and enhance staff/volunteer coordination.
- That there is not another viral outbreak or shutdown during the fall.

PROGRAMMING

Challenges

Our students had an unprecedented amount of stress for the past two months. Their home life has changed. Their school world has changed. And they couldn't go anywhere. Students had to learn how to navigate unfamiliar technology programs like Zoom, Gmail, Google classroom and various other platforms. Many parents have not been able to work, so food and basic necessities have been in short supply—or not available. Depression and the feeling of loneliness has been a challenge for our teenagers, especially since all of their sports and school activities were canceled. Graduations and proms have been postponed or canceled. Our college students have lost jobs, potential summer jobs and internships. And now, because of the riots, there's the fear and trauma from watching violence break out and destroy their neighborhoods and harm people they know. All in all, it's been a difficult time for them.

Praises

- The opportunity to learn virtually and our enrichment classes, chapel, Bible studies and praise parties have boosted student morale.
- Many students have enjoyed special tutoring help with their school work and the interactions they have had with our staff and volunteers.
- More than half the students have participated each week in our virtual club.
- Our high school and college students are staying connected more now than before COVID-19.
- During the COVID-19 crisis, our college and career staff have been able to connect with every one of our college students to assist with technology, food and other basic needs—and to connect them with hiring possibilities.

Prayer Requests

- For our students to stay motivated to learn and active with By The Hand during the summer.
- For our leaders to create engaging curriculum and students to be excited about coming back during the summer and next fall.
- For safety and health as By The Hand begins to open up with safety protocols.
- For the safety of our youth with the warmer weather—and for students to experience healing and freedom from the fear of being harmed or murdered because of racism.
- For God to bless our eighth- and twelfth-grade students who missed out on the traditional graduation ceremony; may God give them and their families a joyful sense of accomplishment and a hopeful expectation for their future.
- Provisions for our students and alumni who are unemployed, especially sole or primary providers for their families.
- That our children are able to regain any reading losses or other setbacks they may have since the COVID-19 crisis began.
- For our students and their families to have good mental and physical health.
- For our students and families to be able to recover from the trauma and loss caused by COVID-19 and the riots.
- That all of our students will encounter God and yield to Him as Savior and Friend.

OPERATIONS

Challenges

Reopening By The Hand sites for summer programming presents challenges on many fronts for our people, facilities and technology. The state and city of Chicago authorities have provided extensive guidelines for reopening, which By The Hand is using as a roadmap to ensure the health and safety of our kids, families and staff. Preparations are well underway as each site is evaluated to determine the ideal setup to meet these guidelines. There are significant challenges with obtaining the highly sought after PPE, such as face coverings, hand sanitizer, infrared thermometers, and other supplies needed prior to opening. The facilities team is exploring many options to maintain social distancing among a population of kids who love to be close together.

Praises

- For the Phase 3 reopening of the state, which allows By The Hand Club to bring students and staff back together during the summer.
- For generous donors who gave By The Hand Club staff restaurant gift cards and provided leadership training/coaching for our leadership teams.
- A strong facilities team that has risen to the challenge of keeping our sites clean and sanitized in compliance with CDC COVID-19 guidelines. They have also provided significant support for the delivery of food and household goods to our families.
- On behalf of a generous donor, Human Resources (HR) distributed 22 rent assistance checks to By The Hand Club staff who've been financially impacted by COVID-19.

- For the technology that allowed our staff to effectively work and connect with each other and students while working from home.
- For the early completion of the Moving Everest middle school.

Prayer Requests

- For the Lord to calm any unfounded fears on the part of staff and students returning to summer programming.
- For availability of all PPE and cleaning supplies required for reopening—and for successful compliance with all guidelines for reopening.
- For continued health and safety for our students and staff as summer programming begins.
- For the HR team as they prepare for hiring and training new staff for fall programming, especially for the middle school.
- That By The Hand provides a welcoming, calming, loving environment for our returning and new students during this uncertain time.

VOLUNTEERS

Challenges

Due to the shelter-in-place order, our volunteer community has also been impacted by our clubs not meeting in person. When students attend By The Hand Club, volunteers consistently come alongside our staff to provide academic and spiritual support, encouragement and social-emotional connections for our students.

During this time in which we have operated virtually, our students and staff still need support from the volunteers. Knowing that By The Hand Club volunteers play an important role for encouraging, tutoring and mentoring our students, we are still developing new channels for students and volunteers to connect during these unprecedented times.

Praises

- For our faithful volunteers who return year after year because of their deep love and commitment to our students.
- For volunteers thinking of ways they can support students and families even when they're unable to be with our students physically—such as prayers, care packages and encouraging notes, to mention a few.
- Volunteers who eagerly seek to learn more about how they can serve students and who are willing to invest the time in training in order to do so.
- For volunteers who have actively responded to By The Hand Club opportunities to join students virtually and for these volunteers being a part of club time.

Prayer Requests

- For the safety and security of all of our volunteers.
- For volunteers who work in essential, front-line industries during this time of public health crisis.
- For By The Hand and our volunteers to be creative in using technology and overcoming the challenges and isolation of social distancing.
- For volunteers to continue connecting with students even when they're unable to meet in person.
- For students who volunteered from Moody Bible Institute, Wheaton and other colleges—and for those grieving the loss of community and the schedule they had at their schools.
- For student volunteers to embrace serving virtually—that they would commit to serving again during the 2020-2021 school year.
- For volunteers to help recruit new volunteers from their networks.
- That as a result of the current crisis, we will develop new ways for building friendships and community with local churches, schools, businesses and other entities.
- That our students and volunteers can return safely to By The Hand as the shelter-in-place order is lifted.

FINANCE

Challenges

Given the economic challenges many Americans are experiencing, it's likely that layoffs, small business closures and other financial hardships will continue to affect our current and future donors. This will make it hard to anticipate their level of giving. Since approximately 90 percent of our revenue comes from donations, this raises the question: how should we plan for sustaining operations and continuing our life-transforming services should revenues decline significantly?

Praises

- Providence Bank, a banking partner, is extremely supportive of our organization.
- The availability of government funding to support payroll costs.
- Donor support, including unanticipated large gifts that were received just before the COVID-19 crisis.
- Understanding vendors when we have to slow down payments.

Prayer Requests

- For continued donor support during this economic crisis—and despite the cancellation of the Spring Benefit.
- For people to get back to work and for the economy to return to a good state as shelter-in-place orders begin to be lifted.
- For continued strength, resiliency and energy for our outsourced finance vendor, Cedarstone Partners, especially Felicia and Diane.
- While we rely on God and not on the economy, a robust rebound during the third and fourth quarters of this calendar year.

FUNDRAISING

Challenges

Due to the pandemic, we had to postpone the majority of our fundraising-related visits, tours, group service days and events. This included the cancellation of the Spring Benefit, our largest fundraising event of the year. These postponements and cancellations, along with the growing financial crisis, have created a unique challenge for fundraising. We know our mission is more important than ever, and we are working hard to ensure the mission can continue to move forward. We are praying that God will continue to move in the hearts and minds of our friends to give in faith above and beyond during this difficult time.

Praises

- Our Day of Prayer and Commitment, held instead of the Spring Benefit, was a powerful display of God's faithfulness. Through the event we surpassed our goal, raising over \$2 million for By The Hand, enabling us to continue serving our kids—mind, body and soul.
- Many friends have helped our kids and families by assembling care packages for those in need.
- Despite the economic decline, some of our supporters have faithfully given above and beyond to help us continue serving through this COVID-19 crisis and, now, unprecedented destruction and mayhem.
- Construction for the By The Hand – Moving Everest middle school is still proceeding and on schedule for opening this fall in time for the start of the school year.

Prayer Requests

- Good health and positive outlooks for our children, staff, volunteers and friends despite the pandemic and riots.
- For God's blessing our supporters with wisdom and provision as they face these challenging economic times.
- For God to place By The Hand on the hearts and minds of our supporters, prompting them to continue providing the support needed to serve our nearly 1,600 children.
- That By The Hand would finish the fiscal year ending August 31, 2020, in the black and begin the new year with a strong financial position.
- That God would provide the leadership and funding necessary to complete the Moving Everest middle school capital campaign.
- That God would make it possible for By The Hand to continue expanding, allowing us to take more kids by the hand and walk with them from kindergarten through college, loving and nurturing them—mind, body and soul.