

SPRING 2024

The Way Station



Pat & Jim Couchenour

The Way Station is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year and I recently had the good fortune to sit down with Way Station founder, Jim Couchenour. During coffee at Generations Cafe, I asked him to share with me what he was most proud of, he told me three things.

The first, is a story about a time that he was going to the East Liverpool location for a Jobs; Ready, Set, Go graduation. In this story, he was on the sidewalk and heading towards the store nearing the door but walked past it while looking in. A woman on the sidewalk saw him and said, "If you go in there they'll help you they're really nice people. If it wasn't for this Way Station I could not have raised my children." This story says it all. But we won't leave it at that.

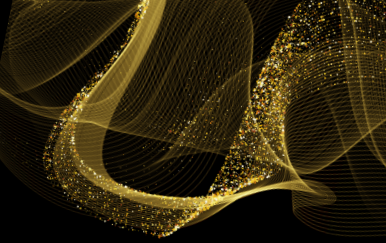
The next two things he's most proud of are saying outright what the story touches on. That is creating opportunities for the jobless to have a way to support themselves and those they love. Over the duration of the life of TWS the organization has created numerous job training opportunities. Whether it be classes to get ones GED or learn jobs readiness skills or physical hands on skills like construction. Jim isn't the "give a man a fish type." He'll give you the fish so your stomach isn't rumbling, a jacket so your not shivering, shoes so you don't sink into the mud, and a hug to ease the hurt of your heart then he'll teach you to fish. Personally, I have a motto I live by while working at The Way Station that was told to me by Vicki Couchenour-Ritterspach, "when deciding how we can help someone : err on the side of generosity."

Most importantly, what Jim and his counterparts were doing in investing their time, money, and energy into creating The Way Station then and what it is now is reflecting the compassion of Jesus.

The mission, focus, and primary emphasis has always been rooted in Matthew 25:35. When we spoke, one of the very first things he said to me was "prayer was a major thing from the very beginning." Without prayer there is no Way Station. There's no "place like a bar that only has the good stuff and none of the bad stuff," the initial vision for what would become The Way Station. TWS hasn't been perfect over the last 35 years, the organization has had fumbles and missteps but the beautiful thing is that something created in prayer and grown from the compassion of Jesus can't be so easily undone.

-Ellen Stryffeler, Outreach Coordinator

The Way Station is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization under the regulations of the Internal Revenue service. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.



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Station
founder*

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