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Feed My Sheep

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TELLING GOD'S STORIES

Feed My Sheep

FOOD SERVICE AS MINISTRY

BY MELODIE ROSCHMAN

Food affects almost every aspect of J. Mark Daniels' life. He met his wife when she was his waitress at a restaurant. Mark describes learning about God as "nourishing." Already a gregarious person, he becomes animated when he talks about local produce, homemade salad dressing, and trying new recipes.

When you are the general manager of Dining Services at Andrews University, being passionate about food just makes sense. Less predictable, however, is Mark's passion for God and his message of love, a passion he shares in a multitude of ways.

Mark has been going to church his entire life — he spent his childhood worshipping with three different faith groups.

But, for a long time, he says, "I was just kind of going through the motions." Everything changed, however, when he met his future wife, at the age of 28, and she introduced him to the Adventist church. Mark was going through a rough patch; he recently had gotten divorced and could feel himself drifting. "I was making poor decisions," he explains, "and these people still loved me."

Mark began to study the Bible, and was convicted to become an Adventist. Soon, his whole life was changing: He got married, adopted his wife's two children, and concluded God wanted him to leave behind a successful career in food service to become a pastor. The family moved from Georgia to Berrien Springs, Michigan, in 2009, and Mark enrolled in the Seminary at Andrews University. He loved



Meal prep and planning are only part of what Mark Daniels does as general manager of Dining Services. He is just as passionate about working alongside his staff and connecting with them on a personal level.

Dauren Heslop

his classes. "All day long, you're spiritually eating," he says, but he also needed to make ends meet, so found a part-time job in Dining Services, wiping down tables and taking out trash in the evening.

In 2010, Andrews decided to hire food service company Bon Appétit to manage campus dining options, and a visiting executive started chatting with Mark while he worked.

"What's your story?" he asked. Mark sketched out the details: a B.A. in landscape design, a temporary job at a fast-food restaurant, and a quick rise through the ranks to an administrative position, before leaving to become a pastor. The executive was impressed and, before Mark knew it, he had shot up from janitor to general manager of the new Dining Services.

Mark has been manager for five years now, and finds God using him in every aspect of his life. While working at Andrews, he volunteers at One Place, a local congregation, as a greeter and Sabbath school teacher. He contributes to campus wellness and the health message through healthy menu choices and sustainable food purchasing. Most importantly, however, his administrative position allows him

to mentor employees and share how God has worked in his life.

“I talk to them about the struggles they’re having,” Mark explains, “with substance abuse ... their sexuality, their spiritual walk, relationships with their parents.” He calls these conversations “Divine appointments,” chances to use his own trials and triumphs to encourage and teach others. “God doesn’t put trouble on us,” he says, “but he will use those troubles if we allow him to for the good of others.”

Being manager of Dining Services, Mark says, is his dream job. He gets to work with food and with people every day. He encourages creativity and health. Most rewarding, however, is watching his employees turn their lives around with God’s help. “Those are the triumphs,” he says. “That’s amazing to me.”

Melodie Roschman is a graduate student writer for the Division of Integrated Marketing & Communication at Andrews University.

More Than Okay

A LIFE LED BY MIRACLES

BY BECKY ST. CLAIR

Carla Arellano’s life can be summed up in one word: Miraculous. Raised in another religious faith, she dropped out of the ninth grade when her sister committed suicide and, eventually, as a single mother with two young sons, she opened her own barbershop and served 650 clients. Then, one day, she was invited to a Bible study.

“I leaned over to look into the Bible the person next to me was holding, and was shocked to see there was more than one book in there,” she says. “I felt so naive, and I didn’t like feeling that way about spiritual things.”

So Carla began to read her Bible. She read six to eight hours a day. One night, after eight hours of reading, she fell to her knees and began to weep.

“Lord, I don’t care if I have nothing else for the rest of my life,” she cried. “All I want is to help you bring as many of your children home with you as you can.”

Shortly after that night, Carla was assaulted. The aftermath caused her to lose her career, her house and her ability to provide for her children. She was homeless, and someone broke into her car and stole the rest of her belongings.

Despite these hardships, Carla sought God’s plan for her life. She even went on a mission trip to an orphanage in South Africa.

“People asked why I would do a mission trip while homeless,” she says. “It’s simple: God asked us to help others, so I will.”

Carla had been homeless for 15 months when a miracle allowed her to qualify for assisted housing. While sitting on



Miracle after miracle has bought Carla Arellano through assault, homelessness, suicide of loved ones, and more, landing her firmly on the path to which she trusts God led her.

a couch someone had given her, she decided she wanted a chair for her living room, so asked God to work it out. The next day, while running errands, Carla felt impressed to stop at a furniture store. With only \$50 in her pocket, she explained to the salesman that she wanted a chair but it had to be within her budget.

“When I told him my budget for a chair, he was incredulous,” she recalls. “I told him I [had been] in South Africa, and I know what need is. I didn’t need a chair; I wanted a chair. Then he calmly asked what I needed.”

The salesman took Carla around the store, asking if she liked several items and taking notes. When they were done, he gave her \$7,000 worth of furniture for her house for only \$2,700, telling her to pay whatever she could each month, even if it was only a penny. Three weeks later, he called and said her bill was paid in full! Carla had paid only the \$50 with which she’d entered the store.