

## ***Description of Widows Harvest, & Guidelines for Assistance***

### ***What is the history and mission of Widows Harvest Ministries?***

Widows Harvest Ministries (WHM) was begun on June 1, 1987 in response to the many home repair needs of older, low-income widows living in inner city and urban neighborhoods throughout Chattanooga. June 1, 2014 will be our 27<sup>th</sup> year in operation, and in that time thousands of widows have received free home repairs and yard services ranging from entire roof replacement to cutting grass.

Our ongoing mission is to “Plead the cause of widows, Provide assistance to widows (primarily through home repairs) and to Promote the spiritual growth and ministries of widows (primarily prayer).

After serving widows for all of these years, we still find that most people do not know about our organization and the types of services we offer.

### ***Who do we consider to be a widow?***

Webster’s dictionary defines a widow as, “a woman who has lost her husband by death and has not remarried.”

WHM defines a widow simply as a woman who is “bereft” (without) of a husband. This definition for a widow is found to be, essentially, the same in both the Old and New Testaments. So, what defines a widow for us is the condition of being without a husband regardless of the circumstances that caused it. In other words, a woman is considered to be a widow by us whether she lost her husband through death, divorce, in prison, in a nursing home, disabled, or even never married.

### ***What are the qualifications for receiving our services?***

Most of the widows that we help are older widows, 55 years old and above, but this age is not set in stone. At times we have helped widows that are slightly younger, but not so young as to still have children at home. Single mother widows, who still have children at home, generally require help beyond just the home repair needs that they might be calling about. Whenever we can, we are more than willing to partner with other ministries and organizations whose mission it is to work with younger widows and their fatherless children. However, if an older widow is helping to care for grandchildren, that is a very different dynamic and she would qualify for our services.

Essentially, the only real qualification for receiving help from us is to be an older widow (see last paragraph) who owns her own home and to personally call us and ask for assistance. That call will begin the process with us for potentially receiving our services.

### ***What is the process for receiving help?***

After a widow calls and makes a request for help with home repair needs our Administrator, Lisa Eames, will set up an appointment for our Director, Andy Mendonsa, to come to the widow's house and conduct an in-home interview and to make a preliminary assessment of both the need(s) you contacted us about as well as any other needs that he might identify while he is there.

After this initial interview our Construction Projects Coordinator, Dick Mason, will make a follow up visit to the widow's house in order to do a construction assessment (based on Director's report) and then he will put a plan together for meeting this need(s).

### ***How long will it take to get the repairs done after the construction assessment is completed?***

Since we are, primarily, a volunteer based organization the time it will take to start and complete a project varies from project to project. Once Dick Mason has a plan in place, which will include the cost of materials (if any), the tools that will be required, the number of volunteers needed and the number of days it will take, then our staff works together to find the funds to pay for the materials and the volunteers to do the work.

As soon as we have the funds and the volunteers to do the work, we will then schedule a work day(s) to come out and do the work. In that we have been doing this for so long we have found that the easier we make this for volunteers to do the work the better the chances are for recruiting them. So, all an individual volunteer or group has to do is be willing to serve and we do all the rest. We completely organize the work project by having all of the tools and equipment at the worksite as well as to provide the expert supervision for the group while they are working.

It should also be noted that projects are not done by us on a first come first serve basis. Sometimes a widow who contacted us a month ago won't receive help from us before a widow that only contacted us the day before. The reason being that each project need has to be met according to the volunteers we have available and the resources that we have for purchasing construction materials needed that job.

### ***How many projects can you handle?***

On average it is not unusual for us to do 400+ projects for widows in a year. This number of projects, though, might represent only 100 widows, because some widows will receive help for more than one need over the span of a year.

WHM is a 365 days a year operational organization. Whereas, many similar volunteer based, home repair, mission organizations are from out-of-town and only offer their services during the summer months. WHM recognizes that needs arise all year round and we are, therefore, committed to both meet these needs unto completion and to be accessible to those we serve on an ongoing basis.

During the summer months, though, when school is out, we do have the greatest influx of high school aged volunteers. Between the middle of June through the end of July of every summer we have hundreds of volunteers available to us as well as funds for the purchase of construction materials. There is always a better chance of meeting a need more quickly by us at these times.