

# After getting help, mechanic wants to assist others in need

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**H**is résumé of various auto mechanics certifications takes up more than 30 pages, and Don Hill has 27 years of experience working on cars.

But when he was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, a painful chronic inflammation of the digestive tract, Hill had trouble paying his rent after a week in the hospital.

That's when Christian Help Inc. got involved and helped Hill pay his rent and get back on his feet.

And with the organization's assistance, Hill will soon be able to open his own business.

Christian Help, a group that helps with utility bills, pays for temporary shelter and refurbishes mobile homes for the homeless or near-homeless, now wants to help people open their own

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businesses or receive job training from others in the program who already have a business.

A grant Franklin College received will provide small loans and training to former homeless people involved with Christian Help.

With his health condition, Hill has a hard time working all day and has always dreamed of the day when he could open his own business and enjoy more flexibility.

The day when Hill becomes a business owner is turning into a reality in the near future, and with Christian Help and a Lilly Endowment grant given to Franklin College, Hill could be the first person helped by the organization to own his own auto mechanic business.

"The plan is to eventually open my own business, and at the same time, teach people that are jobless or homeless to do automotive work," Hill said.

Taking others under his wing, he will help homeless people learn skills to get jobs, and Christian Help hopes more people will open businesses and help others in the program, executive director Pam Leffler said.

Students from Franklin College will help people with Christian

help learn how to create a résumé, business plan or marketing plan. The partnership would help students get involved in the community and help teach people how to create business documents, said Jann Johnson, assistant dean for academic services and director of professional development at the college.

More and more students from Franklin College are considering work in nonprofit organizations and consider changing their majors after working in the community, Johnson said.

"This helps the community and agencies, and gives students applied practice," Johnson said.

Without the students, Christian Help might not be able to offer more services, including help with business plans and résumés, Leffler said.

Money from the Lilly grant

would be used as a small loan for people like Hill to open his business, and other Christian Help members could get services at a discounted rate.

Hill already helps other members, fixing cars at no charge for them. Some people are able to keep their jobs because they can get their car fixed without having to pay for it, and others can find a job because they have a transportation, Hill said.

"Some of these people have just gotten these jobs, and then bam, their car breaks down," Hill said. "They could lose their job if they can't drive to work."

Advertising for Hill's services appears in church newsletters throughout the county, and many people already come to Hill because of referrals he's received from Christian Help.

Two of the biggest obstacles

facing homeless people are child care and transportation, Johnson said.

If Christian Help can get discounted services for people in the program and help teach people skills to get jobs, the obstacles would be taken care of, she said.

Loans could go to a group of people working together to open a business, and people like Hill who have more experience could serve as a mentor, Johnson said.

There are still business skills people would need to learn, and outside organizations could come to Christian Help and teach members about a budget and other skills, like following through on promises to customers and other employees, Leffler said.

"It's a sense of giving them control of their lives," Johnson said.