

There are some dark spaces in this world.

Yet, amid the unlit corners of the city where evil runs rampant, there are others who hold lights to the window, signaling safety, beckoning the forgotten passersby to come take refuge. **Peter Wohler '87** is one of them—holding a proverbial torch and making way for the urban poor, homeless youth, and victims of prostitution and drug abuse through his work leading Source MN, a Minneapolis organization.

Sporting a head of 20-year-old dreadlocks, Wohler says his street name is “The Dreaded Pastor,” and it’s on the streets of Minneapolis that he’s found his calling.

In February of 2018, Wohler and his team played a major role in aiding sex-trafficking victims and assisting law enforcement during Super Bowl LII, an event that brought more than 125,000 people to the Twin Cities. Wohler started working with the organization in 1995, but his story begins a couple decades before.

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Wohler grew up in Brooklyn Park, just north of Minneapolis. His parents attended Northwestern in the early 1950s, when Billy Graham was president of the college, and in the fall of 1984, Wohler also started school at Northwestern. He graduated with a Bible certificate and a bachelor’s degree in math.

Wohler vividly remembers a mission trip he took with the Northwestern soccer team to Guatemala and Kenya—it was his first time experiencing a developing nation, and the trip influenced his worldview dramatically. “There’s something about Northwestern,” says Wohler. “There were opportunities to connect with people from other cultures and with unreached people groups.”

Wohler saw the forgotten and the marginalized on his trip, and he wanted to play a part in letting them know they were seen and loved.

THE DREADED PASTOR

by
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A SOUL STIRRED

During the late 1980s, shortly after graduation, Wohler started volunteering with at-risk youth in Minneapolis. His calling began to stir within him.

In 1992, Wohler joined Youth With a Mission (YWAM) and traveled to India, Amsterdam, and other European cities, where he was exposed to the red-light districts in many of the urban areas. He observed the brothels and the teens in prostitution, and something again was kindled in his soul.

Wohler remembers the moment he felt a distinct call from the Lord to pursue the marginalized and the forgotten. It was 1993, and he was traveling overseas. While praying, Wohler had a supernatural vision of the city of Jerusalem spoken of in Acts 1:8; however, it was clear that his “Jerusalem” wasn’t the city in Israel. His Jerusalem was Minneapolis.

“MY JERUSALEM”

After returning to Minneapolis in 1994, Wohler started working with Source MN, helping meet the needs of homeless youth and at-risk youth stuck in prostitution. He soon realized the need for Source to create transitional housing—a safe place where survival and spiritual growth could be cultivated for victims. Over the years, Wohler has spearheaded the opening of several different transitional, community homes. During some seasons, Wohler and his wife even took women into their own home when the need presented itself.

As the only faith-based organization that works directly with women in trafficking in Minnesota, Source plays a significant role in showing the love of Christ to the overlooked. Part of their outreach involves working with local law enforcement in order to be a victim resource center to those at risk.

THE DARK SIDE OF THE SUPER BOWL

As with many large-scale events, Super Bowl LII marked an increase in human trafficking for the Twin Cities. Wohler explains that police don’t want to arrest the women they find in prostitution, so they rely on community partners like Source to help them care for victims.

“In some ways, the Super Bowl is the worst time to do outreach since women are paid three to ten times more than usual...They’re focused on working instead of making life-changing decisions.”

Leading up to the Super Bowl, Source was able to contact victims directly through their online texting outreach program, as well as create a drop-in center and emergency shelter at Hope Community Church, open 24/7 for victims who needed a place to stay or someone to talk to. Volunteers turned nurseries and Sunday school rooms into beautiful, dignified bedrooms, and over the course of the event, 13 women stopped by this safe haven.

“In some ways, the Super Bowl is the worst time to do outreach since women are paid three to ten times more than usual,” explains Wohler. “They’re focused on working instead of making life-changing decisions.” Since the middle of a large-scale event isn’t an ideal time for women to reshape their choices, Wohler’s team connected the women with resources that would help them take healthy next steps once the Super Bowl was over.

Wohler also explained that amid their planning leading up to the event and throughout the week, relationships with the FBI and police departments were furthered, more awareness was created, and fundraising has allowed the organization to triple its budget and hire staff. Not only that, but during the 11 days around the Feb. 4 game at U.S. Bank Stadium, officers arrested 94 men in sex trafficking stings, according to Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo.

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Little by little, the light is pushing back the darkness. Moving forward, Wohler explains that the desire of his heart and Source MN is that they would be a significant light in the darkness for at-risk populations. They want to continue being a conduit for the church and to persist in growing their resources and volunteers. The dream is this: that the anti-trafficking movement would change culture and that victims would know they can get out.

If you’re interested in getting involved with Source MN, visit their website at sourcemn.org. 🍷

STAGE IV COLON CANCER

In August 2017, Peter Wohler was given a Stage IV Colon Cancer diagnosis with a 20% chance to live after a year. A later prognosis gave him just 30–60 days to live.

Scans at the end of January miraculously showed that his tumor had decreased in size, and Peter is gaining weight again. As of April 2018, Peter’s health has continued to improve, despite his initial diagnosis.

The Wohler family trusts that God can heal him, but even if He doesn’t, He is still good.

To read more, visit Peter’s CaringBridge website at caringbridge.org/public/peterwohler

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