

## MOMS ON A MISSION

Dawn Putnam says her non-profit is just a group of everyday people making a difference every day. But don't believe for a minute that *Moms on a Mission* is ordinary. The group, based out of Dupo, IL, helps the homeless population in downtown St. Louis, low-income families, fire and flood victims, foster children, veterans, and anyone else who needs a hand.

"The way the group started, my sister and I, a few years ago, used to put our backpacks on, and we would go downtown trying to save the world," says Putnam. After bringing needed supplies to people experiencing homelessness, she decided to reach out and see if others would help. She got her answer after inquiring on Facebook. One afternoon, like-minded friends joined her in making 565 brown bag lunches.

That success spurred her along. She recalls her first donation, "I've never been so excited to get two trash bags of used clothes, used t-shirts, used jeans... we went and handed them out directly to our homeless friends, and they need them so badly. And then to tell the people who dropped them off – hey, this is where it went. You could've sold it at a yard sale and made \$10, but this made a difference in somebody's life."

Putnam and her group, *Moms on a Mission*, make weekly trips to downtown St. Louis, delivering everything from water and packaged foods to backpacks and tennis shoes. And call it karma or whatever you like, but Putnam's group has been on the receiving end as well. She explained, "I had a van given to me to continue doing this because I can't get downtown without a vehicle. Can you imagine someone giving you a van? I have a vessel. I can get the items down to the people who need them." Another generous donor also helped with the down payment on their building in Dupo.

*Moms on a Mission* is continuously on the move. Putnam said, "You see one problem and learn about many more, so that has led us down this wonderful road. We do what we call mini missions, which could be us packing up a box of food or a box of hygiene products and driving them to local low-income families. Around the holidays, we do meal kits, filling a box with an entire Thanksgiving dinner, from the turkey to the eggs you need to make a cake. We have our Pay or Pray, a donation-only thrift shop where we invite everybody and anybody to come, and it's in the basement of our building." The good work continues in many more ways, including making sure teenagers have dresses for prom as well as providing "caring cases" for foster children.

Networking exclusively through Facebook, *Moms on a Mission* posts requests and connects those in need with others who want to help. Putnam's group has grown to over 6,000 members in just a few years. "There's your proof that there are more good people than bad people - they want to help. We've had people argue over who gets to buy something for somebody on the board before." Putnam added, "If I can be a beacon, then so be it. That's my lot in this life – to not just help people, but to help people help people."

*Moms on a Mission* is a non-profit operating out of Dupon, IL, serving Missouri and Illinois communities. For more information or to find out how you can help, go to their Facebook page or website: [momsonamissionstl.org](http://momsonamissionstl.org).