

Leaf Chronicle

CLARKSVILLE

Kenny and Vicki York, whose Manna became a village, named Leaf-Chronicle People of the Year

Chris Smith and Alexis Clark Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle

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Kenny and Vicki York had a rough 2019. It was always going to be a challenge: [moving their hunger nonprofit Manna Cafe](#) from a ramshackle warehouse at the north end of Franklin Street into a bigger and better location 3 miles away on Providence Boulevard.

But then [they got some bad news](#).

That whole year they thought they would have to plan the move, organize, pack and relocate? They wouldn't have a year. They'd have only one month.

The Yorks called in their volunteers and rounded up donations, and [they made it happen](#).

"It seemed like it was going to be impossible," Vicki York said, "but there was a part of me that knew all along that it was going to work. And it did."

That in itself would be a tremendous victory.

But one month after they moved in, the [big windstorm hit Clarksville](#), leaving 30,000 families without power, many of them losing entire refrigerators' worth of food.

“Even though we were four days without electricity ourselves, our team really pulled together,” Vicki York said.

Manna Cafe, now operating out of Manna Village, responded with a [food drive and distribution](#), offering every family who needed it a package of goods to restock their refrigerators.

“We served meals in the community and set up a food trailer for those who didn’t have electricity for five days, which was probably about 1,000 meals,” Kenny York said. “We also supplied food to the Red Cross during that time.”

And then, about a week later, sub-freezing temperatures hit Clarksville, so [they organized a warming shelter](#).

“When the temperature gets below 32 and it stays that way for more than 24 hours, we’ll open up a warming center and stay open until it warms up,” Kenny York said. “We’re in a good partnership with the local churches, and for us, it feels like we’re saving lives.”

Because that’s what the Yorks do.

And that's why Vicki and Kenny York are the 2019 Leaf-Chronicle People of the Year.

Feeding 2,000 families a month

Outside of the move and the emergency responses, Manna also did its normal work, making sure no Clarksvillian in need goes hungry.

It averages serving about 2,000 families a month. But in November, it served 2,400, and it expects it will hit that number in December as well.

In 2018, it distributed 2 million pounds of food, and it's on track to surpass that in 2019.

Vicki gives all the credit to Kenny for keeping things going at Manna.

“He loves people and does what he can to relieve suffering,” Vicki York said. “I like to tell people when it comes to Manna Cafe, he birthed the baby and I was the midwife. I take care of him so he can take care of others.”

In turn, Kenny York credits the community he lives in.

“It makes me feel good to know that the community has gotten behind us and supported us,” Kenny York said. “We couldn’t do this without hundreds of volunteers and people believing in what we’re doing.”

Manna Cafe in 2020

As for what comes next, the additional space gives them an array of new options

“In the first part of 2020, we will have our community center open and we will be adding a caseworker to our staff, so we’ll actually start helping people connect the dots and getting them out of the situation they’re in,” Kenny York said.

They plan more classes, seminars and Saturday night gatherings so the homeless can be together.

“We have added Hands and Feet for Christ — that’s a couple of ladies that distribute clothing and household items,” Vicki York said.

And their outreach in 2020 will move outside Clarksville as well.

“Kenny and I for the first time will be going to minister overseas in February for 2½ weeks,” Vicki York said. It's a mission trip to Cambodia and South Africa.

And amid all that, Vicki — Victoria Doulos York — released a book, "[Created for Fearlessness: Embracing Freedom and Joy in a Fearful World.](#)"

'Walking around in the miraculous'

As for being named 2019 People of the Year, Vicki York called it "humbling."

"We're just normal people; we are just as flawed as the next person. We've just done things a little differently and stepped out on faith a little, and thank God we've been able to make a change in the community because of it.

"It was a record-breaking year, and it's kind of astounding. Sometimes I step back and realize that we're walking in the miraculous. Sometimes I feel like we're just watching our lives unfold because we see the miraculous all the time, and we're very grateful.

"It's astounding to me to see what God does."

For more

Manna Village is at 605 Providence Blvd. Call 931-933-0970 or go to www.mannacafeministries.com.

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