

## Humanitarian Relief Worker: Steven Anderson, Light of Hope



Mr. Steven Anderson grew up in Mustang, Oklahoma and is now a current Claremore, Oklahoma resident. While in college, Mr. Anderson showed an interest in Radio and Television and after receiving a degree from Texas A&M, began his career with the local news. He was able to leverage his experience and skills and accepted a new position with Reel FX in Dallas that provided special effects in with feature films such as Shrek, Toy Story, Sin City and Open Season. Mr. Anderson eventually relocated back to his home state of Oklahoma and started his own business Anderson Studios in August of 2013.

Anderson Studios provided support to businesses in multiple states including Oklahoma, Florida, Texas and Kansas. On a quarterly basis, Anderson studios gave back to the community by providing free promotional services and assistance to local businesses and community organizations. One of the organizations that Mr. Anderson began working with was Light of Hope, Layla Freeman, Founder and CEO. He was so impressed with the services that were being provided within the community that he continued to provide quarterly promotional services but also started volunteering his time in the Light of Hope's food pantry.

Mr. Anderson and his business, Anderson Studios were affected by COVID-19 and like so many other self-employed individuals, experienced significant financial devastation due to the pandemic in March of 2020. He heard about Oklahoma Works services through Light of Hope and worked with a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Title 1, Career Coach being enrolled as a Dislocated Worker in April of 2020. After assessment, Mr. Anderson was placed in a work experience position with the Light of Hope food pantry operating under the Community Food Bank of NE Oklahoma. Mr. Anderson serves as a Food Panty Supervisor providing essential services to hundreds of families in need. He now continues this work at the Light of Hope food bank as a Humanitarian Relief Worker funded through federal temporary disaster relief funds. Mr. Anderson helped to create an Emergency Food Pantry Intake Form ensuring more support for the local community allowing for the planning and scheduling of food pickup upon request. He has also helped organize numerous food distribution events and streamlined food bank processes.

As COVID-19 was having more and more of an impact, the Light of Hope food bank was seeing a greater demand from the community for food bank resources. Yet while these resource needs were increasing, they were losing volunteers due to so many of the volunteers being vulnerable to the virus. The need from the community became so overwhelming and with the lack of volunteers, Ms. Freeman was concerned that the food bank might have to close. There were simply not enough human resources to keep up with the demand from the community. Through the federal temporary disaster relief funds and the Humanitarian Relief Worker program, services provided by Light of Hope food bank to the Rogers County community are thriving.