



Impacting Those Who Care

An interview with Trish Borgdorff, LMSW, ACSW, Grace Group and SALTS Leader

Visiting Angels of West Michigan provides non-medical home care. Although

primarily serving seniors, there is a growing need among younger people as a result of dealing with cancer, ALS, MS and other life changing diseases. Visiting Angels provides assistance and support in the areas of personal care, light house keeping, meal preparation, companionship, transportation and end of life care.

Trish Borgdorff has owned Visiting Angels since August of 2003. She oversees daily operations in partnership with an excellent office staff and 80 to 100 caregivers who, together, have served over 1000 clients since opening. She is also a SALTS and Grace Group leader.

What drew you to Open Hearts Ministry?

Prior to owning Visiting Angels, I was on a large church staff where I believed that to be in ministry and to be burned out just went hand in hand. It was through the ministry of Open Hearts that I came to learn how to be a healthier individual in a profession of helping and walking alongside others. I began to experience the benefits of loving people well. I was able to sort out the difference between helping

someone to benefit myself, or helping someone to benefit them.

What difference has this made in your business?

After I embraced my own story, I was able to design a vision of how I would like to manage people differently. I am thrilled that, now as a business owner, I am able to weave what I've learned from Open Hearts, SALTS and Grace Group through my organization. My desire for development includes providing excellent care with excellent people who have excellent boundaries. So much of what we do



has a physical care element and an emotional care element. I've learned that the challenge is to encourage caregivers

to be personal, professional, compassionate and have boundaries. Many people believe those are exclusive of each other, but I have learned it can be done.

How has your staff responded?

My staff became curious about the ministry of Open Hearts because of my own experience. I would not say I recruited as much as offered opportunities for my staff to participate in Grace Groups and SALTS. There is always an element of resistance when inviting someone to journey within their own story. I understand and encourage them to press on and discover what is on the other side as they journey into the unknown.

What has your staff learned that has impacted your organization?

I believe that we have all become better at listening honestly to one another. There is greater space for expression of honest emotion. A true living out of "when one weeps, we all weep, and when one rejoices we rejoice together."

There has been much growth in how we respond to our clients and caregivers. We are more consistent and communicate a consistent message. We are more willing and able to enter into chaos to bring clarity, and we will support

one another in that venture. We've learned to care for a person and stick to boundaries, to have empathy for the lonely, and support a family's decision to have limited hours for care; to hear the pain of an adult child's story as they care for their parents – to truly listen and not stand in judgment, understanding there is more to the story.

We understand that each family has a story, and that every individual in a family has a story, just like each of us does. Sometimes those stories intersect and offer hope and sometimes those stories intersect and bring heightened suspicion or defensiveness. It is important to know our own story first as we listen to others.

What would you say to other organizations about the value of OHM's training?

I believe this has led to our becoming a healthier organization that is able to journey well with others. I believe it has led to knowing how to handle disagreement and conflict with one another, with our employees, and with our clients in an honest way that honors those involved. We have a more honest assessment of our strengths and weakness. We have a stronger team with greater compassion and understanding for each other. I believe it has led to a greater willingness to give of ourselves. It has led to knowing how to celebrate and enjoy both the blessing given and received in words and affirmation.