

Church on the Front Porch

After spending lunch breaks driving through an impoverished Nashville, Tenn., neighborhood in search of an investment home, Thom Hazelip began feeling an undeniable burden for the people in the community. Forfeiting his upscale home with a pool house in the backyard, he decided to move his wife, Michelle, and four young children to the drug-infested area of McFerrin Park.

“What changed it from being a business venture, to us moving down here to be a part of the community was God,” Thom says.

Michelle admits she thought her husband had “lost his mind” when he first proposed the idea of moving to McFerrin Park. But after she saw the numerous needs of the kids in the area and their parents, some of whom were only 13 or 14 when they became parents, she felt a change of heart.

As the family began spending more time “eating Popsicles and painting” with the neighborhood kids on their front porch, it became obvious why God had prompted the move.

“We [now] know all our neighbors,” Thom says. “We know all the kids, what’s going on in their lives.”

The Hazelips have created the nonprofit Front Porch Ministry to offer financial and volunteer support (). The organization provides scholarships and rehab assistance to children and their parents respectively.

McFerrin Park resident Armentria Kelly is grateful for the Hazelips' ministry: "They have touched many lives ... and it's helping me to want to change and want to be able to do what they are doing, to be able to give back."

