

STATEMENT

WINSTON SALEM RESCUE MISSION'S 2019 GOLF TOURNAMENT

| Board of Directors, Winston Salem Rescue Mission |

The Winston Salem Rescue Mission responds to issues surrounding its 2019 Golf Tournament offered with an appearance by PGA Professional, Steve Stricker

WINSTON-SALEM, NC, 8 May 2019—The Winston Salem Rescue Mission is a ministry established in 1967. Today, it sustains multiple outreach ministries to the poor in the Piedmont Triad area of North Carolina. These outreaches include multiple programs to help men overcome addictions and gain the tools needed to become productive members of society, a pantry providing free groceries to those in need, a clothing ministry that provides thousands of articles of clothing each year and a medical and dental clinic that treats individuals who cannot afford to pay for their healthcare and do not have health insurance.

Our ministry is funded by financial donations as well as sales from material donations received for our Rescue Mission Thrift Store. In addition, the Mission is benefitted by special events that focus attention on our work and offer opportunities for people to provide additional financial support as well. Among them are the annual Mission 5K and the annual Mission Golf Tournament.

BACKGROUND

Beginning in late 2018, our 2019 Golf Tournament was announced to the public as being hosted by PGA Professional Steve Stricker. The tournament was publicized with additional offers of opportunities with Stricker for sponsors of the event.

As has been rightly reported in the news media, tournament events were held May 1 and 2 but without Mr. Stricker, to our surprise and dismay. A public figure with a fine reputation, the

explanation for Mr. Stricker’s “absence” became clear after our management team discovered that he had not agreed to participate as they had been led to believe.

FINDINGS

As a Rescue Mission committed to integrity and transparency, we have been careful to gather our facts before offering much-needed explanations for what has occurred under our name. When the deception first came to light, we had more questions than answers—like everyone else. Having begun an investigation and being in possession of more facts, we are able to speak to the matter of what happened with greater confidence.

The deception of which the Mission, its management team, sponsors and participants are all victims, came about as the result of what we now know to be a rather sophisticated and year-long scheme. It was carried out with a set of stories backed by corroborating emails and other communications purportedly made by Mr. Stricker. These stories and communications were used by one of our own employees who shared responsibility for promoting the tournament. That employee, Mr. Rob Hillmer, represented himself as a close family member of Mr. Stricker with direct access to him. Mr. Hillmer has been subsequently terminated as a member of our staff.

Mr. Hillmer had been employed by the Mission after having completed our recovery programs successfully and with distinction. Our background checks showed a criminal history that is characteristic of persons in our recovery programs. But, because of his demonstrated progress, his declared interest and background in marketing and out of a desire to help Mr. Hillmer succeed, he was made a part-time and then full-time employee in our marketing area.

Earlier this year, outstanding warrants for Mr. Hillmer were discovered to exist upon his arrest in Forsyth County. However, the charges appear to have occurred before his entry into our program. They were not uncovered in our background checks. Upon Mr. Hillmer’s arrest, he was helped by our management team to secure bond and legal assistance, again as a means of helping him succeed in pursuit of a new life.

Without question, our efforts to help this individual were exceptional. Unfortunately, the results were equally exceptional. We are confident in reporting, however, that our investigation to date has shown no funds related to the tournament are unaccounted for. All funds received for the tournament are in our accounts and under our control. While it seems clear that no one has been defrauded financially, it seems equally clear that many were deceived.

Why Mr. Hillmer engaged in an elaborate deception which yielded no financial benefit to him remains as much a mystery to us as it does to the community. Anything more as to his motive would be speculation. Attempts to reach him by our management team have failed. We do not know his whereabouts.

RESPONSE

In response to this sad situation, the Mission leadership acknowledges that while we did not create the deception, as Mr. Hillmer's employers and as the host of this event, we are responsible for the results coming from it. Consequently, we are taking the following actions to make right what has been done in our name.

First, we are returning to each sponsor monies received for the tournament without exception.

Second, we are making a second offer to every paying participant of a full refund for the cost of the tournament. We are contacting them by email or mail. (Players wanting a refund can contact Shari Mauk, Director of Finance, during normal office hours @ 336-723-1848.)

Third, we are reaching out directly to all sponsors and participants to offer our sincere apologies.

Fourth, we will contact Mr. Stricker through his agent to reaffirm our regret at the use of his name and thank him for the manner in which he has been so exceptionally supportive and sympathetic of the Mission throughout this past week. He has shown great grace and understanding. For this we are publicly grateful.

Finally, we are working with our executive management team to review this situation in greater depth. We will work as well to strengthen our personnel policies and practices, our methods and policies for assisting our graduates as well as our fundraising policies and practices overall. Our desire is to ensure that the possibility of a recurrence is minimized and that the work of the Mission continues with the transparency and integrity that have always been characteristic of our work.

As we take these steps, we anticipate that the ministry of the Winston Salem Rescue Mission will not only be made stronger but that the ties we have forged through the years with our community will be strengthened as well. By God's grace, we will continue to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of hurting people in the Triad area, so that we may share the good news of Jesus Christ and bring glory to God.