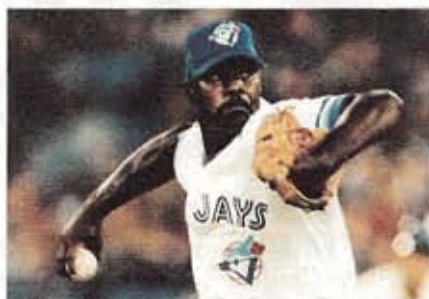


# HELPING HANDS

By: Barbara Dickson



## DAVE STEWART, FORMER BLUE JAYS PITCHER:

### FROM SERVING UP FASTBALLS TO SERVING UP THANKSGIVING DINNERS

**T**he earthly hands of Christ – how exquisite they must have been. Little children scampered to Jesus' side to feel the caress of His hands. People journeyed long distances yearning to be touched by those hands. Having labored as a carpenter for most of His life, His hands were doubtless rugged, perhaps worn and calloused. But that didn't matter, for they provided healing and comfort. Jesus' hands knew service; they tenderly washed His disciples' feet. And His hands knew pain. He willingly surrendered them to be pierced and nailed to a cross in the ultimate sacrifice of love.

When we look down at our own hands, what do we see? In a way, our

hands tell a story about each of us. If we were to study them, perhaps we would see a perfect manicure, or finger nails in desperate need of attention. Maybe we would discover coarse, red skin from continual submergence in water. They are used for various duties such as peeling vegetables and washing dishes. Or maybe we would see hands weathered and rough from years of hard manual labor. Perhaps our hands are disfigured or crippled by disease, or wrinkled with age. But look a little harder, for amidst those wrinkles and creases and scars, are love and compassion.

When you shake the hand of former Toronto Blue Jays pitcher Dave Stewart, you notice the warmth and

the strength of his clasp immediately. His hands are those of a major league pitcher with awesome career statistics. His accomplishments include winning the 1993 American League Championship Series Most Valued Player Award. He was a key member of the Blue Jays' World Series championship team. He is a four-time 20-game winner, who played 15 years in the majors, with a career ERA of 3.95. Retired from the Oakland Athletics since 1995, Dave now serves as pitching coach to the San Diego Padres.

Grasping his hand and looking into his eyes, you can almost imagine him on the pitcher's mound, eyeing the opponent, as his fingers tighten their grip around the ball. He gives the

#### Other volunteers lend a hand in the kitchen

Stewart with volunteers Harold and Jo-Ann Jones



famous Dave Stewart stare, the one that destroys an opponent's confidence as Dave hurls the ball towards the plate. Often, the opposing player's only indication that the ball has arrived is the thump it makes in the catcher's glove.

There's another side to Dave Stewart though, one that the public doesn't see as often. Dave's strong hands are used not only in service to his team, but in service to God. Hurling fastballs has been exchanged for serving the hungry; his rehearsed icy stare has been replaced with his genuine radiant countenance. "I want to live each day to the fullest," he says. "I don't want to just be one of those who sit around and think about what to do. I want to be one of those who gets up and does it."

### WHAT ABOUT THE HUNGRY?

Dave became a Christian in 1987 when his exploding baseball career could not fill the emptiness in his life. In 1993, as a Blue Jay, he wondered what happened to the hungry people of Toronto at Thanksgiving. Someone suggested he contact The Salvation Army. Knowing the Army's practical approach to helping humanity, Dave did and, for the past five years, he has lent a helping hand to the Toronto Harbour Light Centre, to feed the hungry and encourage the lonely on Thanksgiving Day.

"I love to watch people, to be with people," Dave says. "I get a lot of satisfaction and fulfilment from this." Major Thomas Tuppenney, executive director of Harbour Light, says he's thrilled to have Dave Stewart as a part of the ministry. "The man really has the Lord in him. God shines right through him."

Though the decorations are different and some of the volunteers change, the scene at the Harbour Light Centre on Jarvis Street in Toronto's downtown, not far from the SkyDome, is the same at Thanksgiving and Christmas when the Army puts on a special meal for the needy. The doors

open to the public at noon, and people come by the hundreds, waiting quietly in the chapel for their turn to move into the dining room. Each sitting accommodates 100 people.

Theo Korthof, Harbour Light's chef, and his staff, have been preparing for more than a week: cooking and deboning 900 pounds of turkey, peeling and cooking more than 500 pounds of potatoes, supplemented by peas and corn, stuffing and gravy, and rounded out with 120 pies and 250 loaves of freshly-baked bread. On the day itself, the kitchen is still bustling with activity, as the staff and volunteers provide about 1,200 meals in six hours.

Clearing tables, refilling coffee mugs, dishing up peas and corn, sweeping floors, the tasks are numerous and immediate. On Thanksgiving Day, Dave Stewart refills coffee cups, serves meals, hands out dessert. "He's actively involved in what's happening," says Major Tuppenney. "These people deserve a good meal," says Dave. And indeed it is a good meal. Some people come back for seconds; others three times.

But, interestingly enough, they don't all come for food. One woman came into the chapel last Thanksgiving and sat for two hours. She just needed to feed her soul. On another occasion, a man came to Major Tuppenney and asked, in his street lingo, "I want this

**Colonel Clyde Moore and Major Tom Tuppenney, with Foundation members Lloyd Exeter, Doran Major, Foundation vice-president; Dave Stewart**



**Dave Stewart**  
*Right: the icy state of the pitcher*  
*Left: the radiant smile of the helper*





**New Beginnings: singers with a message of hope**

Jesus thing." This is just the kind of opening the major is seeking. "We want to supplement their hunger and take away their loneliness," says Major Tuppenney. "But we also want them to know about Jesus Christ. If only one person gets saved, with all the planning and money that goes into the day, it is worth it."

Whenever he's there, Dave Stewart speaks to each person. Coming from an underprivileged background in Oakland, California, he understands

programming is geared toward meeting all their needs. We offer a holistic ministry here: spiritual, physical and emotional."

Of course, Dave Stewart isn't the only one supporting this ministry. More than 100 volunteers offer their hands in service for these events. Among them are New Beginnings, a male singing group founded by Harbour Light Corps. These are men who have come through the centre's addiction program and whose lives have been redeemed by Jesus. Their faces, some worn by life, shine with the light of Christ. Veteran Salvation Army officers, Majors George and Edith Clarke (R), who serve as corps assistants at Harbour Light, are also there to provide music and encouragement.

### PLEASE DON'T STOP

Dean Feener is typical of most volunteers. "I felt very good for having done this," he says. "I enjoy it immensely and I have a real sense of satisfaction." Why does he volunteer to help? To meet Dave Stewart? No. "I have a huge respect for the work Major Tuppenney does," he says. "I am here to support the program. That's more important than meeting a celebrity."

Colonel Clyde Moore, the Army's chief secretary in Canada and Bermuda, thanks Dave Stewart and his foundation for their faithful service. "Please don't stop. We need your help," he says. And to those awaiting their meals, the colonel has

some advice: "Thank God for the gift of life," he says. "But go beyond just living. Be thankful to Jesus, for the abundant life that He offers to each of us."

"I applaud Dave Stewart's dedication of his time and resources," Colonel Moore comments afterwards. "It's superb of him. I wish this could be contagious all across the country. On these special days of the year, people need to reach out to those who are without friends, families, and food."

### GIVING SOMETHING BACK

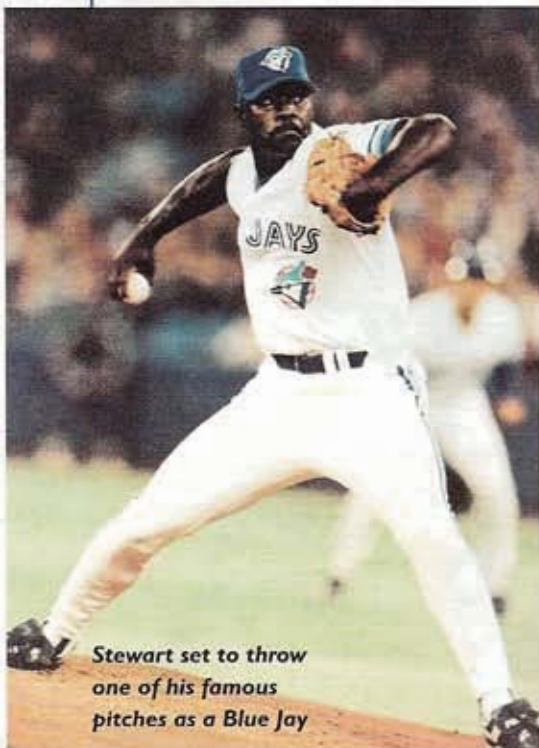
But the work of mercy never ends, and Dave Stewart wants to remain a part of it. He intends to continue his work in Toronto. "I love Toronto," he says. "I've been to very few places that treat a human being like a human being every day." But Dave helps out elsewhere too, with his Bread of Life operation in Palo Alto, California, for example.

Lloyd Exeter, president and chief executive officer of the Dave Stewart Foundation in Toronto, comments, "Dave is an outstanding man. He puts others before himself, not for glory because he doesn't want media coverage. This is just his way of giving something back." Adds Dave even more significantly: "It's my way of showing I have God in my heart."

All too soon at the Harbour Light Centre, the last meal is served and the doors close. At Christmastime, there is the extra touch of gift-giving: a toque, scarf, gloves, socks and a goodie bag for everyone. When the recipients are gone, loving hands remain. The volunteers, sacrificially giving, eagerly anticipate the next major event. The Harbour Light and The Salvation Army press on, knowing there are 364 more days in the year to care for people. The Dave Stewart Foundation continues to reach out to feed the hungry and the lonely.

And the hands of Christ continue to work – through dedicated human vessels.

Originally appeared in  
The War Cry, January 1998



**Stewart set to throw one of his famous pitches as a Blue Jay**

that there's much more to these people than physical hunger when they walk through the Army's doors. Major Tuppenney agrees, and adds: "Our