



the ROCKFORD RESCUE MISSION rescuer

a Grateful Family

*One man's determination...
his family's love... and the
power of prayer.*



Read this moving three-part story of how your gifts change the lives of individuals who are struggling and those who care about them.



“Addiction is like being trapped in a hole. You can see the guy on the other side of the mirror, and you know what he wants, but you can't do it. You don't know how.

I was born prematurely, with a cleft lip and a cleft palate. So I was made fun of a lot. Kids can be really cruel. That scarred me. I just always wanted to be accepted, and I guess I chose the wrong crowd. For over 35 years I struggled with alcohol and drugs. I got a divorce, and that hit me pretty hard.

I would always pray those foxhole prayers: *God, get me out of this one and I'll do better.*

And then you get better and you forget about God... until the next time.

Mike's story continues on Page 3...



Mike Marx

Part One

A Heart of Thanksgiving

Reflections FROM THE CEO



CEO Sherry Pitney with two program graduates, Mike and Dave, during our 2019 Thanksgiving Banquet.

Dear Friend,

With the ongoing impact of COVID-19, this has not been a year when our first response was to give thanks.

And yet, we do. God is in control. Viewed through that lens, the challenges and loss surrounding the pandemic seem less frightening. Amid chaos, God gives hope.

The Old Testament book of Habakkuk has felt especially relevant this year. Habakkuk was a prophet during a time when things were going badly for Israel. His book opens with a lament: “How long, O Lord, must I call for help? But you do not listen!” But soon Habakkuk takes time to listen to God, to discern what He is saying in these hard times. He focuses on the foundations of his faith, what he knows to be true about the God who loves him.

Finally, Habakkuk comes around to the truth that God is in control and can be trusted. His, and Israel’s, identity rest in that. He ends the short book by rejoicing in the God of his salvation.

This year, we have been working on our own short book, due out by Christmastime. It will be a series of stories from women connected in some way to Rockford Rescue Mission. The theme, basically, is that we all have our tough stuff – parts of our lives that evoke shame, grief, fear, regret. Often, that junk collects to hijack our identity. But as we turn our eyes, and let God release the hold these stories can

have on us, we realize He ultimately will use them for His glory. We find our true, beautiful identity in Him.

I am so thankful God works this way. We see it every day here at Rockford Rescue Mission, in lives saved, recovered and redeemed. If we are honest, we all see it in our own lives, too. God entrusts us with stories that will bring Him glory. Stories of hope.

The upcoming season of Thanksgiving 2020 can hold deep meaning for us all, if we let it. This difficult year reminds us of who we truly are – children of a God who loves us beyond measure. We all are invited to His table for a true Thanksgiving feast.



Partners in Hope,
Sherry Pitney

Sherry Pitney
CEO

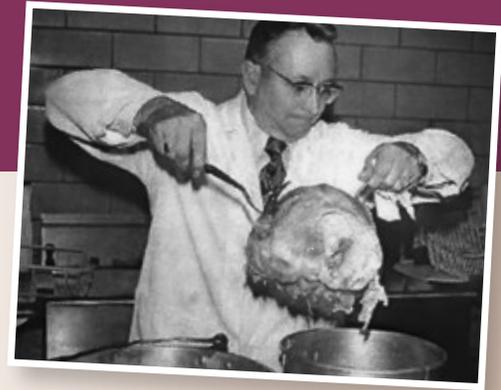
How Your Gifts Are Changing Hearts & Lives

OCTOBER 2019 - JUNE 2020

<p>Food</p>  <p>132,810 meals served</p>	<p>Shelter</p>  <p>41,686 nights of lodging</p>	<p>Medical Care</p>  <p>6,762 clinic appointments</p>	<p>Spiritual Guidance</p>  <p>385 spiritual decisions</p>	<p>Advocacy</p>  <p>5,609 total sessions</p>	<p>Clothing & Personal Hygiene</p>  <p>162,980 items distributed</p>	<p>Education & Career Assistance</p>  <p>375 Works! Center participants</p>
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The Unchanging Heart of Thanksgiving

In November 1964, Rockford Rescue Mission served a modest Thanksgiving feast in its rented building at 116 Kishwaukee St. It had been quite a year. Ray Stewart opened Rockford Rescue Mission the previous May, serving Rockford's homeless and hopeless on the strength of prayer and a very unpredictable budget. The future was uncertain, but there was much to be thankful for.



Through thick and thin, Rockford Rescue Mission has celebrated Thanksgiving with a community meal every year since. The heart behind it has never changed. People, churches and businesses donate food and their service. In our beautiful West State Street venue, hundreds gather each year – from richest to poorest and from youngest to oldest.

November 2020 will mark Rockford Rescue Mission's 57th consecutive Thanksgiving feast. We don't yet know exactly what this one will look like. It's been quite a year – filled with fear, pain, loss... and yet, hope!

Mike's Story... *continued*

“ I tried different treatment programs. I always thought I could handle things after I got myself under control again and things were better. But in 2018, I was defeated. I got arrested on a drug charge, and was facing jail time because it was my second offense. I lost my job and I lost my trailer. Then I had to put my dog down, which was hard. I had her 13 years. She was my life for a while.

Everything was just falling apart. I was just trying to sleep my days away, and hopefully, the problems would just go away. But they weren't going away.

A friend told me I should think about Rockford Rescue Mission. I always thought it was just for homeless people. But in 2019, I went – first to the Crisis Center, and then 17 days later, to the Life Recovery Program.

Rockford Rescue Mission offered a lot, and I took advantage of everything I could. I went through the Genesis Program, and it opened my eyes to a lot of things. It digs into your soul, and you find out a lot of dark secrets and why you do what you do.

I know I've done a lot of damage, and I'm not proud of it. It's something I just don't want to go back to. I've gotten too far. I'm not going to lie — I still have thoughts about it. But then I play that tape all the way through: *If I do this, what's going to happen after that?* And so on, and so on.

It feels good to be making the right decisions. ”



Today, Mike and his son Dustin work together at their family-owned factory, Form Relief Tool.

A Witness and a Testimony

Meet Rockford Rescue Mission Volunteer Ardie Johnson

After a 40-year career as a missionary, Ardeth “Ardie” Johnson found a new calling – volunteering at Rockford Rescue Mission.

Ardie served with The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) in a region of South Africa that used to be called Zululand. After retiring, she moved to Fairhaven Christian Retirement Center in Rockford. But she had no intention to retire from missions.

Nine years ago, she responded to a call at her church, First Free Rockford, that Rockford Rescue Mission needed volunteers. She was assigned to the pantry, and she has been working there ever since, organizing and shelving the huge amounts of donated food products.

Ardie loves working with Rockford Rescue Mission residents and guests. Sometimes they’ll stick around and talk with her for an hour or more.

“It was normal for me to get into something where I could be a witness and a testimony, and I realized I could do it here,” she says. “I appreciate being able to talk to the men and women that come to help in this area. I can ask them what their relationship is to Christ, and why they came to Rockford Rescue Mission. I can talk to them, challenge them. And I end up praying for them. I enjoy that. There’s nowhere else I could work and do that.”



Stay
Up to Date!

For the most current information on special events, urgent needs and lives changed by your support, visit our website or follow us on social media.



From Chaos to Hope

Meet Tiara.

She battled a 10-year addiction to drugs, including five years of homelessness.

“My upbringing was chaotic,” she says. “I grew up around so much abuse and trauma. I never had a strong role model to show me how to make healthy choices and live for my God-given purpose.”

After hearing about Rockford Rescue Mission from a pastor in Elgin, she decided to give the Life Recovery Program a try. **“I felt lost, unloved and desperate,”** she says. “I didn’t have anywhere else to go.”

Tiara entered the Life Recovery Program in August 2018, and graduated in March 2020. “I have learned to rely on God for everything, in every area of my life,” she says. “I have learned I need positive people to maintain my recovery.”

Along the way, Tiara also has found a career path. She has worked as an intern at Kids Around the World and graduated from Youth Builds welding course. Tiara was one of six (and the only female) to receive her welding certificate.

Tiara will continue her internship at Kids Around the World for 14 weeks. After that, she hopes to find a full-time welding position in Rockford.

Tiara now describes herself as **“confident, loved and hopeful.”** She asks for prayer for “people to see God in me. In whatever I do, they can see that I do it for Him and His glory.”

a Grateful Family

...continued from the cover



Mike Marx with his parents, Jim and Judy. The family owns and operates Form Relief Tool in Davis Junction, Illinois.



Jim Marx— Mike's Dad Part Two

“ Mike worked for me since 1984, when he was 16 years old. I had hopes and dreams of him taking over the family business. You never think things will go the way they did.

I know at Rockford Rescue Mission they talk about trigger points (situations that trigger destructive behavior). I was probably at the top of Mike's list. He would come in to work in the mornings, and you could smell the alcohol on his breath. He was always in a state of denial.

It got bad. The relationship took a dive. As a parent, I was just totally disappointed by the direction that he took. When you just can't make any headway, you lose heart.

Mike would call his mother when he was half out of it. She would talk to him and try to encourage him to try to change things: *Things will be alright. Just keep hanging in there.*

But he would never call me. The only relationship I had with him was an employee relationship. In March 2018, I had to fire him. I'd had enough. He told me, 'I'm not listening to any of your crap.' He slammed the door and left.

Today, there has been a transformation. Rockford Rescue Mission has a lot to do with that. Other recovery programs do talk about a higher power. But here it's all biblically based, and I think that's one thing that really helped Mike. He talks about the things that he's learned in the Bible.

This year, when we celebrated my daughter's birthday at the house, Mike gave thanks for the meal. That was a special moment for us all. ”

Judy Marx— Mike's Mom Part Three

“ As a mother, it just kind of tore my heart up every time I would see Mike. I prayed for 35 years as he struggled. Sometimes prayer is all you have. I couldn't fix him. I couldn't talk to him anymore. His dad couldn't reason with him anymore. So what do you have left? When you know God is there for sure, that's all I had.

My one prayer that was a constant was, *Keep his heart soft.* I didn't want him to get hard-hearted toward God.

Every time he would try to get help, I would get so much hope. And then I would see him drop again, and each time it took me down a little bit more. So when he went into Rockford Rescue Mission, I thought, *OK, God, you've got to get it this time.*

I knew that God always answers prayer. And I knew that He doesn't always answer it in the timing that I want or the way I want. So I just kept saying to God, *When it's your time, it is going to happen.* And I felt like it would happen while I was still alive. I wanted that. I didn't want to go without knowing if he was OK.

I see Mike now and I am so thankful. Before, whenever he and Jim talked, it was arguing, hollering, cussing, everything. Every day that Mike would come in was another day that cut Jim. It kept taking his dream away.

And now Mike has come back, and they sit here and they talk about everything. They laugh, they joke. It is just a whole different atmosphere.

I credit it to God, and then Rockford Rescue Mission, and then Mike. Because he has that determination and that excitement. He is so excited when he reads something in Scripture. It just thrills me. ”



ROCKFORD RESCUE MISSION'S THRIFT STORE AND NETTIE'S MERCANTILE OFFER UNIQUE SHOPPING



Throughout the lengthy shutdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we missed our faithful customers... and we hope you missed us too. We have been so glad to be open again and to welcome everyone back.

As you know, our Remade store and Restoration Café reopened in June as Nettie's Mercantile, a unique venue in which to shop for exclusive gifts and homemade baked goods while supporting our

ministry financially and providing vocational training opportunities for residents of our Life Recovery Programs.

Our Thrift Store offers gently used items including clothing, household goods, furniture, accessories and more to meet the needs of our guests, as well as provide a low-cost shopping option for the community. This enterprise generates more than 21 percent of Rockford Rescue Mission's general

operating budget.

Your renewed support of these enterprises is critical to maintaining our outreach to neighbors who are homeless or struggling to provide for themselves and their families.

We hope you'll visit us again soon for tasty treats... for unique and economical shopping experiences... and to support our life-changing programs and services!

Please visit our website – rockfordrescuemission.org – for store hours and specials!

worry
DOESN'T HAVE
THE LAST WORD

Do you ever lose sleep over current events, your family or whether you've saved enough for retirement? If so, you're not alone. In fact, anxiety now affects 40 million Americans. But God wants us to bring our fears and worries to Him.

Psalm 55:22 says to "cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you." For those who place their trust in Christ, Dallas Willard once said, "the world is a perfectly good and safe place to be."

And there's more great news. If you're concerned about retirement saving, time is still on your side. Here's why:

- 1 75 is the new 65.** People are living longer than ever, which could actually allow you to delay retirement a few years and lessen financial worry at the same time.
- 2 Play catch up.** Americans age 50 and up are eligible to make extra contributions to tax-sheltered retirement accounts. These are called "catch-up contributions" and they may work for you.
- 3 The SECURE Act.** Congress recently passed the Setting Every Community Up for Retirement Enhancement Act to give Americans more time to continue retirement savings. While you can still make a Qualified Charitable Distribution to Rockford Rescue Mission beginning at age 70½, the age for taking required minimum distributions from an IRA has been raised to 72.

Take steps toward a more secure financial future and trust God with the rest. "So don't worry, because I am with you" (Isaiah 41:10).

For the full version of this article, request a FREE copy of "How to Stop Worrying and Find Peace" by contacting Ted Tomita at **815-965-5332** or tedtomita@rockfordrescuemission.org – or bless your family today with a God-honoring will at christianwill.org/rm.