



the ROCKFORD RESCUE MISSION
rescuer

Thank you for
bringing hope to
hurting neighbors
like Lisa.

“ Learning about God...
knowing His Word...
hearing His voice...
it makes me want to
live again. ”

Lisa shares her story on Page 5



May Your Heart be Light

Reflections FROM THE CEO



In 1943, Hugh Martin wrote *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas* for the 1944 film *Meet Me in St. Louis*. It was a sad song – so sad that the film’s star, Judy Garland, refused to sing it in its original form. “They’ll think I’m a monster,” she told Martin.

One verse said:

*Have yourself a merry little Christmas
It may be your last
Next year we may all be living in the past*

Another:

*Faithful friends who were dear to us
Will be near to us no more*

Martin changed the lines to:

*Have yourself a merry little Christmas
May your heart be light
Next year all our troubles will be out of sight*

And:

*Faithful friends who are dear to us
Will be near to us once more*

The war years of 1943-44 were filled with uncertainty and fear. Americans died by the thousands overseas. At home, people sacrificed so the troops would have enough. Gasoline, groceries and clothing were rationed. Life had utterly changed, and no one knew for how long. Those were some hard Christmases, as evidenced by this verse:

*Someday soon we all will be together, if the fates allow
Until then we'll have to muddle through somehow*

Frank Sinatra would get that verse changed in the 1950s. He wanted to record the song for a Christmas album, but he asked Martin to “jolly it up.” So the “muddle through” line became: “Hang a shining star upon the highest bough.” It feels out of place.

I’m sure by now you are drawing connections to 2020 and the fear, anger, uncertainty and sadness brought by the pandemic. Here at Rockford Rescue Mission, a few of our guests and staff got COVID-19. We were under quarantine for a while. Between the time I write this and the time you read it, I have no idea what more we all will have faced. It’s been a year of muddling through somehow.

What comforts me is the absolute certainty that God never leaves us. He sits with us in all of the suffering and uncertainty. In fact, those are often the times He changes our hearts to be more like His. This Christmas may not look like any other, but the unchanging reality of Emmanuel – God with us – fills us with hope.

Even when our troubles remain very much in sight.
Partners in Hope,

Sherry Pitney

Sherry Pitney
CEO



Coming Soon

Rockford Rescue Mission is putting the finishing touches on *The Other Side of Hope*, a book featuring the incredible stories of seven women with close ties to our ministry. All have experienced deep suffering. Through it all, though, they chose to walk into their true identities as children of God.

Watch for more information soon!

Fill Hearts with Christmas Hope

Bless a Resident

If you'd like to purchase a specific gift for a resident from his or her wish list, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at volunteer@rockfordrescuemission.org or **815-965-5332, ext. 151**. You'll be provided with the name and age of a resident along with a brief list of suggested gifts. We ask that gifts total no more than \$50 per person.

Help Residents Bless Those They Love

The men, women and children in our Life Recovery Program are not always able to spend Christmas with their loved ones or in their own homes. Partner with us to provide gifts that will let them know they're cared for and loved.

For Adults:

- Men's & women's underwear
- Men's & women's hoodies
- Hard, wrapped candy (candy canes, etc.)
- Small LED flashlights
- Hand warmers

For Children:

- Children's underwear & pajamas
- Children's books

Meet Our Chief Program Officer, Greg Cooney

Greg began his service in ministry at Winston-Salem Rescue Mission in North Carolina, helping homeless guests set goals and move forward in their lives. "It was through this process that I discovered my passion for program development," he says.

As he and his wife, Sharon, prayed for clarity of the next step in their ministry journey, a friend introduced him to Rockford Rescue Mission. "It was clear their value of 'serving with integrity and excellence' was a high priority, and I wanted to be part of that," he says.

Greg came to Rockford Rescue Mission in 2016 as Director of Operations, where he gained a deeper understanding of the details required to maintain our facilities and enable our programs to function. In 2018, he shifted his focus back to programming as Chief Program Officer.

Today he provides oversight for all of Rockford Rescue Mission's programs, which include Men's and Women's Crisis and Recovery, as well as our Works! Center, Hope Clinic and Performing Arts Center. The most fulfilling part of his job, he says, is hearing that an individual has given his or her life to Christ, and his experience has instilled in him the value of stewardship: *"Through serving at Rockford Rescue Mission, I have come to greatly appreciate the importance of being a godly steward. As a ministry, God entrusts us with precious dollars and in-kind gifts from our donors, valuable hours of service from our volunteers and, most importantly, with the broken and hurting lives of His precious children. My prayer is that we would always walk worthy of this calling and continue to point all who walk through our doors toward Christ."*



Greg and his wife, Sharon, have two sons, Chandler (age 8) and Max (age 6). The couple is involved in the music ministry at their church. As a family, they love to travel and introduce their boys to God's beautiful creation.

Meet Heritage Partners **John and Dena**

Dr. John and Dena Koehler support ministries all over the world, but their giving starts in Rockford. It's a big reason they are Heritage Partners with Rockford Rescue Mission.

"We've been here for many, many years," John says. "I've practiced medicine here. Dena grew up here. This is our community, and Rockford Rescue Mission is an opportunity to support a vital local ministry. It's a vital part of the safety net for people here, and it also preaches the gospel."

Heritage Partners are people who include Rockford Rescue Mission as a beneficiary in their will or estate plan.

"Everything we have is God's anyhow," Dena says, "so why not give it to groups that are spreading the gospel and are especially helping those who are down and out and need to hear about Jesus and his love? And hopefully, they will turn around and help others. Spreading the love of Jesus. That's what it's all about."

John mentions Proverbs 21:13 as an indicator of God's heart: "Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor will also cry out and not be answered."



To become a Heritage Partner or for more information, please contact Ted Tomita at **815-965-5332, ext. 106**.



Mercyhealth's residency program and Cancer Center recently joined forces with Hope Clinic to serve our population in a more timely and effective manner. We're thankful for their dedication and partnership!

Hope Clinic Offers Essential Care for Residents, the Homeless and Community

For Rockford Rescue Mission's residents and guests, quality routine healthcare is essential to their recovery and well-being.

Hypertension and diabetes are common in the population we serve and screenings are critical. Many are prescribed medications and don't understand their purpose or dosage. Often guests or residents have discontinued prescribed medications without understanding the long-term effects. Mental health issues are also a concern.

Rockford Rescue Mission's Hope Clinic opened in 1999 to address the special medical needs of those in our care, as well as the homeless and community members who can't afford healthcare on their own. A dental clinic was added in 2002. From the beginning, we've been blessed with dedicated volunteer professionals who share their time and expertise.

A team of doctors, dentists, hygienists and chiropractors, as well as a retired pharmacist, serve in Hope Clinic on a regular basis. We've also developed valuable partnerships with Crusader Clinic, Mercyhealth's Rosecrance Ware Center and St. Anthony School of Nursing, all of which offer specialized services as well as the assistance of physicians and students.

We're grateful for these volunteers and partners who enable Rockford Rescue Mission to provide a full spectrum of holistic care that is so vital to healing and transformation.



“ Last Christmas I was living in a tent... and hadn’t heard my children’s voices for six years. ”

Lisa’s Story

Lisa lost custody of her children as she battled an addiction that destroyed her marriage and left her homeless. Then she fell into a relationship with a man who was abusive, and a tent was their only means of shelter. Her drinking escalated. Her health declined. And she remained in that self-destructive environment... for four years.

“I was punishing myself because I didn’t feel I deserved anything better after losing my children. That still is the hardest thing for me. There’s an empty feeling without them.”

Yet throughout that tragic time, she continued to attend church. “I had a lot of people praying for me in the community,” she says. Finally, no longer caring if she lived or died, she sought help and was referred to Rockford Rescue Mission. As she came through our doors, she remembered those who had prayed for her. “I believe it was their prayers that got me here.”

In our Life Recovery Program, Lisa is learning to understand the root of her addiction, but she believes learning about God is where real healing begins. **“Knowing His Word, connecting with Him, hearing His voice; it makes me want to live again.”**

And this year, the holidays will be much different.

As she continues her healing process, God is restoring her relationship with her children. Although they can’t visit her at Christmas because of COVID-19 restrictions, she will talk with them by phone and have gifts for them through David’s Closet. “And being here now, I have a family of sisters who build me up and encourage me and I’ll be happy spending Christmas with them.” Yet perhaps the most dramatic difference from last Christmas, Lisa says: **“I’m able to look at myself and not be ashamed. God has given me hope and a future.”**

How the CARES Act Benefits Nonprofits and Their Donors



In an effort to ease financial burdens and offer incentives for those wishing to support their favorite charities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States government created the CARES Act in March. This legislation provides tax benefits to both individual and corporate supporters of nonprofits like Rockford Rescue Mission.

The CARES Act grants the following for 2020:

- **Gifts up to \$300 are 100% deductible, even for those using the standard deduction.** This means donors can deduct up to \$300 per year whether they itemize deductions or not. Contributions by cash, credit card or check are eligible; gifts of stock are not.
- **The maximum charitable deduction is raised to 100%.** Previously, individuals could deduct up to 60% of their adjusted gross income (AGI) for charitable deductions of cash (not gifts of stock). The stimulus package allows individuals to deduct up to 100% of their AGI in 2020. This is helpful for donors making major cash gifts, reducing their overall federal tax burden. In addition, donations in excess of AGI may be carried over to future tax filings for up to five additional years.
- **Corporations have greater incentive to make charitable gifts.** Previously, charitable giving for a corporation was limited to 10% of taxable income. The limit has been increased to 25%, giving business donors a greater tax and philanthropic incentive for larger charitable gifts.

Please consider how the CARES Act could have a positive impact on your year-end giving to Rockford Rescue Mission. Be sure to consult your financial or tax advisors for more information and guidance on your particular fiscal situation.

Information in this article is accurate as of September 1, 2020.

Life is Short. Make it Count.

Moments after takeoff from La Guardia Airport, a flight collided with a flock of geese. Both engines lost power, forcing Captain Chesley Burnett Sullenberger III to make an emergency landing in the Hudson River. Everyone survived and Sullenberger became a hero. (Story reported by History.com)

Life can change on a dime. *But this thought shouldn't strike fear in our hearts – it should move us to action.*

Here are two ways to make your life count today:

1. **Serve others rather than self.** Every human is born egocentric, but as we grow, we learn that our actions have great impact on others. God honors our sacrifices. Hebrews 6:10 says, “God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.”
2. **Focus on giving rather than getting.** Americans are consumed with acquiring – but a legacy of generosity demonstrates God’s love. Would you consider a gift in your will to Rockford Rescue Mission? This could be a powerful way to give even after you die.

For the full version of this article, request a FREE copy of 3 Ways to Make Your Life Count Today 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/rrm.

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.



We'll be open during the Stroll on State celebration!

Do your Christmas shopping at Nettie's Mercantile...

15% off one item (excludes furniture)

All proceeds benefit the ministry of Rockford Rescue Mission.

625 W. State Street • Rockford, IL 61102 • 815-977-4361

Please visit rockfordrescuemission.org for store hours.



Limit one per customer • No cash value

Cannot be combined with other offers. Offer expires 12/31/2020.