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the ROCKFORD RESCUE MISSION
rescuer

After years lost
in addiction
and despair,
*Anthony is
learning to be
the man God
created him
to be.*



Your Story Matters

Dear Friends:

The holiday season carries sentimental visions of family gatherings. We love and celebrate those gatherings – and at Christmas we celebrate our ultimate hope in Jesus Christ. We also know all too well that, for many families, the holidays are hard. Broken relationships, pain and grief all bubble to the surface, too.

We're currently working on a book, *The Other Side of Hope*, in which seven women, including myself, tell their stories – stories of pain and redemption... identities lost and found... despair and hope. The book is due out in 2022, and telling these stories has been no easy process for any of us. We have been dogged by the thought: *It's in the past. Just leave it there.*

But God redeems our stories and our brokenness – not only for our own sake, but for the sake of others who are walking hard roads. Our deep hurt turns to hope. Often, our most effective service for Him grows from our greatest pain. In the book, we're using a quote from 19th-century preacher Charles Spurgeon: "I have learned to kiss the wave that slams me into the Rock of Ages."

This holiday season, no matter what story you find yourself in, I pray that you find it OK to be real – to share your story with someone who loves you and cares about you. I pray that you experience the overwhelming love and hope of the One who knows your story best... because He became flesh, and dwelt among us.



Partners in Hope,

Sherry Pitney

Sherry Pitney
CEO

4 Easy Ways YOU Can Help this Christmas!

FEED HUNGRY FOLKS



Want to nourish your neighbors? Donate these foods to help prepare thousands of meals this holiday season. Please deliver them to **715 West State St. in Rockford, weekdays, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., at the Food Service entrance off Mulberry Street.**

stuffing * bags of potatoes
canned fruits and vegetables * coffee,
creamer & sugar



MEET BASIC NEEDS



Looking to cover the basics? These essential items keep Mission guests safe and comfortable during their time in our care. Please drop off donations at **715 West State St. in Rockford, weekdays, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

garbage bags * paper towels & toilet paper *
laundry detergent * hand warmers

SHARE GIFT CARDS



No time to shop? Donating gift cards for these merchants helps purchase holiday gifts as well as year-round necessities. Please mail or deliver them to **715 West State St. in Rockford.**

Walmart * Target * Amazon



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 Supervisor at **charmeljacobs@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.



**THANK YOU
FOR MAKING
THIS CHRISTMAS
A TIME OF JOY!**



Anthony with two fellow Life Recovery Residents

“I never understood how surrender could lead to victory.”

Hi, I'm Anthony. Let me tell you how God used Rockford Rescue Mission to save my life.

I was raised in a drug-shooting gallery in Baltimore, Maryland. Eventually I bounced from house to house, group home to institution – never more than a year in the same place. Drugs and alcohol took over my life, just as they had my father's. Every day, I raced to get my first drink or to shoot enough heroin and cocaine to keep the withdrawals from coming.

Eight years ago, I lost my girlfriend to a heroin overdose while we were using together. Months later, both my father and uncle killed themselves. I numbed the pain of their deaths with more drugs and alcohol. In the midst of that, I learned I was going to be a father. So for a time I white-knuckled it, pausing the heavier drug use for the sake of being a father to my son.

But hopelessness and depression set in again. Looking for my next high became more important to me even than caring for my beautiful son. I met and fell in love with a woman who also struggled with addiction. Soon, we both relapsed and the awful nightmare repeated. I bought the dope, and while we used together, she overdosed and died.

I'd lost almost everyone and everything that I had ever loved. Riding the Blue Line train in Chicago, with

a needle in my hand, I cried out to God: “Please – if you are there, I need your help. I cannot do this anymore!”

I had just enough faith to get me through until I found a treatment center in Rockford, where my counselor was a graduate of Rockford Rescue Mission. He brought me here, and everyone welcomed me with respect. I had been to treatment before, but this time was different. I had to surrender to God and be honest like never before.

I never understood how surrendering could lead to victory. Today, God has removed those cravings for drugs and alcohol while giving me something greater. Now, I am in awe of how He has changed my life. Instead of being a slave to addictions, I look for opportunities to serve others and to be a great father to my son.

I have a good job at Advanced Chimney Service here in Rockford, and I attend City First Church every week. I'm living temporarily in the Mission's transitional housing. It's a safe place where I can continue to become the man God created me to be.

Through Rockford Rescue Mission, God is doing for me what I could never do for myself. I will be forever grateful.



Remembering Our Dear Friend, Mimi

This holiday season we are celebrating the life of Mimi, a dear friend and donor to the Mission who passed away earlier this year. Mimi would spend all day knitting blankets for those in need, and would regularly donate them to the women in our Crisis Center and Recovery Program.

Mimi loved knitting, the Mission and the fact that her creations were being used by the ladies in our care. We are truly blessed to have known Mimi, and are grateful for the impact she had on so many lives!

Volunteers are the Heart of What We Do

Sarah and her son, James, started volunteering at the Mission in January 2019, when Sarah's husband and James' father – a now retired Rockford Rescue Mission chaplain – told them that volunteers were needed!

Sarah and James quickly began serving, and dove into organizing our hygiene closet, David's Closet, Sheila's Closet and other storage areas. This was no small task, but Sarah and James loved implementing efficient organization systems to best serve our guests and residents. "It is a blessing to see how many donations we get here at the Mission." Whether it's a single bag of hotel soaps someone brought home or boxes of items from a corporate donation, they all truly make a difference.

James' favorite part of volunteering is getting to know the guys on staff. Sarah's favorite memory was when her husband, Pastor Dave, was presenting residents with their first Bibles. Being there to witness that day was incredible, and something she holds very close to her heart. "The Lord is in this place," she says.

Interested in volunteering? Visit our website at rockfordrescuemission.org/ volunteer to fill out an application today!



Every December, we display Nativities that include the "three wise men." Here are a few surprising things you might not know about them:

- 1 There may have only been two.** Because the magi brought three gifts, it's often assumed there were three, but the Bible doesn't offer a number.
- 2 They didn't arrive the night Jesus was born.** Matthew records the men arrived "after Jesus was born," at the "house" where Jesus was. It's believed Mary and Joseph were no longer at the stable but in another location of the city, at a later time.
- 3 They were the first Gentiles to worship Jesus.** The Bible says they knew Jesus was the "King of the Jews." And even though they were astrologers, they were overjoyed to worship the baby as King.

Every December, we follow in their footsteps. We give gifts and gather to worship the King. One way we can do both is through the practice of Biblical stewardship. We can donate our time serving alongside loved ones, or update an estate plan to include a gift to a ministry like Rockford Rescue Mission.

To request a FREE copy of the full version of this article, *Surprising Facts About the Nativity*, contact **Ted Tomita** at tedtomita@rockfordrescuemission.org or **815-316-4176**. Or bless your family with a God-honoring will at christianwill.org/rrm. Thank you!

