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Freedom



This issue's cover story features Ron, who has completed our Life Recovery Program for the second time. Relapses are tragically common in this world, but Ron has emerged from that deep pain and discouragement to a place of freedom.

Our God is a God of second chances, third chances ... to a point where we lose count of the number of times we've messed up and He is there ready to take us back. I'm so thankful for that. As we approach Easter, I think about the second chance our risen Lord Jesus gave to the disciple Peter. As Jesus faced trial and crucifixion, Peter publicly denied ever knowing Him—three times. But on Resurrection morning, it was Peter running toward the empty tomb with John. And then in Chapter 21 of John's gospel comes that beautiful moment of reconciliation at the seashore, when Jesus restores Peter.

Someone who has messed up and been given a second chance can truly appreciate that story. Some of our Life Recovery residents have been through multiple rehab programs. Some, like Ron, have even been through the Mission program more than once. But when they finally break free of addiction and pain that has dogged them their whole lives, they feel a level of gratitude to God that most Christians can only imagine.

Even when we drift from God and make a mess of our lives, He is always right there, waiting to welcome us back. This Easter, may Ron's story serve as a powerful reminder to us all.

Partners in **HOPE**,

Sherry Pitney
CEO

Outreach Program Launch

Community outreach isn't new for the Mission, but having a director dedicated to the task is. Veteran staff member Mike Hedrick's new role is Outreach Services Director. Rather than wait for needy people to come to the Mission, he's meeting them where they are—like panhandlers at busy intersections, or homeless people camping under bridges.

"Basically," Mike says, "it's driving around the community looking for people who are homeless or in need and asking them, 'How can the Mission serve you?'"

His role also includes visiting hospitals, the police department and jails to grow community partnerships. We hope to engage in a series of outreach fairs, where the Mission and community partners could set up tents in church parking lots and introduce homeless people to available services.

If you encounter a homeless person who needs help, contact the Mission at 815-965-5332, or email info@rockfordrescuemission.org.

"It's a good way to handle this as opposed to just handing someone money and you don't know where it's going," Mike says. "We have the resources and the expertise to be able to help someone short- or long-term so they can get back on their feet."

The Mission also will be asking soon for volunteers we can train to be part of our Outreach Team.



Another Chance

This is my second time going through Rockford Rescue Mission's Life Recovery Program. Before you let that sway your opinion of me, let me tell you my story.

My addiction started when I was 16. Crystal meth dominated my life for a long, long time. Then my parents were killed by a drunk driver in 2013. The only way I knew how to deal with that kind of pain was to use even more meth — all day, every day.

When I first came to the Mission, in my late 30s, I was an absolute mess. I went through the program, but I only told people what I thought they wanted to hear. I said I had a relationship with Jesus—but in truth, I didn't think I deserved to be saved and loved by God.

When I left, I went right back to my old way of life. Lots of unhealthy behavior, lots of drinking. My sponsor saw what my life had become again. He told me: "You know where you need to be."

"I know," I said. I was at the end of everything, again. I had nothing. So I came back to the Mission. Everyone knew me already, and I had not left on good terms. So it was hard for me to humble myself, come back and say, "I know I messed up. I would like another chance."

This time, I was truthful. I overcame some anger and grief issues, mostly about losing my parents. It was scary bringing it all into the light, but I'm glad I did. It let me overcome a lot of obstacles. This time I am definitely devoting myself to Christ. Everything is different now. I am blessed in so many ways I can't even describe it.

I've graduated again and am living in the Mission's transitional housing. I'm continuing to rebuild my life, surrounded by nine or 10 other guys doing the same thing. We're a tight group. And I'm doing vocational training in the kitchen. My mom taught me to cook when I was young, and I believe God has gifted me in it. Now, at age 41, I'm thinking about building a career with it.

My advice to anyone who wants to get out of a life of addiction is, come here. Stop thinking about it and do it. If you truly want help and you are willing to help yourself, and also let God guide you through it all, come to the Mission. Because you'll find all of it.



Easter Blessings



"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you..." *1 Peter 1:3-4*

This Easter season, let's rejoice together in the greatest HOPE of all.

"This time I am definitely devoting myself to Christ. Everything is different now. I am blessed in so many ways I can't even describe it."

- Ron, Life Recovery Resident

The Mission at a Glance

October 2022 - January 2023



20,905
Nights of Shelter



59,805
Meals Served



1,338
Case Management Sessions



367
Medical Appointments



17
Jobs Secured



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In Memory of Mark Wallace

The Mission lost one of our dearest volunteers when Mark Wallace died Jan. 25. In April, Mark will be honored posthumously as the Mission's Volunteer of the Year.



After first encountering the Mission as a Crisis guest when he had lost his job, Mark began volunteering in 2011. He continued every Tuesday and Friday afternoon right up until the week before he died. Most recently, he filled vending machines and sorted and distributed items that people donated to the Mission.

"The Mission made such a difference in my life to help me get back on track," he said in 2021. "(God) showed me 'Mark, you're here to make a difference. You can do it.'"

Teresa Reeverts, Program Support Services Director, remembers Mark fondly. "While I always thanked Mark, that wasn't what he worked for," she says. "He was often uncomfortable with praise. He just wanted to serve by doing a good job. Well done, Mark!"

Thank You, Home Depot!

Special thanks to the team at The Home Depot for donating a palette of laundry detergent and 40 sets of earbuds.

The Mission cares for more than 150 daily. A large quantity of detergent is needed to keep clothing and bedding clean. We are able to provide this quality of care because of community partners like The Home Depot.



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Rockford Rescue Mission shares hope and help in Jesus' name to move people from homelessness and despair toward personal and spiritual wholeness.