

The Rescuer

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Intersections

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rockford rescue mission
rescue + recover + restore

From the CEO



For our summer issue, we wanted to give you a close look at what plays out daily on our streets. If you drive around the area, you can't miss them: Desperate people stationing themselves at most major intersections. It's so sad, and so dangerous.

Our story takes you on a ride-along with Mike Hedrick in the Mission's van as he seeks to point people in a better direction. Mike's is one of those amazing stories of hope. On the morning of his 38th birthday, he woke up in his drug dealer's van, where he had been living. And he thought: *I can't live this way anymore*. He entered a recovery program that day 15 years ago, and has not used a drug or drink since.

As part of his role as Outreach Services Director, Mike meets hurting and homeless people on the streets. God changed his life, and today he seeks and serves those who look and live a lot like he once did. It has been a true joy to see his career path at the Mission unfold. It all began with touring the Mission with his pastor years ago, then serving as an intern, leading our recovery and crisis programs and now today, he is providing hope and help to precious people beyond our in-house programs.

The Mission's ministries have always extended beyond our walls, but this takes things to a new level. We have many more things in mind for our Outreach program, all with the idea of meeting and ministering to people where they are.

Maybe you'll see those folks at intersections a little differently after reading this. Maybe you'll even see an opportunity for yourself as a volunteer. Regardless, I hope you—and they—see Jesus in it all.

Partners in **HOPE**,

Sherry Putney

A Career ...and a Calling

Looking to put your faith into action with an exciting new job? The Mission has several amazing opportunities to minister to people every day. Use this QR code to check out our employment listings.



The Mission Up Close

Want to meet some of our amazing residents and staff? Want a close-up view of our day-to-day ministries? We offer tours for individuals and groups every fourth Wednesday of the month, starting at 11 a.m. and including lunch. To sign up, call us at 815-965-5332 or email info@rockfordrescuemission.org.

About Our Cover Story

You can find a **longer version**, including more conversations and more photos, on our website. There's also a link to our Get Help cards, which you can print and give to people asking for money (give them a bottle of water, too). The cards direct people to the Mission and list the free services we offer.



Thrift Store

Shop our Thrift Store for gently used clothing, furniture and so much more. We're adding one-of-a-kind items every day. And don't miss our Vintage Finds—you never know what treasures you'll discover! Every purchase and every item donated supports Rockford Rescue Mission.

2710 20th St. • Open 9-5 Mondays Through Saturdays



Cover Story

Fifteen feet from a metal sign that says “Panhandling is Not Safe,” a woman greets stopped cars with her own sign scrawled on cardboard:

*Homeless
Anything Helps
Thank You
God Bless You*

She’s working the busy corner of State and Alpine. Sometimes, others independently work the other corners of the intersection. Panhandling is most definitely dangerous, but it’s not illegal. At dozens of intersections around the Rockford area, drivers encounter the same dilemma. *Is this person legit? Do I give them something? Do I avoid eye contact and hope the light turns green?*

Three mornings each week, Mike Hedrick tries to give people something better. He’s the Mission’s Outreach Services Director, and he drives around town in the Mission’s white passenger van, stopping to chat and offer help as people are willing.

At State and Alpine, he pulls into a nearby parking lot, grabs a sack lunch and water and walks over to talk. Annie* looks to be in her late 30s or 40s, wearing jeans and a purple hoodie. Along the cement wall at the corner, she’s staked out the spot with her jacket and backpack. Mike knows her, but still greets her from a distance to avoid frightening her.

“Have you thought about coming to the Mission?” he asks. She shakes her head.

“I have a cat.”

Mike hands her a brown-bag lunch, a bottle of water, and noticing her sunburned face, a Chapstick.

“You really need to get off the street,” he says gently.

“I know.”

“Do you need some socks?”

She thinks for a moment. “Yeah.”

“Come on, I’ve got some.”

They walk around the corner to the van, where Mike gives her not only new, white socks, but also a bag filled with travel-sized shampoo and other hygiene items.

He gives her a friendly pat on the shoulder and she walks away, toward the woods where she likely has a tent.

...

Near 11th Street and 11th Avenue, a set of railroad tracks leads past a brambly brush area. Fifty yards from the tracks, a blue tarp drapes over some tree branches. Mike recognizes the occupant as Daniel*, a guy he knew when both were in recovery at the Salvation Army. He doesn’t approach yet. Homeless people get robbed a lot, and you never know what someone might be ready to do.

Eye contact is made. Mike waves.



“Who are you?” Daniel shouts.

“Rockford Rescue Mission,” Mike answers, holding up a lunch bag.

“Have a good day,” Denzel says, turning to walk back under the tarp. Not everyone is ready to accept help, even when they need it desperately.

...

These van trips are far from the only thing Mike does as Outreach Director. Soon he hopes for volunteers to help serve as eyes and ears to encounter people who need help.

“The big thing is, don’t talk down to them,” Mike says. Talk as a friend. But don’t sugarcoat it, either. It’s a loving thing to tell someone, “You need to get in somewhere.” **I**

**Names have been changed.*

The Mission at a Glance

October 2022 - April 2023



Faithful Volunteers

In enjoying their retirement together, **Sam and Betty Bachtold** serve weekly in the Mission's kitchen—and they're the point people for their whole church's involvement here.

Sam was a schoolteacher; Betty worked at the Kane County Jail. Since their retirements, for the past five years they have been volunteering on Tuesday mornings, washing and cutting fruit for meals, making lunches, whatever help is needed.

Their church, the Apostolic Christian Church of Belvidere, also has made quite a commitment. They've authorized Sam to buy supplies for the Mission kitchen whenever needed. So, every four to six weeks, he goes shopping for food, paper goods, serving utensils and more.

"The most I've spent is just under \$1,000," Sam says. Then he adds with a laugh: "It helps that I'm the church treasurer also."

For Sam and Betty, volunteering to serve needy people is just a question of what Jesus would do. "The glory goes to God," Sam says. "Not to us or to our church."

"And," Betty adds, "we are thankful that we have good health and that we are able to help out and do what we can. So it's an opportunity that we just find pleasure in doing."

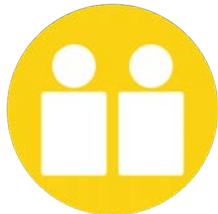
Watch Sam and Betty on video from our Evening for Hope telethon.



34,305
Nights of Shelter



97,268
Meals Served



1,810
Case Management Sessions



544
Medical Appointments



104
Jobs Secured

Your partnership
helps change lives!
Thank you!



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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.