



# The Rescuer

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## Hope Grows

How Aftercare keeps our Life Recovery grads on a path toward wholeness

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rockford rescue mission  
rescue + recover + restore

## From the CEO



It's taken a little time to gain back the momentum we lost during the pandemic. In the world of churches and other ministry organizations, it's not been as simple as flipping a switch back to "forward."

But as 2023 has moved along here at the Mission, that lost momentum has started to reappear. Despite a continued staff shortage, we've launched two initiatives to bring our ministry into better alignment with people's needs. One is our Outreach program, which you read about in the last *Rescuer* newsletter—proactively going to people who are hurting, offering help in Jesus' name and inviting them to the Mission.

The second new initiative, and our cover story for this issue, is Aftercare. We give our Life Recovery residents every tool we can imagine to rebuild their lives during their 9- to 12-month program. Sometimes, though, when they leave the protective walls of the Mission, they find themselves overwhelmed and they relapse into self-destructive behavior.

This happens in all recovery programs, Christian or not. It doesn't mean we have to accept it. The Aftercare program allows our Life Recovery graduates to live in the Mission's transitional housing for up to a year as they re-enter life outside. And whether they still live at the Mission or not, they find caring support from our staff and from each other as they confront life's ups and downs with jobs, family and friends.

This type of help has been part of the Mission's DNA from the very beginning. But now, thanks to faithful giving by individuals, churches, organizations and businesses, you make it possible to dedicate staff and resources specifically for Aftercare. It's a way of acknowledging that everyone—whether in a recovery program or not—is a work in progress. We need each other.

Partners in HOPE,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Sherry Putney".



## Thrift Store

When you shop Thrift Store, you'll not only find unique clothes, furniture, household items and more; you'll also get to meet some of our Life Recovery graduates like Jolynn. Several of our grads are employed at the store—rebuilding hope as they prepare for a bright future.

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

## Restoration Celebration



Our Restoration Celebration is one of the best nights of the year! On June 13, we honored 19 graduates who have completed our Life Recovery Program and now are on their way to a hope-filled future. Please take a moment to pray for each of these precious people as their recovery continues.

## Donation Need

We need a minivan or SUV to transport our men and women to appointments and group outings.

If you or someone you know would like to donate a vehicle, please contact Ted Tomita at 815-316-4176 or [tedtomita@rockfordrescuemission.org](mailto:tedtomita@rockfordrescuemission.org).



## About Our Cover Story



You can find a **longer version**, including more photos, on our website. Cover photo: Dorothy, one of our Life Recovery graduates, during her weekly meeting with Pam, our Aftercare / Alumni Services Director.

## Cover Story

In the Thrift Store processing area, Jolynn works her way through a bin full of donated women's clothing. Each item gets priced, hung on a hanger and then on a rack. When the rack is full, she wheels it through a set of swinging doors and out to the sales floor, where she places the clothes on display.

Retail isn't new for Jolynn. She has worked in grocery stores and at Walmart. But the feeling she brings to this job is definitely new. Before, a frustrating moment at a job would derail her whole life. Over and over. Last year, family members brought her to Rockford Rescue Mission.

"I'm a night-and-day different person now," Jolynn says. "I was very angry when I came here. I didn't want to be here. But I have so much more patience now, and so much more peace. I have God in my life now. I'm free."

### Vocational Training

Jolynn graduated from the Life Recovery Program in June, and now lives in our on-site transitional housing. Her job is a result of the Mission's Advanced Vocational Training (AVT), which helps those entering our Aftercare program—designed to help them adjust to life again. Some grads work in Mission departments like Food Service, Facilities or Thrift Store. Others work for organizations that partner with us. As with Jolynn's case, any vocational track can be customized to the person's interests and abilities. Hers also has included administrative work in the Works! Center and now her job at Thrift Store.

"Jolynn has just blossomed since she's been here," says Teresa Reeverts, who oversees the Works! Center in her role as the Mission's Program Support Services Director. "And she really excels in customer service."

### Lifetime Tools

AVT comes at the end of the Life Recovery Program and the beginning of Aftercare, where the Mission continues to keep tabs on graduates. Pam Tomita was appointed last year to the new position of Aftercare / Alumni Services Director. She brings a sense of urgency to the role; in the past several years, three of our Life Recovery graduates have relapsed and died of drug overdoses. All recovery programs, Christian or not, deal with this awful news sometimes.

"I am a critical thinker anyway," Pam says. "So my thought was, are we giving them the best that we can offer them? Can we prevent those tragedies from happening? Probably not, because ultimately it's their choice. But are we doing everything we can do?"

Pam thinks about the recovery tools residents receive, and how to help those stay front-of-mind in coping with everyday life again. Currently, she meets one-to-one for 30 minutes each week with 17 men and women. She asks questions like: *How are you doing? How's your job or school going? What things are you recognizing that could trigger destructive behaviors? How are you managing anxiety and stress?*

"We also talk about false beliefs," Pam says. "A lot of them deal with low self-esteem or being capable to do a job or to finish a class or even start something."

The Mission is adding a new stage—Job Readiness—to the Life Recovery Program. This lets our residents take the recovery tools they've learned, and put them into practice as they adjust to life outside the Mission.

"That's how I see God really working through the vocational programs," Teresa says. "You have to get in there and walk beside people, to give them that confidence again to go live their life, to go explore other things."

As for Jolynn, she has set her sights on finding housing of her own, and continuing to succeed in retail and administrative work.

"I need to stand on my own two feet now," she says. "And with the help of the Lord, I can do it."



# The Mission at a Glance

October 2022 - July 2023



**47,886**

Nights of Shelter



**134,403**

Meals Served



**2,358**

Case Management Sessions



**618**

Medical Appointments



**128**

Jobs Secured

**Your partnership  
helps change lives!  
Thank you!**

## Volunteer Spotlight

Matt Domanico volunteers on Thursdays in the Mission's kitchen, helping the staff to prepare lunches and dinners. It's kind of like having LeBron James show up to practice with your basketball team.

Matt and his brother, Eric, co-own Ascot Meats, a butcher shop and meat market in Prospect Heights. They are the third generation to run the business, founded by their grandfather in 1968. But at the Mission, Matt is happy to serve quietly behind the scenes — settling into the Mission's routine of feeding hundreds of people.

"The cooks tell me what to do and they don't have to babysit me," he says. "They know what I'm good at. It'll be, 'Hey we've got to make chicken salad for lunch.' And then I know the routine and I know where everything is."

Not that Matt's overall expertise isn't recognized and drawn upon.

"Some of the cooks will ask me for advice and I'll give it to them," he says. "Like substituting ingredients if they're out of something. I don't always chime in, but they're very good about asking for help if need be. They know my background."

Matt's initial connection to the Mission came through his wife, Meredith, who is Student Ministries Director at their church, First Free Rockford.

"I've met some great people," he says. "People in the program, volunteers. Now that I've been doing this for a little bit, my dad has caught wind of it. And now he has done some volunteering on the side, in the suburbs. He sees the positive difference that it makes. So now I've inspired other people to do it. Not that that is my motive — by no means is this about me — but it's a great result."



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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.*