

The Rescuer

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Family Reunion

Curt and Deneen prayed and prayed for their daughter, Candace. Years passed. Sometimes they wondered if God was even listening. But today, this family's story is better than they ever could have asked or imagined.

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From the CEO



Welcome to the holiday season! I hope you will take joy when you read our cover story of Candace's ongoing healing and restoration, not just for her but for her beautiful family. She and young Carter were such a joy to us during their stay here at the Mission as Candace completed our Life Recovery Program. This promises to be a special season for them.

You may be reading this and feeling hopeless about your own family. Anger, resentment, misunderstanding and hurt can run deep. And it all feels magnified as the holidays approach. Believe me, I know. As much as we beg God to fix everything, sometimes we can pray for years and nothing seems to change. Does God even care?

Let me assure you that the answer is YES. I don't believe God causes bad things to happen to good people, but He does use those circumstances to make us more like Him. That's never an easy road. But here's something else I know about God: He sits with us in those hard times—sometimes silently, sometimes with a gentle, "I know." It can come through His Word, through a sudden and clear thought you know isn't your own, and often through the kindness of someone else. He provides peace when our world only seems to offer fear and anger.

May the Prince of Peace be ever-present in and through you and your family as we celebrate this special season of Thanksgiving and Christmas.

With Gratitude and Joy,

Sherry Putney



Holiday Feasts

• **Thanksgiving Banquet: Noon**
Wednesday, Nov. 22

• **Christmas Banquet: Noon**
Friday, Dec. 22



These are two of the best days of the year at the Mission, when we gather as a community to thank God for His goodness and enjoy a fantastic meal together. Thank you for making these special times possible!

Tour the Mission



If you've never toured Rockford Rescue Mission, what are you waiting for? Sign up for an up-close and personal look for yourself and your family, friends or coworkers. Two things we can guarantee: You'll be astonished at how much good happens here, and you'll want to tell others. To sign up for a tour, contact us at 815-965-5332 or info@rockfordrescuemission.org.

About Our Cover Story



You can find a **longer version**, including more photos, on our website rockfordrescuemission.org

Evening for Hope

The Mission's 60th anniversary year kicks off Thursday, Jan. 25 with our Evening for Hope Telethon from 7 to 9 p.m. on WTVO Channel 17. Tune in for amazing stories and interviews about how God changes lives here!

Goal: \$125,000

Family Reunion

Curt and Deneen Czosnek watched their daughter, Candace, languish in rebellion, abuse, addiction and more. As they prayed and the years passed, sometimes they wondered if God was even listening. This is their story of restoration, hope ... and new life.

A close friend urged Deneen to contact Rockford Rescue Mission as a place that could help Candace.

"I called and talked to the staff supervisor for literally an hour and a half on the phone," Deneen says. "She explained everything about the Mission, what they stand for. Everything is through Scripture and I knew that's what Candace needed—because I knew that her spirit was dead. It needed to be filled again."

"And then at the end of our conversation she prayed with me. And through all of that I felt a tugging that this was definitely a perfect place for Candace."

Deneen and Curt floated the idea to Candace, who filled out an application but never submitted it.

"She wasn't ready," Deneen says. That moment would come a year later, in 2022.

"I had nothing and I was broken," Candace says. "I realized, *Where am I going to go from here? I need to make something of my life.*"

She filled out the application again, and this time hit "send."

On a Tuesday morning in May, Curt drove Candace to the Mission. He pulled his truck into

a parking space and they talked for a few minutes, then prayed together. When they went to the door, the staff supervisor was there to meet them.

Curt recalls: "The first thing she said—I'll never forget it—was, 'We've been praying all night that you would come this morning. A lot of girls back out at the last minute. We're so grateful you're here.'"

Candace quickly realized she was in the right place. "They dealt with substance abuse obviously, but that wasn't my main issue," she says. "I struggled with a lot of depression and grief and anxiety. It was cool to be able to work on that stuff as well as some substance abuse I was dealing with. And also be able to work on a relationship with Christ, all in the same place. Somewhere that was safe."

What no one knew yet was that there would be two people coming home in a few months. Two months into her stay, Candace found out she was pregnant. She called her mom.

"I was overwhelmed," Deneen says. "I was questioning God, thinking, *What's happening? She was doing so well. And You're allowing this. Why? I don't get it.* But when I see it now, I totally get it. She's a great mom. She has a purpose, and everything just fit in place. God does have a perfect plan."

Carter was born in December 2022, and immediately became a source of joy not just for the family, but for the Mission. Curt and Deneen visited Candace at the Mission a few times over her 10-month stay. Each time, they

marveled at her progress.

"We thought, Gosh, she looks healthy," Curt says. "She looks beautiful. She looks vibrant. She's speaking positively. Not all at once, but you could see a change in her."

Candace and Carter came home to her parents' house in April 2023. "Right now, I'm in a season where I'm kind of reaping all the benefits of the work that I have done in the past year at the Mission," she says. "I'm really grateful to my family and to the Mission for supporting me the whole time and believing in me."

Now Candace enjoys being Mom to Carter and older brother Cayden, and she works at a nearby restaurant.

"We've been lifting up all our kids in prayer for years and years," Curt says. "Sometimes you just think, *I don't know.* But it happens on God's time. Candace found her spot at the Rescue Mission. And she just thrived."



The Mission at a Glance

October 2022 - September 2023



57,541

Nights of Shelter



153,295

Meals Served



2,998

Case Management Sessions



151

Spiritual Decisions



161

Jobs Secured

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



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Serving Veterans in Need

Retired U.S. Army Col. David Draeger thinks a lot about Jesus' Parable of the Lost Sheep.

"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.'" (Luke 15: 4-7)

"That's what we do every day," Col. Draeger says. A 30-year Army veteran whose tours included Desert Storm, Afghanistan, Iraq and Bosnia, he's now a Veterans Care Navigator for Rosecrance, and serves as a VFW chaplain. He heads a team that seeks out military veterans or their family members who need help. Maybe it's health care, or job training. Sometimes it's as basic as food and shelter.

"It's a mission I get up for every day. We've got a great team. We're all helping each other. It's a collaboration of many different services getting together, discussing clients, holistic approach, multi-level services. It's the coolest thing ever, and it's working."

Col. Draeger and his team come to the Mission's Community Room on Wednesday mornings as part of a regular circuit of stops, with the goal of connecting veterans to services they need but don't know how to obtain.

The issue for some veterans is how they were discharged from the military, he says. At levels like misconduct or dishonorable discharge, a veteran is ineligible for Veterans Administration aid such as mental health or medical support

"So there's sort of this void out there of veterans who can't be seen by the VA," he says. "We can see anybody." And, he adds, when necessary they also can find help from sources other than the VA.

"We can get help for any veteran," he says, "as long as the veteran wants to help himself."

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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.