

hope rising

rockford rescue mission



Winter 2024 • Volume 60 • Issue 1

rescue • recover • restore

The Rescuer



Communities RISING

Celebrating a Rockford Legacy

Thinking Creatively About the Numbers • Page 4

A Message from Mayor Thomas McNamara • Page 4

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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.



2024 Marks 60 Years of Serving the Rockford Area



Sherry Pitney, CEO

This special issue of The Rescuer kicks off a milestone year for Rockford Rescue Mission. We're celebrating 60 years of serving, in Jesus' name, people in our community who are homeless and hurting.

Each of five Rescuer issues throughout this year will focus on a different group of people whose faithful service who have helped make these 60 years possible:

- *Community (Winter issue)*
- *Churches (Spring issue)*
- *Volunteers (Summer issue)*
- *Staff (Fall issue)*
- *Donors (Holiday issue)*

Let's start by focusing on community.

A Growing Concern

Rockford was thriving in 1964, with its 130,000 population second in Illinois only to Chicago. It was widely known as the machine-tool capital of the United States. Machines, parts and especially fasteners made here – screws, nuts and bolts – kept American industry humming.

As Rockford grew, so did social problems. Homeless men – and almost all were men – were often war veterans struggling with alcoholism brought on by what we now know as PTSD, post traumatic stress syndrome. Our community didn't ignore homelessness, then or now. In 1963, the Register Republic newspaper published a series of stories and photos about the problem. One of the people who read those stories with interest was my mother in-law, Nadine Pitney.

She and my father-in-law, Rev. Gerald O. Pitney, had moved here from Missouri four years earlier for G.O. to pastor the First Baptist Church in North Park (now Machesney Park). Nadine thought about city rescue ministries she had visited, like Chicago's famed Pacific Garden Mission. *That*, she thought, *is what a city like Rockford really needs.*

Nadine and a few others from their church began praying that God would send someone to Rockford to start a rescue mission. Her prayer would be answered in the form of recovering alcoholic Ray Stewart, who opened Rockford Rescue Mission on May 1, 1964 at 116 Kishwaukee St. (You can read all the details in our 2004 book, *Rescuing the Raggedy Man.*)

From then until now, Rockford Rescue Mission has served our community every single day, with an astounding amount of food and shelter ... and thousands of changed lives.

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A Crossroads of Serving

It's hard to read the gospels without clearly seeing that Jesus made a high priority of serving poor and hopeless people within His reach. The Mission has never hidden the fact that we are a Christian ministry, motivated by sharing the love of Christ with anyone within our reach. We know not everyone in our community believes exactly as we do, but the beautiful thing about Rockford Rescue Mission is that we can all meet needs together anyway. We are a crossroads—a place where churches, businesses, civic organizations and caring individuals can lock arms and serve people who are homeless, hurting and in need of hope.

We also greatly appreciate the support of our city and area leaders. The Mission does not receive direct government aid, but we do partner with governmental, healthcare and educational agencies in areas like finding housing, care and employment for our residents and guests. We participate in the Rock River Homeless Coalition — a network that includes governmental agencies, ministries, healthcare providers, veterans facilities and more — because none of us can solve homelessness alone. Our community needs our collaborative thinking and working.

The Mission does not seek public funding, but we have received numerous private grants from local foundations and other philanthropic-minded organizations. We cherish these relationships and the partnerships that have grown over the years. One thing underlining it all is that, almost universally in our community, the Mission is viewed with favor — by civic leaders, businesses, clubs, schools and, of course, churches. That sort of uncommon network has been 60 years in the making. We so appreciate those friendships and partnerships.

They make Rockford better.

Ghermy Putney

**Save the date:
Jan. 25 7p.m.
An Evening For Hope
Telethon
WTVO Channel 17**



Telethon 2024 Preview: Auggie's Story

"Through Rockford Rescue Mission, God turned my life around. I've studied His Word deeply, and I've received so much help from the staff and the other guys in the program. Through it all, I've realized there's not a single experience in my life that hasn't spoken to somebody in one way or another when I talk with them about it. People believe that they're not good enough for God. And I hate that. I want to break that idea."

Auggie's story is one of many you'll hear during our 26th annual **An Evening for Hope** telethon. Please tune in from **7 to 9 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 25 on WTVO Channel 17.** It's another way for our community to come together in support of the Mission. You can have a direct impact in helping people like Auggie rebuild their lives with the hope of Christ and then radiate that hope to others.



**ALL ARE
WELCOME
HERE**

- THE ALCOHOLIC
- THE ADDICT
- THE STRANGER
- THE SOJOURNER
- THE PILGRIM
- THE POOR

*"There is hope for
all who enter here"*



Thinking Creatively about the Numbers

Prior to about 1991, statistics were inexact at best when it came to counting how many meals, nights of shelter and spiritual decisions happened at Rockford Rescue Mission. For our 60th anniversary, we thought it would be interesting to compile the precise stats we do have, to get a look at the sheer volume of the Mission's impact in our community.

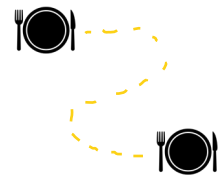
In just the 33 years we've kept exact statistics, from 1991 to 2023, here's what we know:

1.8M Nights of Lodging

Comparison: If thought of consecutively, this totals more than 3,729 years of nights – or every night since 1706 B.C., when woolly mammoths still roamed the earth and roughly the time when the biblical figures Jacob and Esau lived.



4M Meals Served



We've served three meals a day, every day, since 1964 to anyone in need. Just since 1991, that's more than 4 million meals. For comparison, think of each of those meals as a dinner plate, 10 inches in diameter. Place them in a line, each touching the next. That line would stretch 638 miles, from Rockford to the outskirts of Washington, DC.

42,147 + Spiritual Decisions

This is our bottom line. The number represents people coming to salvation in Jesus Christ, being baptized and/or rededicating their lives to Christ. For comparison, this is about equal to the crowd capacity of Chicago's Wrigley Field.



The organization continues to grow and expand and now includes case management, in addition to providing shelter, food and necessities. It is also home to the city's and county's Focused Deterrence Re-Entry Program, which identifies and deters members of the community who are at a heightened risk of committing future acts of crime and gun violence.

Rockford Rescue Mission is more than a shelter. It provides hope and encouragement when people are down on their luck and have nowhere else to turn. We are blessed to have Rockford Rescue Mission in our community and its army of volunteers. It warms my heart to see this organization in action. Each year, my staff and I volunteer to serve Thanksgiving meals to those at the shelter. It's a tremendous honor to plate a turkey dinner for residents who have no other place to spend the holiday.

I encourage all of our residents to support Rockford Rescue Mission and help ensure it continues to care for our community for another 60 years!

A Message from Mayor Thomas McNamara

In May 1964, the doors of Rockford Rescue Mission opened to the community. Now, 60 years later, many things have changed; however, the organization remains dedicated to moving people from homelessness and despair towards personal and spiritual wholeness. It's a lofty and critical mission.

Since the beginning, Rockford Rescue Mission has been a staple in our community. It provides care and compassion to those most in need, supported by kind and generous donors who give graciously of their time and money.