

hope rising

rockford rescue mission



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rescue • recover • restore

# The Rescuer



## Volunteers RISING

“If you’re in my family, then you’re connected to the Rescue Mission.”

Life-Changing Conversation • Page 2  
Sherry’s Family Legacy • Page 3

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# “I see you”

## For Mission volunteers, a conversation can change a life.

“Hey, how are you today?”

The guy in the Wednesday lunch line looks up. Scott Graham is not only filling a tray for him, he’s also making a personal connection.

“You look like you’re hungry,” Scott says. “Let me get you a little extra.”

Scott and his wife, Taffey, volunteer at the Mission every Wednesday to serve or prepare food—wherever they’re most needed. One of their favorite things is to **look someone in the eye, remember their name and ask how they’re doing**. It sounds simple, but it can change a life.

“They feel like they’re invisible, that nobody cares, that they’re in this by themselves,” Taffey says. “I saw a guy today hugging his dirty, filthy coat to himself and he wasn’t with anybody or talking with anybody. And I wanted to look at him and say, ‘**I see you.**’”

The Grahams also help with evening Chapel services once a month as part of a team from their church, First Free Rockford. The two have been married 40 years and are retired – he from the former Singer Mental Health Center, she from DCFCS.

“I figure it this way,” Scott says. “**God has blessed us a lot**. If I can’t give a couple hours to people who are less fortunate than me, then I’m not a good person, a good Christian or a good role model.”

Taffey’s family ties with the Mission go back to the early days. One night when her dad picked up a hitchhiker who needed care, he called Mission co-founder Gerald O. Pitney and asked, “Do you have a place for this guy?” The Mission was full that night, but Pitney said bring him anyway — that he always kept an extra space on the couch in his office.

Later, Taffey’s parents regularly volunteered in the Mission’s kitchen and stock room. When her mom died 10 years ago, instead of flowers she asked people to give to the Mission.

“So it’s like we’ve always had this connection,” Taffey says. “If you’re in my family then you’re connected to the Rescue Mission.”

Almost always, the Grahams both go home from their volunteer shifts with a sense of joy.

“For Scott and me, serving here is so fulfilling,” Taffey says. “You feel like you’ve just stepped in and been the hands and feet of Jesus.”

### YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS Last year, did you know?

**17,844**

Volunteer hours were shared in all of our program services.

**1,404**

Active volunteers served throughout the Mission.

**150**

Chapel services were hosted at the Mission.

**153,295**

Meals were served to anyone who needed them.

When you volunteer, the life that gets changed just might be yours. If you want to see how you can impact your community through being a Mission volunteer, scan the QR code with your camera app or go to:

[volunteer@rockfordrescuemission.org](mailto:volunteer@rockfordrescuemission.org)



\*Data used from FY 2023



## A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM SHERRY PITNEY

### FAMILY LEGACIES GROW THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

From our cover story in this issue of The Rescuer, I love how Taffey and Scott Graham's story with the Mission goes back to Taffey's childhood and a family connection with my father-in-law, Mission cofounder G.O. Pitney.

**"If you're in my family, then you're connected to the Rescue Mission," she says.**

So many families and individuals begin, and maintain, that lifelong connection with the Mission by volunteering. **That includes me!** When I was in high school, our church would conduct chapel services at the old Mission location on Madison Street. I was sometimes called upon to play the piano or sing for those services.

**When people spend time here serving others, the Mission gets into their hearts.** They get to meet some of our residents and guests and hear their stories – maybe even while telling their own. Plus: **In an age when people feel increasingly disconnected from each other, volunteering offers the chance to experience community** by serving together with friends, family members or maybe even others whom you're meeting for the first time.

In 2023 alone, a total of 1,404 people volunteered with us, either at the Mission or at our Thrift Store. They were individuals, couples, families, and groups from schools, churches, clubs or workplaces. Many volunteered regularly. Together, they provided almost 18,000 hours of service to our residents, guests and staff. Or, you could think of that number this way: **It was more than TWO YEARS of hours!**

If you are one who has volunteered with the Mission, **thank you.** May I also ask you to extend an invitation to your friends and family to join you in serving? The need is huge, and without a continually growing base of volunteers, many of the ministry services we provide would just stop. To see our many opportunities, visit [rockfordrescuemission.org](http://rockfordrescuemission.org), click "Give Help" and then "Volunteer."



Partners in Hope,

*Sherry Pitney*

Sherry Pitney, CEO

## VOLUNTEER STORIES



"What volunteering means to me is just an opportunity to help out the community. I'm going to remember this for a while. We are extremely grateful for the service hours we do every year, to show us what helping the community is all about."

-Henry, Boylan High School Student, Food Service



"I really just love giving back to the community and helping within the area we live."

-Amber, Chiropractor, Hope Clinic



"We've been volunteering, for me 16 years and for David 11. Volunteering here means I'm serving God. The things I price and sell all go to the Mission to help those staying there. I don't have a lot of money to give but I can give my time. I really feel I have a heart for the Mission. I sort the books and have loved every day here and look forward to every day I get to be here."

-Ruby and David, Thrift Store

## ONE FAMILY'S IMPACT

Curt and Deneen Czosnek have a special connection with the Mission, as their daughter, Candice, went through the Life Recovery Program and it had a profound impact on their family. Candice's life was transformed after completing the program and she became a living testament to the message of Jesus and the Mission. The experience had such a positive impact that Curt and Deneen now volunteer at the Mission. Even though they live as far away as Racine, Wisconsin, they bring their grandchildren with them as their way of giving back.

They said: **"When Candice was here, we saw the total restoration, all that she got through from where she was.** You just want to give and to serve, to help them and be beside them to be an encouragement. **Whether that's giving them food or a smile.** You can see some not-great areas in Rockford but then you see the Rockford Rescue Mission and it's like a little light in the city."

**Candice and many others are able to experience the Mission's Life Recovery Program completely free of charge, thanks to our faithful donors.** It takes \$32,553.37 to fund someone like Candice through a full year of the program, or \$89 per day. If you would like to support the Mission and its life-changing programs, please scan the QR code with your camera app or go to: [give.rockfordrescuemission.org/donate/Donate](http://give.rockfordrescuemission.org/donate/Donate)



Give today  
on our website





# ROCKFORD RESCUE MISSION 60TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT WITH MO PITNEY

Save the date for Saturday, Sept. 28.  
A night to remember, with music by  
Mo Pitney along with Luke Pitney

When: Saturday, September 28 - 7:00 p.m.  
Where: Rockford Rescue Mission, 715 West State St. Rockford

## TO EVERY VOLUNTEER FROM 1964 TO TODAY, THANK YOU



## SHARE HOPE THIS SUMMER

As guests in our Women's Crisis Center, Jasmine and her daughter found warm meals and a safe place to sleep at Rockford Rescue Mission. Their story joins countless more as testimony to the way God transforms lives here as the Mission provides basic necessities and so much more. You can be part of these amazing stories. By donating or volunteering, you help provide Christ-centered care to meet the needs of homeless, hungry and hurting people in our community.

- ✉ Give now using the enclosed reply card and envelope.
- 🌟 Give online anytime at [give.rockfordrescuemission.org/donate](http://give.rockfordrescuemission.org/donate)

