



The Rescuer



More Than Just a Makeover
In our Men's Crisis Center, hope shines
even brighter.

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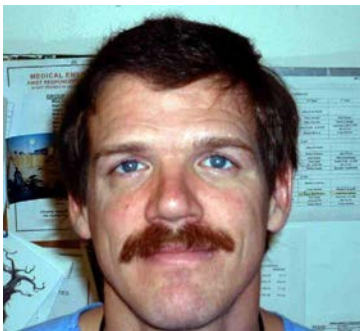


ROOM TO BREATHE, ROOM TO HEAL

John Hazlewood (pictured right) will never forget the day he first stepped into the Day Room in the Mission's Men's Crisis Center. **It was 2005, and his life was a mess. He hoped he was in the right place, but he was scared.**

"I walked through a doorway and into a room that had four big round tables and plastic chairs around the tables and then one big TV in the corner," he says. "It was very crowded, and I was very intimidated."

Despite every urge to leave, John stuck it out—thanks in no small part to staff members who assured him he was in the right place, doing the right thing. **They pointed him first toward a relationship with Jesus Christ. Soon, John would enter the Life Recovery Program and his life was forever changed.**



John in 2005 when he first came to the Men's Crisis Center

Part of the reason those memories remain so vivid for John is that still sees that room every day, but now from a different angle. Today, he's the Men's Crisis Supervisor—helping men find the same hope and help that he found here. Until recently, the Day Room hadn't changed a lot since the Mission moved to this building in 1999—well, except for the predictable wear and tear. Given that the room is used hard, 365 days and nights every year (providing a combined 25,379 nights of shelter last year alone), it looked run-down and out of date.



But this summer, John's view changed dramatically. **The Day Room he found so intimidating 20 years ago has been transformed.** Thanks to a team of volunteers and staff, the wall that once separated two small day rooms has been removed to create one big, uncrowded space. Instead of baby-blue walls, they've been painted with a color actually called Comfort Gray. High, open ceilings and bright LED lights replace the old drop ceiling and fluorescent lights.

In short: **It doesn't look like a bus depot anymore.**

Does that matter to guys who need a place to sleep, or just to get in out of the cold or heat? Absolutely, says Pad O'Neil, the Mission's Facilities Director. "You don't want to build a living room," he says. "You don't want them to give the impression that you're here to stay forever, because they're not. But we want it to be durable, clean, bright, modern and safe. **We want to make it peaceful, restful, cool in the summer, warm in the winter. And a place for recovery.**"

John's the first to admit that a nicer room doesn't cover the deep pain that 60 or so men bring to the Mission each night. But it does signal a different, better and safer environment. "Now with them taking the wall out, it allows everyone to spread out," he says. "It doesn't seem like we're sitting on top of each other. And it allows the staff to have more of a direct vision of what's going on, because we're not looking through a little doorway or a camera."

In other words, it looks more like hope.

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MEN'S CRISIS RENOVATION PROGRESS



BEFORE



RENOVATION BEGINS



CURRENT PROGRESS

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM Sherry Pitney

“There was a time in my life, a very difficult time, when I wondered if I would need to temporarily stay at a shelter.

By then, I had already served homeless and hurting people for 25 years here at Rockford Rescue Mission. But my traumatic experience, awful as it was, placed me on common ground with the people we serve. I learned what it feels like to be desperate and in need of help, not sure if I would be safe that night. In light of that, as I look at our Crisis Centers, I often think: Would I want to stay here?

Nearly a decade ago, we created Pitney Place, named in honor of Mission pioneers G.O. and Nadine Pitney. It dramatically improved our environment for women and children, whether they are crisis guests or Life Recovery residents. While it can never be home, it's warm and welcoming.

This summer, with the same thought, we remodeled the day room in our Men's Crisis Center. It had looked about the same since the Mission moved to this location in 1999. Now, it's been transformed and modernized. It's a better, safer, more comfortable environment for our guests and staff alike. This issue's cover story takes you inside the project and lets you hear from the people who made it happen.

To a person experiencing a low point in their life, the way a place makes them feel can make all the difference. The day room in a crisis shelter can't help but feel a little institutional, but our hope is to minimize that. We want the room to reflect what our guests already receive from our staff, whether they are coming to us for the first time or the hundredth time: a warm welcome in Jesus' name.

”



Partners in Hope,

Sherry Pitney

Sherry Pitney, CEO

Did you know?

148

MEN, WOMEN &
CHILDREN WILL STAY
AT THE MISSION TONIGHT*

323

NUTRITIOUS MEALS
ARE SERVED EACH
DAY*

91

FULL-TIME & PART
TIME JOBS ACQUIRED BY
GUESTS & RESIDENTS

\$2.44

PROVIDES A HOT MEAL
TO ONE GUEST OR
RESIDENT

\$12.40

PROVIDES A NIGHT OF
SAFE SHELTER AT THE
MISSION

*Numbers based on October-through-July average

Give Today
on Our Website



THANK YOU FOR IMPACTING LIVES AND TRANSFORMING FUTURES

In May, we reached our goal of raising over \$140,000 during the May Matching Challenge. This allowed us to start our remodel project, giving the Men's Crisis Center a much-needed modern update to make it feel more like home for the men staying with us.

The project is made possible by our dedicated donors, who remain faithful to our mission of impacting lives in Jesus' name in the Rock River Valley. Thank you to the many businesses that provided resources for the construction, the volunteers who offered their skills and time during this project, and to the NKC Family Foundation for starting the matching challenge that inspired such generosity.



RENOVATION STORY CONTINUED

Volunteer Team

Chris Graceffa from the Rockford Cosmopolitan Club recruited a volunteer team of retired men this summer to do the demolition and construction. Some had experience with this kind of work, some didn't. They worked 8:30 to 2 on several Tuesdays and Thursdays, meaning the Crisis Center could still be open for overnight guests.

A highlight of their workdays was lunch time. No, really. They ate lunch at the Mission among Mission guests and residents. It was a daily reminder about the importance of their work and the people it would serve.

Volunteer Bob Opperman summed up the experience: "To me, it is a small way that I can give back from the blessings God has provided to me and maybe, in some small way, help others out."



More Than Storage

Volunteers recently built a brand-new bin storage system for our overnight guests, replacing the metal lockers that had served faithfully but were finally wearing out. For many of our guests, the contents of these bins represent their entire world: clothing, important documents, personal mementos and the few possessions they can truly call their own. Having a secure, organized place to keep these items provides peace of mind and a sense of stability in the midst of uncertain circumstances. The new system is sturdier, more spacious, and better suited to the daily demands of shelter life, ensuring that our guests can rest easier knowing that what matters most to them is safe.

None of this would have been possible without the caring hearts and willing hands of our volunteers. Thank you for building not just storage bins, but hope and security for those who need it most.



THE WAY HOME

A PODCAST BY
ROCKFORD RESCUE MISSION
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