The youngest person we ever served at the Rescue Mission was just two days old. The very day mother and baby were released from the hospital, they came to the Mission for our Thanksgiving Banquet. Mother and daughter enjoyed a meal out of the bitter cold while dad searched through our clothing table for anything that would suit his baby girl. It was our privilege to ensure that mom, dad and baby had food, clothing, blankets, diapers and a place to stay before they left. One of our volunteers, who had a one-year-old child at home, even called her husband and had him bring down a bag of newborn winter clothing that their child had outgrown.

As the staff of the Rescue Mission marveled, cried, and rejoiced over the baby girl we had the privilege to serve, I was reminded that over 2,000 years ago, Mary and Joseph were turned away from the inn and Jesus was born homeless, laid in a manger. As we rejoiced, so too did angels, shepherds and wise men as they worshiped and gave gifts to Jesus. How appropriate to give gifts to Jesus, who was Himself a gift.

When most people think of homeless people, their minds drift to images of elderly men with beards in ragged clothing. But here at the Rescue Mission, we do serve a lot of children. It’s one of the most difficult, yet rewarding parts of our ministry.

Every day, parents walk through our doors with their kids and ask for help. Some need a nutritious meal, clothing, or are looking to escape the cold in our day room. Others need a Family Food Box. Sometimes the parents are struggling with addiction and need a recovery program.

Over the past several weeks, children have been a particularly rewarding part of our ministry. Low-income families have been lining up to qualify for our Christmas sponsorship. Our heart and approach is to talk with the parents and determine eligibility, needs and desires. Once this is done, we do our best to obtain gifts and a Christmas Family Food Box and pass them off to the parents without their children’s knowledge.

This way it is the parents who are nurturing, providing for and giving gifts to their children. We hope our approach enables parents to build stronger family bonds, which are important for children to learn and experience in order to help break the cycle of poverty and homelessness. I personally want to thank you for all your prayers, support and time you have given God through the Rescue Mission and to our most hurting neighbors this year. Please prayerfully consider further support for our Christmas Banquet and God’s continuing work throughout the year as we work to change lives for now and eternity.

I have a Blessed Christmas,

Chris D. Crosswhite
Executive Director

P.S. If you would like to help bless a family this Christmas, it’s not too late. Please give Greg Sheffield a call at the Rescue Mission and ask him how you can help: 801-355-1302.

Just 18 months ago Joseph Johnson tried to kill himself. Now, with his new mountain bike (which he rides whenever possible) in the background, Joseph holds up his recovery graduation certificate.
THANK YOU FOR A GREAT THANKSGIVING

With your help, we provided over 1500 meals to homeless and hurting people at our annual Thanksgiving Banquet, which included a special message of hope, great food, clothing giveaways, praise music, hot showers, haircuts, free flu shots provided by the Fourth Street Clinic and Christian counseling for people who are struggling during the holiday season.

Over 100 volunteers cooked, served, bussed tables, cleaned up, sorted clothing, played music and simply talked to our homeless friends. Thank you so much to each and every one of you who served and donated to make the banquet possible, including Smith's Food and Drug Stores, who generously donated 100 turkeys for the banquet. Donations like these help keep our costs in line and allow us to bless others with the abundance of food through Family Food Boxes and donations to local refugee churches. Please check out pictures of our banquet in this edition of the Rescuer and visit our Facebook page for more great photos.

With Thanksgiving behind us, we are looking to Christmas. We have less than a month to prepare for what may be an even greater outreach – our Annual Christmas Banquet for the Homeless on December 23. This Christmas, we are planning to serve another 1,500 meals at our banquet and provide over 12,000 hot meals and hundreds of Family Food Boxes to needy families throughout the month of December. Our food service comes in addition to handling warm winter coats, new socks, long pants and thousands more items of clothing we pray for and support our Christmas outreach. We have much work to do and since we gave away so much for Thanksgiving, we are running short on warm clothes and food.

Please remember that our banquets are not just meant to provide for material needs, but to give hope. Many of Utah’s homeless don’t have anywhere to go for the holidays. We hope that great food, warm clothes and smiling faces might be the encouragement they need to join our New Life Program, which changes lives by helping people off the streets and into housing, employment and restored family relationships. Please pray that our Christmas outreach will touch many lives this year as we celebrate Jesus – God’s gift to us all!

Our Stats

how your gift helps

online functions and internal networking.

I was good at this kind of work as I had been an avionics expert in the Air National Guard and knew about internal computer systems and processes. But it was a hard job to get. I interviewed several times over the course of two months. During those months I had other job offers to work at retail electronics stores, but I turned them down in hopes of obtaining a job that paid a living wage.

I also realized that I needed a sense of purpose if I was going to stay sober, and I really felt like having a job that challenged me would make a big difference in my long-term success. Finally, after all the interviews, phone calls and waiting, I was hired.

Today, I love my job and I love helping people solve complex systems questions. It’s fun and I really feel like people need me and depend on me. I am so thankful to the Mission’s job placement coordinator, Greg Sheffield, who was there to support me in finding a job. I don’t know if I could have done it alone.

Struggling to Find Hope

Thanks to the help I received at the Rescue Mission, my life is totally different from a year ago. I am even rebuilding relationships with my two adult step-children with whom I had struggled to keep in touch with after their mother died of cancer in 2008. It was the end of that three-year cancer battle that sent me spiraling into homelessness and hopelessness. If you have never lost someone close to you – to cancer or another illness – you might find it hard to relate to my story, but my wife’s battle with cancer and eventual death broke me.

Even before she died, alcohol and drug use had been part of my life. I drank too much and sometimes used drugs, but we were always able to have good jobs and raise our children. However, when my wife was in the late stages of her cancer, she drank until she passed out each night. She just could not endure the pain. She said it didn’t matter if she drank herself to death because she was dying anyway.

Each night I would pick her up off the floor and put her to bed. When I tried to help her stop drinking, we would get into fights. She felt like I didn’t relate to what she was going through, and I felt like she couldn’t relate to what I was going through. I told her “you don’t have cancer, our whole family has cancer!” and that’s what it felt like.

It was so hard at the end that we separated and were living in different homes when she died. The whole experience was devastating. After she died, I started drinking more and more.

While I still held down my job as the manager of an electronics store, I was coming to work hungover every day. At night, I was so depressed that I couldn’t really take care of myself, and I was so isolated that I really had no friends or family to turn to. Since it was winter and freezing, I did the only thing I could. I went to the public housing shelter.

It was shocking to be homeless and the shock breathed a little life into me. I went out, got a job and saved up some money. After I had saved up enough, I secured a long-term rental at a dumpy hotel on North Temple in Salt Lake.

The motel wasn’t much better than the shelter. I never knew when one of my neighbors might fly off the handle, burst into my room and try to hurt me. The one thing that was good about the public housing shelter was that they made sure that I had any alcohol inside. That rule helped me stay sober. But once in my own motel room, I returned to drinking a bottle a day.

By April of 2015, I had completely run out of hope. With my last little bit of money, I bought myself a present for my 22-year-old step-daughter and made plans to take my own life. I cut and cut on my wrists as I drank and slowly waited to bleed to death. But in the morning, I woke up again. I hadn’t lost enough blood and my wounds were already healing.

I didn’t want the maid to find me, so I called the police, who checked me into the psychiatric evaluation facility at the University of Utah. I transitioned into some temporary housing, but still was as lonely and depressed as ever.

The Help I Needed

In November, someone told me about the Rescue Mission. While I was leery about joining the New Life Program because it was a one-year commitment, I decided to give it a shot. Through the Bible studies, counseling sessions, work therapy and meeting with my ‘prayer partner’ - Scott Price – my life has changed. I don’t have thoughts of killing myself anymore. And with more success and sobriety, I feel like I can be a father to my step-children again. They have already lost a mother; they shouldn’t have to lose their father as well.

So moving forward, my goals are simple: I want to continue succeeding at my job and stay sober. I look forward to graduating from the New Life Program and getting my own apartment. Most of all, I’m excited about repairing relationships with my children and earning their respect.

I am so thankful to the Rescue Mission and all of its supporters, I truly believe that without this place, I would be dead today. The Mission was here when I was desperate and hopeless. They gave me a new life, for which I am eternally grateful.

JOSEPH: Continued from Page 1

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