

# A SUMMER OF HOPE

*Our homeless and hungry neighbors continue to need help all summer long.* Their needs are many. Food, cold water, shelter, shade and clothing are basic necessities.

But other needs, like a compassionate heart and godly advice, are just as important. And while the needs of the homeless are many, contributions to the Rescue Mission significantly decrease during June, July and August. We often refer to this as our “summer slump,” when our financial ability to serve homeless men, women and children is challenged. With our summer slump in mind, please consider making a special “Summer of Hope” donation today and help us rescue people from the streets all summer long.

You can use the enclosed envelope to send a check, make an online donation at [RescueSaltLake.org](http://RescueSaltLake.org) or call our finance office (801-746-1006) to make a

secure gift by credit card over the phone. Please help us provide nourishing meals, shelter, clothing and care to men, women and children who have no place to call home this summer. Your support can truly make this a Summer of Hope!



## JULY 2017 - CHAPEL AND KITCHEN SERVING SCHEDULE

| Sunday  | Monday  | Tuesday   | Wednesday  | Thursday  | Friday                             | Saturday   |
|---|---|---|--|---|------------------------------------|--|
|   |   |   |  |   |                                    | 1 Bible Baptist                                    |
|   |   |   |  |   |                                    | Kitchen: South Valley Community Church             |
| 2 Gospel Grace - Chapel and Kitchen             | 3 First Baptist of West Valley - Kitchen and Chapel           | 4 Calvary Chapel of Salt Lake<br>Kitchen: Intermountain Baptist Youth | 5 South Mountain Community Church - Kitchen and Chapel       | 6 Salt Lake Christian Center<br>Kitchen: Korean Presbyterian Church of Utah | 7 Mt Olympus Presbyterian          | 8 Berean Baptist                                   |
| 9 Calvary Chapel Salt Lake - Chapel and Kitchen | 10 Intermountain Baptist                                      | 11 Unity Baptist  | 12 Northern Utah Mennonite<br>Kitchen: Southeast Youth Group | 13 Millcreek Baptist  | 14 Hilltop United Methodist Church | 15 Southside Church of Christ - Chapel and Kitchen |
| 16 Alpine Church                                | 17 Bennion Christian Center                                   | 18 K2 - The Church  | 19 Capital Church  | 20 RMSP<br>Kitchen: Capital Church  | 21 Risen Life                      | 22 Evangelical Free Church of Salt Lake            |
| 23 Grace Community Bible<br>30 RMSL             | 24 Living Waters Christian Fellowship<br>31 Gateway Community | 25 Canyons Church<br>Kitchen: First Baptist Tooele                    | 26 First Methodist   | 27 Tooele Christian Fellowship  | 28 Midvalley Bible                 | 29 Capital Church                                  |

# RESCUER

JULY 2017

The Monthly Newsletter of the Rescue Mission of Salt Lake



[RescueSaltLake.org](http://RescueSaltLake.org)

## ERNIE LUNA: A Former Panhandler Finds Employment

*Editor's Note: Ernie Luna first gave his testimony in the Rescuer back in 2008. He has had some struggles since then, including relapse and his mother's passing. But today, he has again found freedom in Christ.*

For the first time, I am letting God control my life.

And, spoiler alert: He is doing a great job, way better than I could do.

Today, I have what I consider a dream job. Before I started working at Peterbilt, I spent my whole life settling for jobs that I didn't really want, just because I needed work or thought I couldn't find anything better.

But when I was hired at Peterbilt, I tried a different approach. I saw an ad for a delivery driver on an online job search site. I am not great on the computer so when the ad said that applicants must come in and fill out an application in person, I figured it was right up my alley. "Old school," I thought, just like me.

On my way over to fill out the application, I talked to God. It was the first time I had ever applied for a job where I had asked God about it first. I said, "God, if this is where you want me to be, bless me with this job." I prayed it up. Within three days (after an interview and background check) I was hired.

Not that it is a glamorous job or anything. I am a parts delivery driver. But compared to other jobs I have had, I love it. Also, I have the opportunity to earn my CDL and drive even bigger trucks, something I look forward to. I know this blessing comes from my relationship with God.

Every day, when I wake up, I talk to Him. I say, "God, it's another morning." And I ask Him to take control of the day and guide me where He wants me to be. I try to make sure my life is not about me, but about Him. When I started living like this - talking to God like I really believed in Him and truly wanted Him to control my life - that's when my life changed.

Even though I had been through the Mission's New Life Program once before, I went back to alcohol because I didn't stay close to God. Even though I must admit that the first time though the Mission's program did help me a great deal. I got sober, I secured a decent job, and I moved into my own house. But I relapsed because I started believing all my success was based on me. In my mind, I gave myself the credit, not God. What I have come to learn over the last eight years of struggling with sobriety is that when I run my life it is terrible.

Please see "Ernie" on Page 3.



Ernie Luna has a great job, has paid off all his debts, is plugged into a local Christian church and is ready to move into his own apartment.

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# CELEBRATING FREEDOM

*The men and women who came from Europe to America 400 years ago were seeking freedom.* They wanted to worship in their own way and be free from an authoritarian king.



It makes sense, then, that when the United States was founded many years later, the cornerstone of the country was freedom. No other nation has had such clear freedoms—to worship, to speak, to write, to pursue happiness, and to not be imprisoned without due process of law. Many of these basic freedoms are called out in the founding documents that made America.

So in this month when the birth of this nation is remembered, much of our celebration will be about the freedoms we enjoy, and rightly so.

Make no mistake, American freedom is a great thing. But nowhere is the ideal of human-divined freedom made so imperfect as on the streets of Salt Lake City. Here, we see that no matter how free a country may be, it cannot produce spiritual freedom, freedom of the soul.

Instead, we see that freedom can, at times, be an illusion. We see people who believed they were free to drink or not drink, come to realize they are a slave to alcohol and can't stop. We see those who believed they could get a job and leave the streets realize they have no ability to secure employment and feel trapped.

Sin—the bad things all people do despite the fact that we try really hard not to do them—suffocates freedom,

even in America. Yelling at a spouse, criticizing someone behind their back, judging someone, and loving money more than people—these are all things that deep down we realize we shouldn't do. We even strive not to do them, yet we all do them, despite our best efforts. All of us, to one degree or another, are like the heroin addict who really wants to quit, knows they should quit, tries to quit, but somehow can't quit.

This is the inescapable curse of sin that no human-conceived ideal of freedom can overcome.

So in this month when we celebrate American freedom, which by any measure is a great thing, let us be aware that true freedom can only come from a relationship with Jesus. When Jesus and the Holy Spirit come and live inside a person's soul, only then can that person say no to anger, jealousy, addiction, and the love of material things.

Only God has the power to truly change people and set them free from the things they know they want to be set free from, but are powerless to quit. God's freedom is the only true freedom, and it hasn't been achieved by any government, society or a ten-point plan. It is achieved through a relationship with Jesus. So join me in praying that we all would strive for God's true freedom, even as we thank Him this July for the great freedoms He has allowed us to have in the United States.

God bless you,

Chris D. Croswhite  
Executive Director

## OUR STATS

how your gift helps

*These are not just numbers, they are lives impacted!*

|                      | May 2017     | YTD 2017       |
|----------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Professions of Faith | 33           | 205            |
| Meals                | 13,588       | 72,121         |
| Family Food Boxes    | 183*         | 884**          |
| Nights of Shelter    | 4,415        | 23,704         |
| Clothing             | 6,676        | 31,969         |
| Day Service/Hygiene  | 936          | 3,686          |
| Jobs Obtained        | 1            | 13             |
| Housing Obtained     | 3            | 12             |
|                      | *3,660 meals | **17,680 meals |

## ERNIE: Continued from Page 1

My life reached a low point in the summer of 2015. My mom had recently passed away in California and my brother, who struggles with meth addiction, convinced me to come to back to Utah and give the Rescue Mission's New Life Program another try. My brother had also graduated the Rescue Mission's New Life Program and achieved sobriety.

But when I came back to Utah, I couldn't commit and ended up on the streets. I was sleeping behind fast food restaurants, in the park or in alleys. Every so often the cops would arrest me for public intoxication and take me to the detox center, but I would be back on the streets the next day.

One day I got so drunk I fell off the sidewalk and broke my ankle. I woke up in the hospital and the doctor told me I needed surgery. I was in a cast and a wheelchair for a month. In my warped, addicted mind I actually thought this was kind of a good thing, since when I panhandled in a wheelchair I could earn an extra \$20 a day.

*“I have a great church family [and] my bills, tickets, and fines are all paid off.”*

Another twenty bucks was enough for me to buy whatever bottle of alcohol I wanted and get some food. As a side note – I know there is a lot of talk about panhandling these days. People should know that, as someone who has lived on the streets for many years and has panhandled a lot, everyone who panhandles is using the money for drugs and alcohol. I know some people who give to panhandlers are OK with that, and I am not here to judge anybody who gives to panhandlers, but people should know what they are giving towards and consider if there are better, more productive ways to help.

When my leg healed, my brother started coming down to the streets almost every day. He would find me and talk to me about joining the Mission's New Life Program. Each time I would reject him, but his persistence wore me down. I realize that it was really God using my brother to seek me. God is the one who seeks us and saves us, even when we don't want to be found. He will find His children, one way or another.

And so I joined the New Life Program for a second time and now, almost two years later, I am ready to graduate. I have a great church family at Capital Church. My bills, tickets, and fines are all paid off. I was able to get my driver's license back and am sober. I have a great job and am working with the Veterans Administration (I was in the military in the mid '90s) to get an apartment. I even have enough money saved up to buy a car.

But even as I want a car and an apartment, I am still talking to God and waiting on His timing. For now I still have my bicycle, which I ride to work each day and then ride up to Memory Grove and City Creek Canyon each night. It's beautiful up there and I love taking pictures of the Capitol Hill area and posting them on Instagram. My life is good, even as I wait

to see what God is going to do as I anticipate moving out of the Mission in the next couple of months.

I want to thank all of the supporters of the Rescue Mission for donating so homeless people like me can have a free place to come and have God change their life. Without the Rescue Mission I

don't know where I would be. One thing you can pray for me about is my daughter. When I was in the military I was married and we had a baby girl together. But about the time I left the military we divorced, my drinking spiraled out of control and my ex-wife took my daughter, Desiree Marie Luna. I haven't seen either of them since.

I would love to see my daughter, who is now 24, again someday. She may not want to meet me, but I am asking God to open the door. I really don't have a clue of how to find her, but I know God can work it out, if it's in His plan for my life. So pray for me. Pray that God would keep me close to Him and not let me wander from this great relationship we have together.

## ENDING PANHANDLING

This summer there will be more and more panhandlers on the streets. In July, there will also be a concerted effort to encourage people not to give money to panhandlers, since it's often difficult to know if the person really needs help, or is just trying to get money to buy alcohol or drugs.

For those who truly want to help panhandlers, we have “Help Cards” that people can give to panhandlers. These cards let panhandlers know that the Rescue Mission offers free food—fresh cooked meals and food boxes every day—as well as free nightly shelter, clothing and a pathway off the streets.

Helps cards are available at the Rescue Mission, or they can be ordered off our webiste and can be downloaded and printed there as well. Visit [RescueSaltLake.org](http://RescueSaltLake.org) for more information.

We want to help, and all our services are completely free.

RESCUE MISSION OF SALT LAKE  
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