

hope rising

rockford rescue mission



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rescue • recover • restore

The Rescuer



**Staff
RISING**
Faithfully serving God
by humbly serving others

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A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM SHERRY PITNEY

As Rockford Rescue Mission travels through this year of celebration for 60 years of ministry, each issue of *The Rescuer* has focused on a different aspect that has sustained the work for these decades. We started with community, then churches, then volunteers. In this issue, we celebrate our wonderful staff. The Mission's ministry would of course not be possible without the commitment and dedication of these 80 men and women, serving in full-time and part-time roles.

Rescue work is incredibly difficult. The rewards are great, but they are rarely immediate. Often they are interspersed with deep pain and tragedy. Yet, God is at the center of it all. He prepares and equips our staff for this work, even long before they are actually employed here. He walks with us each day as individuals and as a team—offering guidance, wisdom, protection and compassion. I love what Jeff Richardson says in his story on the next page:

“I know God is in this place and that He has His hand on it.”

We have so many talented people serving in so many ministry roles here, from Crisis care and Life Recovery to vocational guidance, healthcare, facility maintenance, personnel and financial management and so much more. Jeff and Leona, who appear on this issue's cover, would quickly tell you that their stories are no more compelling than any other staff member's story. Yet, I think they represent our staff well. They reflect God's heart in the ways they humbly serve others.

Thank you for remembering our staff as you pray for the Mission and those whom we serve.



Partners in Hope,

Sherry Pitney

Sherry Pitney, CEO

Mission Staff Through the Years



80 full- and part-time missionaries serve God at Rockford Rescue Mission. Meet two of them.

JEFF'S STORY

'I KNOW GOD IS IN THIS PLACE'

Jeff Richardson is Facilities Assistant for the Mission, meaning he fixes things and helps improve life and work here for everyone. Jeff has served the Mission for 23 years, and his family legacy stretches back even further. He first came to work here at the invitation of his father-in-law, Gene Hollembeak. Gene worked with us for decades in facilities and ministry, starting with the Mission's earliest days on Kishwaukee Street, then later Madison Street and finally our current location.

For Jeff, part of the job is keeping the Mission safe for guests, residents, volunteers and staff.

"I like the variety," he says. "One day you may do plumbing, the next day electrical, the next day you might be a chauffeur or a mechanic. You can plan things, but most of the time you come into work and those plans are set aside."

As with all jobs, there have been seasons for Jeff when he has wondered if it's time to leave and do something else.

"But then you see someone who's turning their life over to God. You see their life as you're walking around the Mission. You see that change and you think, Wow, that makes it all worth it."

"Then you go to graduation and here are the graduates coming back who are still clean and sober. That just puts that spark back into you – It's worth it. Let's keep going.

"I know God is in this place and that He has His hand on it."



Gene Hollembeak, John Brily and Jeff Richardson
2001



Jeff Richardson 2024

LEONA'S STORY

'I NEVER FELT LIKE I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BE HERE'

Leona Tennin is our Homeless Services Supervisor, overseeing both the Men's and Women's Crisis Centers. After volunteering for a year and a half at what was then our Women's Crisis Center on Cedar Street, Leona joined the staff in 2011. All of her time with the Mission has been serving Crisis Center guests.

"I never felt like I wasn't supposed to be here," she says. "I've always liked helping people."

In a place filled daily both with joy and sadness, Leona finds ways to stay grounded.

"It's by the grace of God, first. Let's start with that," she says. "Even in the midst of maybe some tragic things that happen, there are still victories. There's still peace in knowing that God is in the midst of it if you allow Him to be."

"The guests are not always grateful when you're trying to redirect them. And I realize that I can't take it personally, because it's not about me. But when just one person comes back and says, "You know what, Miss Leona? Thank you. I'm glad you said that or did that," it makes it worthwhile for me."



"When you look at the end goal of pleasing God, but also the privilege of being able to help someone else, it's really rewarding."

BRANDI'S STORY

'I CAN'T WAIT TO BE A MOTHER AGAIN'

“After years of struggling with meth addiction, I was clean for a couple of years. Then I almost died. I had to have brain surgery for three aneurisms. When I woke up in that hospital bed, I craved meth again. **And I had lost most of my memory. They even had to tell me I had two beautiful children—I had no idea.**

Soon, I started using drugs again. I have a very loving family and they didn't want to continue to get their hearts broken. So I came to Rockford to go to a Christian recovery home for women, and I did get clean there. But then as I started a job in Rockford, I also started drinking—trading one addiction for another. **That's when I came to Rockford Rescue Mission's Women's Crisis Center, and then eventually to the Life Recovery Program.**

The Mission has shown me God, full force. Some days are harder than others. **But God is showing Himself in truly, tremendously beautiful ways.** The other women in the program help lift me up in incredible ways. We're all going through stuff, but we lean on each other. We speak life into each other every day, all day. And the staff here—they're teaching me how to change my mindset and how I look at things. They hold you accountable, but accountability is something I haven't had in years. I needed that.

God has been restoring my memory—including some things that I don't want restored but that need to be brought to the light in order to never go back. Generational curses are being broken. **I can't wait to be a mother again.**”



Brandi 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 to fund someone like Brandi 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 give through one of the ways below or consider being a monthly Hope Giver.

- ✉ Give now using the enclosed reply card and envelope.
- 🖱 Give online anytime at rockfordrescuemission.org



ROCKFORD RESCUE MISSION 60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION WITH MO PITNEY & LUKE PITNEY

We're excited for our 60th Anniversary Celebration Sept. 28! Tickets are \$35 and Mo Pitney Meet & Greet tickets are available. Also, enjoy our art exhibition at the celebration.

5:30 p.m. - Meet & Greet
6:00 p.m. - Meal
7:00 p.m. - Concert

General Concert Ticket - \$35
Optional Add-on Meal Ticket (Burger & Sides) - \$10
Meet & Greet Ticket (Includes Reserved Seating for Concert & Meal) - \$100

Ticket processing fees will be added at checkout. To buy tickets, scan the QR Code to go to Eventbrite.com or call 815.965.5332.



SEPTEMBER 28

