

# REAL CHANGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF REDWOOD GOSPEL MISSION

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SEPTEMBER 2021



LEARN CONNECT

## Thanksgiving is about food and family.

### What if you don't have either?

*"My life before the Mission was chaos, destruction and hopelessness, and my life after is hope, love and family." – Kevin*

**When Kevin first stepped through the door of Redwood Gospel Mission, he didn't know if he'd ever talk to any of his relatives again. His struggle with addiction had pushed them so far away that he was utterly and completely alone.**

Can you imagine that?

#### **Nowhere Else to Turn**

*"I had no one left. I'd burned every bridge I had left. I had nowhere to turn to except God," he says.*

At that point, Kevin had been homeless for a year. It had been over two years since he'd had communication with any of his family members.

During that time, when he ate – if he ate – it was mostly processed food. No vegetables. No fruit. His body was sluggish. He was depressed most days. The holidays, without food or family, were even worse.

#### **A Meal Was the Start**

Then Kevin remembered a place where he had been before. A place where he'd gotten a good meal and been able to take a shower. A place where he felt welcomed and safe.

*(Continued inside...)*



Get involved at

[srmission.org/fall](http://srmission.org/fall)

# Thanksgiving is about food and family.

(Continued from cover)

## That place was the Redwood Gospel Mission.

*"I thought, this is my last chance. This is my last chance at life, at getting my family back," Kevin says.*

He joined our recovery program and discovered something he never expected – a whole new family.

*"People talk about that sometimes," he says. "The RGM family – and it does feel like a family here."*

## Too Many Families to Count

But the Mission family isn't the only family that Kevin became part of by coming here. He also met Jesus and became part of the family of God. Plus, he was welcomed into a local church family – 10 people from church came to his graduation – and was able to reconcile with his relatives!

*"The first time I got to see my grandmother again was at my graduation and she totally forgave me, and we just hugged and cried," he says.*

He also has a strong connection with the guys he went through the program with and considers them his brothers.

*"I'm just blessed. And I have a wonderful church family and... lots of hope towards the future. I just finished school and I have a new career I'm getting into," he says.*

Today you can help someone else change their life – and become part of a whole new family – by giving a Thanksgiving meal.

*"I couldn't be more thankful to these people that donate their time and money and their hearts to help save lives. And to save my life. There's no better cause I can think of. By one person getting better and getting saved, think about how many other people that person can affect. It's a big domino effect." – Kevin*

## Each \$1.87 you give helps feed one person in need!



# It Always Comes Back to Gratitude

Jeff Gilman  
Executive Director



## Nothing that happens at the Mission happens in a vacuum.

Everything, from turning the lights on to feeding people like Kevin, happens because of the generosity of friends like you.

That's why, no matter how many other things I want to share with you when I write my column, I always come back to gratitude. I am just so incredibly thankful for you and the fact that you are part of the Mission family.

Every day – on holidays like Thanksgiving and even average Mondays – your generosity and prayers help to change lives by sharing the love of Christ with people who desperately need it.

I've been in this ministry for 28 years, and I am still amazed by how much friends like you do to care for the poor and needy neighbors in our community. This Thanksgiving, I'll be giving God thanks for you and the entire Redwood Gospel Mission family.

## Change Your Life. Volunteer.



### Paul has a deep compassion for homeless people because he used to be one.

Several years ago, he was reminded of how painful it was while watching three men huddled outside a coffee shop sharing a single cup of coffee, just trying to stay warm. At that moment he knew he needed to do something to help people in need and decided to volunteer.

*"I figured out who took care of the most people in town and who did it with local resources," Paul says.*

His search led him to the Mission and we're so glad it did! A trained chef, Paul has been invaluable helping in our kitchen and leading other volunteers at the Thanksgiving Banquet. But he says you don't have to have any special skills to volunteer.

*"Just show up and be present. You will walk away fulfilled," Paul says. "Step outside of your comfort zone because that's where real change happens. And if you want to change your life and make your life better, this is a really easy one."*

**Every year, we need 500 volunteers for the Great Thanksgiving Banquet alone and we'd love to have you!**

We also have dozens of volunteer opportunities throughout the year. If you're interested in volunteering, contact: Mariella Zapata at 707.578.1830 or [mzapata@srmission.org](mailto:mzapata@srmission.org). Or you can mark your interest on the reply form.



*When you volunteer at the Great Thanksgiving Banquet, you get to see the impact of your meals with your own eyes.*

# How Do You Think God Will Use The Meals You Give?

## Give \$1.87 Meals!

When we talked to Kevin about supporting the Mission, he said, "There's no better cause I can think of." We may be biased, but we have to agree.

**When you give a gift to the Mission, you know that it will help to change a life, and at just \$1.87 per meal, anyone can have an enormous impact on the lives of our poor and needy neighbors.**

That's because, as Kevin's story shows, every meal can help to change a life.

Sometimes people eat a meal and then stay the night right away. Other times, they come back the next day and join our recovery program. In cases like Kevin's, even if they are away for a while, they always remember the feeling they got from that meal.

It can give them the motivation and hope to come back and connect to other services that will transform their lives and even help them meet Jesus!

*"By one person getting better and getting saved, think about how many other people that person can affect," Kevin says. "It's a big domino effect."*



**Just imagine the domino effect you can be a part of this Thanksgiving season by giving even one \$1.87 meal!**



*When you send your gift, please include your signed Coat Tags! You can also give securely online at [srmission.org/fall](http://srmission.org/fall)*

### REAL CHANGE

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# The Great Thanksgiving Banquet



**The Great Thanksgiving Banquet is back after the pandemic year, and we couldn't be more delighted!**

It's our biggest event of the year – which means it's one of the best opportunities we have to share God's love and change the lives of people in desperate need here in our community.

**What:** A huge Thanksgiving event for 4,000 of Sonoma County's neediest people, complete with food, medical care, haircuts, coat giveaway, children's activities, the Gospel message and more!

**Where: Sonoma County Fairgrounds**

**When: Wednesday, November 24th**

The only way we can pull off this amazing event is with the help and support of friends like you! We'd love to have you join us by giving a gift to provide meals, volunteering for the event, donating a turkey, praying and/or signing and returning your Coat Tags!

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## Turkey Drive

**In addition to the Great Thanksgiving Banquet, we're also doing Food Boxes for families in need again this year.**

That means we need turkeys, and lots of them. So we're doing a turkey drive! The next time you're at the store, consider picking up a frozen bird and dropping it off at the Men's Mission campus at: 101 6th Street, Santa Rosa

We'll store it in our commercial freezer until we need to roast it for the banquet or thaw it to add to one of our family food boxes. Our goal is to collect 1,000 turkeys – will yours be one of them?

*Find out more about the coat giveaway on the reverse side.*



# Sign Your Coat Tags!



Often there are men and women who come to the Great Thanksgiving Banquet in nothing but a worn-out shirt. It's obvious they don't have the funds to afford a hot meal, let alone a warm winter coat to help them survive the coming winter months. That's why we started giving away coats at the event.

This year we hope to give away 2,500 winter coats of all sizes to help people stay warm this fall and winter, and we want each one to have a special Coat Tag signed by a friend like you.

**You'll find your Coat Tags included with this newsletter. Please sign them and return them along with your gift to provide \$1.87 meals.**

**You are  
Loved**

*"I have loved you with  
an everlasting love;  
I have drawn you with  
unfailing kindness."*

*Jeremiah 31:3b*

If you'd like to donate coats, contact: Mariella Zapata at 707.578.1830 or [mzapata@srmission.org](mailto:mzapata@srmission.org)