

REAL CHANGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF REDWOOD GOSPEL MISSION



INSIDE:

- It Really is a Wonderful Life
- The Homeless Birthday Party
- Outreach Ministry Updates
- Meet People Right Where They Are

MAY 2023

Steven Fell Off a Cliff

For Steven, becoming homeless felt like falling off a cliff.

"But there was a safety net at the bottom," he says. "And that was the Mission and accepting Jesus in my heart. I praise God that this place exists, because without it, I don't know. I might not even be alive."

Steven is alive because of the generosity of friends like you, and of course, the incredible grace of God.

It's been a bumpy road of life-controlling substances, homelessness and jail, but now Steven's in a great place. His transformation started when he came to the Mission for the first time for a meal. He was surprised at how good the food was. He felt like people actually cared about him.

It was the opposite of what he'd experienced on the streets.

"I hate it out there," he says. "You see a lot of negativity about the homeless people from the community."

(Continued inside)

"Even if you don't believe in God, this is a place where you can come and feel accepted, get warm, get food and get loved." – Steven



Get involved at srmission.org/outreach

Steven Fell Off a Cliff

(Continued from cover)

You are one in 100!

"God bless you. Praise the Lord that there's people like you that exist, because for every one of you, there's a hundred that don't care, at least."

— Steven



It Just Takes One

The constant stream of judgment and negativity that our poor and needy neighbors experience means that when God works through friends like you, you get to have an even bigger impact. Your compassion stands out like nothing else does!

"Out of all the people that don't care, all it takes is one person to go, 'Hey, come here,' and put their arm around you, and say, 'Come walk with me this way,'" says Steven. "A lot of people, until they come here, really don't know what to do."

Three Reasons

But not everyone will come to the Mission, because:

1. Not everyone has access to transportation.
2. Not everyone knows the Mission exists.
3. People aren't sure what to expect – will they be welcomed with love or scorned like they are on the streets?

Those three reasons – second only to the compelling call of God – is why we have so many different outreach ministries and events.

Your gift today will share God's love with our community and transform lives!

We take our services to people like Steven so that they get the chance to experience what the Mission is all about, which of course is God's love.

One of our biggest outreach events, our annual Homeless Birthday Party, is coming up on May 26th. Steven has attended before, and it had a big impact on him.

"You feel cared for when you come to the party," he says. "You feel like, 'Oh, somebody does care about me. . . Somebody not only cares that I'm homeless, but they want to help lift me up. . . It's an abundance there. It's a cornucopia of love!'"

Love Makes it Possible

It's that love – God's love – in action that transforms lives from the inside out. Steven is proof. Today he loves God more deeply, is part of a supportive church community, has a job and has been sober for over seven years!

"It's a world of difference from being out in my tent. Praise the Lord!" he says.

Praise the Lord, indeed!



It Really is a Wonderful Life

Jeff Gilman
Executive Director



Every year when we host the Homeless Birthday Party, I can't help but think about the movie, "It's a Wonderful Life."

Like George Bailey, the main character in the movie, many of the men and women who come to the birthday party are either wrestling with or have wrestled with the thought that the world would be a better place if they were never born. Many of them, like George, have even felt such despair that they are willing to commit suicide just to find relief.

But with the angel, Clarence, as our guide, "It's a Wonderful Life" reminds us that every life has purpose. To not have lived – or to end a life prematurely – is tragic.

At the Mission we celebrate the beauty and importance of life by showering our hurting neighbors with love and showing them that we are delighted that they are alive. It is through outreach ministries, like the Homeless Birthday Party, that despairing men and women get to encounter God and His purpose for them in the midst of their circumstances.

The birthday party, and every outreach event made possible by your partnership, celebrates life and helps people step into the life God has for them. Thank you for your support. Thank you for showing people of all ages, races, backgrounds and economic situations that they were created by a good and loving God and that their life matters.



The Homeless Birthday Party



At last year's birthday party, Nan (middle in back row) and the Bayside Church group handed out popcorn and lemonade to the guests. This year's booth will be a surprise, but we know that whatever they decide to do will be a huge blessing!

The Homeless Birthday Party, which was so important to Steven, will be held on Friday, May 26th this year. It'll be a wonderful time of food, fun, festivities and most important, community.

The body of Christ makes this party possible because each year multiple churches partner with us to celebrate the fact that our poor and needy neighbors exist. We throw the party to show them that their lives do matter.

Bayside Church is one of the churches that has had a booth at the party for years. Nan, the church's liaison to the Mission, says that they love being a part of it.

"There's so much joy," she says. "All of the guests that are there are enjoying it so very much. I think that helps them feel noticed and important. It's just the



blessing that I personally get from seeing the smiles on their face, and I love interacting with them...There's a lot of happiness there, a lot of smiles, a lot of fun bantering."

Plus, serving at the party is a great way to build comradery within your own church as well as with other churches in the community.

"I think people sometimes step back because they're afraid it's going to be too much work," Nan says. "There's work involved, but it's not unmanageable work by any means. The benefits from it far outweigh the work."

We usually have around 10 churches partnering, and there is plenty of room for more! If you'd like to find out more about volunteering for the Homeless Birthday Party or any of our other ministries, contact Tina Karns, tkarns@srmission.org or 707.578.1830 x 314.

We Are Called to Go Out!



Outreach Ministry Updates

The Homeless Birthday Party is just one of many outreach events and ministries your generosity makes possible. And this summer, God is at work in many of the ministries, including our Mobile Shower ministry and our new Mobile Kitchen.

Second Mobile Shower Hits the Road



"We try to make it a ministry instead of just a shower," says Grace, one of the volunteers. "We want them to also have an opportunity to learn the Word. We've had about 10 people become part of the church and their lives have totally been changed in every way."

In 2015, our first mobile shower unit hit the road. As of last year, we were providing more than 100 showers a week to our homeless neighbors around Sonoma County.

And now, thanks to generous friends like you, we'll be able to reach even more people, because a second mobile shower unit is now up and running! The new unit is focusing on Sonoma County area, which frees up our first shower unit to go into Mendocino County, at our Ukiah location and other areas that we're praying God opens up soon!

The new shower unit also has laundry facilities, which means our guests will have the option to wash their clothes. That gives our staff and volunteers more opportunities to have conversations and build relationships while guests wait for their laundry to finish!

The Mobile Kitchen is Up and Running

The refurbished food trailer we got from a local non-profit organization is now up and running, and God's timing is perfect. We just started work remodeling our main kitchen, and now this fully equipped mobile kitchen is helping us serve the hundreds of meals we provide to our poor and needy neighbors every day!

Once our main kitchen is complete, the trailer, which is being run by our Blackcoat Catering team, will be out at a variety of events.

"Being able to actually bring a kitchen out somewhere is going to be amazing!" says Marshall, a former guest who helped launch the Blackcoat Catering Program that helps train guests in food service.

It's already amazing seeing it in action here at the Mission, and we can't wait until we can use it on the road.



The new Mobile Kitchen will allow us to host more outreach events, expand the Nomadic Shelter ministry to churches that don't have their own kitchens, train more people for jobs in the food service industry, generate income and help more people learn about the Mission just by being an ongoing visual presence.

When People Don't Come to Us, You Make It Possible for Us to Go to Them!



Another Way to Transform Lives



Any amount you give today will allow us to continue to go out into our community, meeting our poor and needy neighbors where they are – in the mess of life – to share God's transforming love.

Meet People Right Where They Are

God didn't sit around waiting for us to come to Him, He came to us in the person of Jesus Christ!

Likewise, at the Mission we believe that we are called to go out to our hurting neighbors, share God's love and invite them into transformed lives. Your gifts make that possible!

Men and women who are experiencing homelessness feel like they have nowhere to go. Many of them don't even know about the Redwood Gospel Mission.

They feel trapped on the streets. Defeated by their circumstances.

But God can work in their circumstances, not in spite of them. That's what outreach is all about – and it's why gifts from friends like you are so important.

Every time you help us "go out," people who may never set foot on our property get to experience the transforming love, mercy, grace and kindness of our God. If we don't go to them, how will they know that there is hope and that God has purpose for their lives?

Please give as generously as you can!

*Thank you for
your generosity
and faithfulness.*



Giving to the Mission at any time is a huge blessing that changes lives. But writing a check or putting a gift on your credit card isn't the only way you can make a lasting difference. Another option is remembering Redwood Gospel Mission in your will.

Over the years, a number of faithful friends have left gifts to the Mission, and their impact on our poor and needy neighbors is still continuing!

For more information on legacy giving, contact Jeff Gilman at 707.578.1830

You can also give securely online at: srmission.org/outreach



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