

REAL CHANGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF REDWOOD GOSPEL MISSIONS



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MAY 2024

The Power of a Party

Weize has been to nearly every outreach event that the Mission has.

"And it's nice that when you're out there and being unsheltered that they have these events to look forward to each year," Weize says.

"People know that they'll get a warm meal or get to do arts and crafts. They know it's a place they can get a jacket or just come and have someone pray for them. It's a place that they know is safe, where they can get what they need or ask questions."

Those events helped her build relationships and those relationships changed her life.

Where It's Okay Not to Be Okay

"It was okay not to be okay. And they still accepted you," she says, referring to the Mission staff and volunteers.

"They welcomed you in and with open arms. And they wanted to help you and pray over you and see what kind of resources that they could help you with."

(Continued inside...)

"I know when I was feeling my darkest, if I went to the Mission, I'd have a little bit of hope. I'd feel a little of God's love, my heart would warm up a little bit and it was like a comfort zone for me." – Weize



Get involved at rgm.org/birthday



The Power of a Party

(Continued from cover)

It really is all about relationships.

Relationships with God, each other, family, friends and ourselves.

"We need a village when we're in recovery to stay in recovery because that's what keeps us strong."

– Weize

Some of the other resources Weize connected with were the Nomadic Shelter, the Rose for women and children, and our chapel services, all of which helped her grow in a relationship with Jesus and stay sober.

"Before coming to the Mission, I never had five years clean," she says. Now she's heading into year 6.

She's also deeply connected to her church and helps when it's their turn to host the Nomadic Shelter.

"I'm actually on the other side and helping people sit down with just a meal and asking them, 'How can I help you? What do you need? How can I help you with resources?' I share a little bit of my story that I was at their shoes five years ago, and there is hope and light at the end of the tunnel."

Making our Community Stronger

About a year and a half ago, Weize went through the Peer Support class at West County Community

Services. After she graduated from the class she did an internship, got a job and just recently got a promotion!

"I know what recovery looks like," she says.

Now, instead of being the one experiencing homelessness, Weize continues to help others – both at work and when she volunteers, which she does often. She'll be at the Homeless Birthday Party on May 24th.

Jesus Makes Us Family

"I love the Redwood Gospel Mission because you guys bring everybody together as a family," she says.

And it's only by being a family – by coming together in the name of Christ – that lives are truly transformed.

Please pray that this year's party will plant seeds of hope and change in the hearts of everyone who attends! Each \$2.02 meal you can give will help!



You Are a Miracle

Jeff Gilman
Executive Director

Several years ago, Dr. Ali Binazir, a guy who really likes numbers, calculated the odds of you being alive, exactly as you are, at 1 in $10^{2,685,000}$.

Stop and think about that for a moment. You being you, with your parents, your eye color, your traits, born on the day you were born, breathing in every breath you take today. The probability of you being you here and now is practically zero.

And that tells me you are a miracle. A miracle of

love and creativity and science and beauty. A miracle of God.

I'm sharing this with you, not only because I believe it's true, but because I want you to know how much you matter. I believe it's only by knowing our true value and worth that we can help others find theirs.

Not only are you a miracle, but so are all the homeless men and women on the streets of Sonoma and Mendocino Counties tonight. They just don't know it, yet. But together, we can celebrate them and the miracle that is their life so that they can begin to live like the miracles that they are.

That's one more reason I hope you'll partner with us for this year's Homeless Birthday Party. We need you, as a living miracle, with your unique gifts and talents, to help celebrate others and show them that they are living miracles, too.

The Blessing of Being a Blessing

We asked Mary, "If someone gave you a million dollars to stop volunteering, would you?"

She didn't blink an eye before responding, "No. I would lose the life and joy that I get every day from what I do."

Mary will say that there's nothing special about her. No special degrees or decades of training. She hasn't gone to seminary, she's not a social worker and she's not a state-certified teacher.

But what she is, is so much more. Mary is someone who shows up and loves deeply, and because of that, the Mission has been blessed by her volunteering for 15 years. And in the process, she's been blessed more than she could have ever imagined.

"Serving here has completely changed my life," Mary says. "More and more I've been compelled by love. The more I seem to do with people, the more God's love just grows in me. It's helped me to overcome a lot of fear, insecurity, anxiety."

And because it's helped her so much, Mary wants other people to have the same benefits.

"I'm trying to get more people to come and volunteer. It's been so good for me, which sounds selfish, but it's serving this way that expands God's love in us, which is life changing."

Mary loves volunteering so much that in addition to teaching classes and mentoring, she helps at our events, including the Homeless Birthday Party.

"There's nothing like seeing God at work than when you see him do for people what they can't do for themselves. People will be so stuck and absolutely hopeless. They've lost everything. They've lost everyone in their lives," Mary says. "And then to watch God just start filling them with love and transforming them and giving them their life back... there's nothing better."



Mary loves volunteering so much that in addition to teaching classes and mentoring, she helps at our events, including the Homeless Birthday Party.



Homeless Birthday Party Volunteer Opportunities

If you want to see God at work in our community and watch Him change lives – including your own – join us for the Homeless Birthday Party!

There are volunteer opportunities for individuals and groups, including:

- Registration and Greeting
- Preparing and Serving Meals
- Set-up and Clean-up
- Prayer Team
- Handing out Blessing Bags
- Helping with Comfort Ministries (if you are a licensed hair stylist, etc.)

To find your place, contact Tina Karns at tkarns@rgm.org or 707.578.1830 x 314.



Sign and Return Your Birthday Card



"Happy Birthday."

Those two words say so much. They say: I see you. Your life matters. I'm glad you were born.

And yet, those are words many of our homeless neighbors never hear. That's why the Homeless Birthday Party is so important. And it's why signing and returning the enclosed birthday card is such a big deal.

By signing and returning the card (and sending a gift), you are saying that you believe that every life is valuable, that people can change and that there is always hope.

Here's what you do:

- 1. Sign your first name** (there's room for you to add a short note if you'd like).
- 2. Put it in the enclosed envelope** with your gift and send it in by May 23rd so we'll have it in time for the Homeless Birthday Party.
- 3. Pray** for the person who will receive your card.
- 4. Smile**, imagining what your birthday card will mean to someone who hasn't gotten one in years.

The Homeless Birthday Party is on May 24th. Please make sure we have your card by May 23rd.



NOTE: Please use ballpoint pen and sign your first name only.

Thanks for helping to bless our hurting neighbors in such a special way!

Blessing Bags

Our goal is to give every guest at the party a Birthday Blessing Bag.

You can help make sure there's enough by stuffing your own and dropping them off before the party!

Grab a festive birthday bag and fill it with:

- 2 pairs of socks
- travel size brush
- sunscreen
- lip balm
- toothbrush
- toothpaste
- mints
- sunglasses or sun visors
- \$10 Gift Card (fast food, coffee, movie theater, etc.).

Drop off your completed bags at the main office, Redwood Gospel Missions Ministry Support Office 1821 Piner Road. M-F, 8a-1p & 2-5p. Nikigiovonie Rogers. nrogers@rgm.org or phone 707-578-1830 X 315 by May 20th.



In addition to a great meal, birthday cake, comfort ministries like haircuts, a clothing give-away and birthday cards, we want each homeless guest to get to take home a Blessing Bag.

Show a Homeless Neighbor
their Life Matters!



Give \$2.02 Birthday Meals

Life in this broken world is hard for everyone. But can you imagine how much harder it would be if you were completely on your own?

Without family. Without friends. Without knowing the God who created you and rescued you?

That isn't some made-up scenario. It's the very real reality that our homeless neighbors live in. Many of them have gone for years without community and it's taking its toll on their lives, their health and their souls.

That's why, for more than 25 years, the Mission has hosted a Homeless Birthday Party. And while it may seem like a strange thing to gather a bunch of people and celebrate all of their birthdays on one day, it's one of the best ways we've found to pull our poor and needy neighbors out of despair and put them on the path to new life!

And it's friends like you that make the birthday party possible! Will you help by sending a gift by May 23rd?

Each \$2.02 you give will help provide a birthday meal for one person! A gift of \$20.20 is enough to provide meals for 10 people.

*When you send your gift,
be sure to include
your signed birthday card.*

*Give now by going online
to rgm.org/birthday*



**Each \$20.20 you give helps provide 10 birthday meals!
Every meal can help change a life like Weize's.**

Another Way to Transform Lives



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 Missions 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.



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