

# REAL CHANGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF REDWOOD GOSPEL MISSIONS



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MAY 2025

## The Cupcake That Changed Jon's life

**Before he came to the Mission, Jon hadn't celebrated his birthday in years.**

Having been addicted to meth since he was 15, life was about survival – not celebration.

*"I had no birthday on the streets," he says. "I had no one to celebrate it with."*

Years went by and Jon's life got worse and worse.

*"My life was terrible," he says.*

He wanted to stop using, but no matter what he tried, he couldn't. Other programs didn't help. But then he came to the Mission, and from the very first hot meal he had here, Jon knew something was different.

### **The Difference is LOVE**

*"When we're on the streets, nobody cares about us," he says. "Our own friends rob us for our food when we're sleeping, or they'll rob us for our clothes because they want what we got. But at the Mission, they give out clothing, they feed us breakfast and dinner. It's a good place to be."*

That care and compassion pointed Jon to Jesus and helped him decide to join our New Life Recovery Program.

*Continues inside.*

A close-up portrait of a man with dark hair, smiling warmly. He is wearing a light blue and white vertically striped button-down shirt over a black t-shirt. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a building and some greenery.

**"I thought I had nobody that cared about me." – Jon**

## The Cupcake That Changed Jon's life

*(Continued from cover)*

*"I didn't even know who Jesus was until I got to the Mission," he says. "I was brought to become a Christian, and I was baptized on March 5th, 2023. So now I'm a Christian, and I'm happy to be."*

As Jon went through the program, everything in his life began to change. For the first time since he was 8 years old, he was sober, clear-headed and hopeful for the future.

He had gotten so used to not celebrating his birthday, when it came around, he didn't expect much. But we weren't going to let the day slip by without celebrating.

### The Cupcake

*"Someone gave me a cupcake and wished me a happy birthday," he says. "I realized that I have friends. I had people who cared about me. It was really great."*

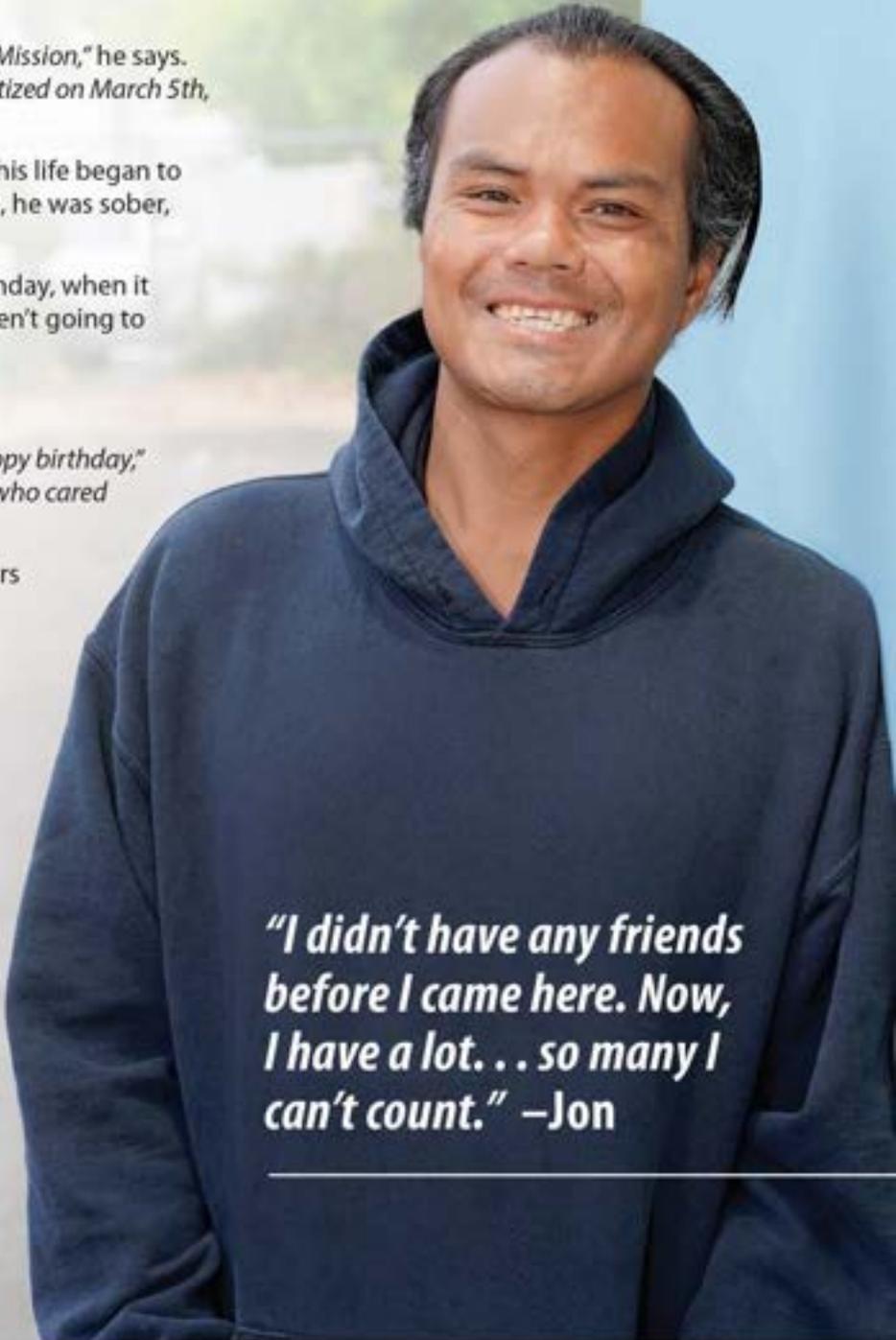
Like Jon, many of our homeless neighbors go years or decades without anyone acknowledging their birthday. That's why we created the Homeless Birthday Party. It's one day to stop and celebrate people's lives, just as they are, and tell them we are glad God created them.

*"It's really good for the homeless to go to the party," he says.*

### The Power of a Party

While he was in the program, Jon even helped chauffeur guests to and from pick-up points around the city so as many people as possible could participate. He's not sure if he will join us this year – he's busy with his job, attending church and spending time with his friends – but he knows that for everyone who attends, it can be a life-changing day.

*"I never thought I would've had a life like this," Jon says, happily.*



***"I didn't have any friends before I came here. Now, I have a lot... so many I can't count." –Jon***

 ***Your gift today will show a homeless neighbor, like Jon, that their life matters and that transformation is possible!***



**Jeff Gilman**  
Executive Director

# Why the Homeless Birthday Party is Unique

**Most of the events we do are designed to give people a chance to change their lives. But the Homeless Birthday Party is unique.**

Of course, it also offers people avenues for transformation if they want to take that step, but that's not the main purpose. When we created this event, it was simply to show people that God loves them, period.

It's our chance to honor them for who they are and show them that they are truly loved without needing to do anything to earn that love.

Kristen, who helps decorate for the party, said it beautifully when she said, *"It's always crushing to me when you are talking with somebody, and they say they just feel like they're a burden to society and that nobody cares about them. I love this event because it allows for us to show them that they've been created. They're not born by accident. And it allows us to tell them that there's a God that loves them."*

There's no more important message that we could share, and I'm so grateful that you help us do it in such a meaningful way.



## Sign and Return Your Birthday Card

No birthday celebration is complete without cards! Here's how to help us make sure that everyone who comes to the party gets one:

- 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 and **send** it to the Mission by May 20th 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.



Kristen and her church, SOMA, have been helping with the birthday decorations for the past four years.

## Food, Fun, Festivities and **More**

### The Homeless Birthday Party is unlike any other event we do.

In addition to plenty of food, cake and decorations, we have a variety of services, including haircuts, blessing bags, clothes giveaways and more.

To make the party extra special, Kristen and her church help with the decorations.

*"When I heard that there was a celebration, to celebrate just people being born all on one day, I thought that was the best thing I'd ever heard of. So that's why I love this event so much," she says. "I think everyone's birth should be celebrated."*

To make the celebration extra special, Kristen and

her church help with decorations, giving the party a festive, playful, kid-like feel.

*"Every year, the decor gets a little more colorful and a little more childlike because no one, as a kid, hated their birthday. And so, we want to bring back that feel of a kid's party," she says. "The services that are given with the haircuts and all of that, make it feel more like a special day."*

But it's not only about making people feel special for a day, it's about showing them their worth as God-created men and women.

*"I love this event because it allows us to show people that they've been created, that they're not born by accident. We get to show them that there's a God who loves them."*

# UKIAH UPDATE: The Mobile Resource Center is Open!

As our services in Ukiah grow, we realized we needed to add a Mobile Resource Center trailer so that we could partner with local medical personnel and social service providers to offer more life-changing services to our needy neighbors.

Friends like you offered to help purchase the trailer, which we dedicated and put into service in March.

Now along with our mobile showers, we have a private meeting space to help guests with medical needs, applying for food stamps and other vital services.



*Thanks to the generosity of friends like you, we were able to purchase a brand-new Mobile Resource Center for Ukiah!*



# Share God's Love by Volunteering

If you want to see God at work in our community and watch Him change lives – including your own – come volunteer at the Homeless Birthday Party, with our Mobile Ministries or at our other locations throughout the year!

In addition to our special events, we have regular opportunities for volunteers to serve meals, to mentor guests and a whole lot more.

To find your place, contact Tina Karns at [volunteer@rgm.org](mailto:volunteer@rgm.org) or 707.578.1830 x 314.



*Volunteers are ready to serve guests in Ukiah.*

# Celebrate Life!

## Give \$2.02 Birthday Meals!

Since the beginning of creation, every human being has had immeasurable value for one reason: they were created by a good and loving God, in His image.

It doesn't matter what they look like.  
What they do or don't do.  
They are loved, period.

Sadly, most of our homeless neighbors don't know that. Instead, they think they are a burden, a disgrace and that their lives don't matter.

We know that nothing could be further from the truth and the Homeless Birthday Party is our chance to share the beauty of that Gospel truth with them and celebrate the God who created them.

**Will you help by giving a gift to provide meals? Each \$2.02 you give provides one birthday meal!**

When you send your gift, be sure to include your signed birthday card. Your card could be the added nudge someone needs to see that their life matters!

**Each \$2.02 you give helps provide a birthday meal for a homeless neighbor.**



## Keep the Celebration Going

The Homeless Birthday Party happens once a year, but with the support of friends like you, we're able to show our homeless neighbors that their life has value every day, all year long.

And with legacy giving, that celebration – and the transformation that it leads to – doesn't have to stop.

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 at: [rgm.org/birthday](http://rgm.org/birthday)



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