

REAL CHANGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF REDWOOD GOSPEL MISSION

MAY 2019

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Birthdate #1 of 3: Why Celebrating Matters

Jessica wants people currently struggling with homelessness to know three things:

1. She wants them to know about the Homeless Birthday Party.
2. She wants them to know they matter.
3. She wants them to know that they are loved.

When Jessica's father died, she was launched into a life of homelessness. She was only 18.

She joined a gang, roaming the streets, sleeping on friends' couches when she was lucky. She lived that way for years. More years than anyone should have to.

Then one day she heard about the Homeless Birthday Party. She attended and realized that life could be different.

"My experience was wonderful," she says. "They handed out backpacks, hygiene items and clothes. There was foot-washing and haircuts. It all made me feel wanted, loved and a part of the community."

That's a feeling people who are homeless rarely have. Instead, they battle feelings of despair and homelessness, thinking that no one cares about them.

But when you support the Homeless Birthday Party, you show them that their lives matter. You give them hope that their lives can change. In fact, Jessica recently celebrated her actual birthday here at the Mission, where she is a guest. She turned 31 surrounded by people who love her and are rooting for her. Now, she's looking to the future and hoping to inspire others.

Read more inside...



Get involved at srmission.org/birthday

When you celebrate 1 birthday, you can open the door to 2 more!



Birthdate #2 of 3: **A Life of Freedom**

Monday, November 20th, 2006 was the day that Luther's life changed forever. That's the day he first walked into the doors of the Mission. Since that day, he hasn't used drugs or had a drop of alcohol.

But that's not to say it's been easy. After using drugs for 45 years – yes, 45 years – he was in rough shape. Anyone who looked at him could see it, but he was in denial.

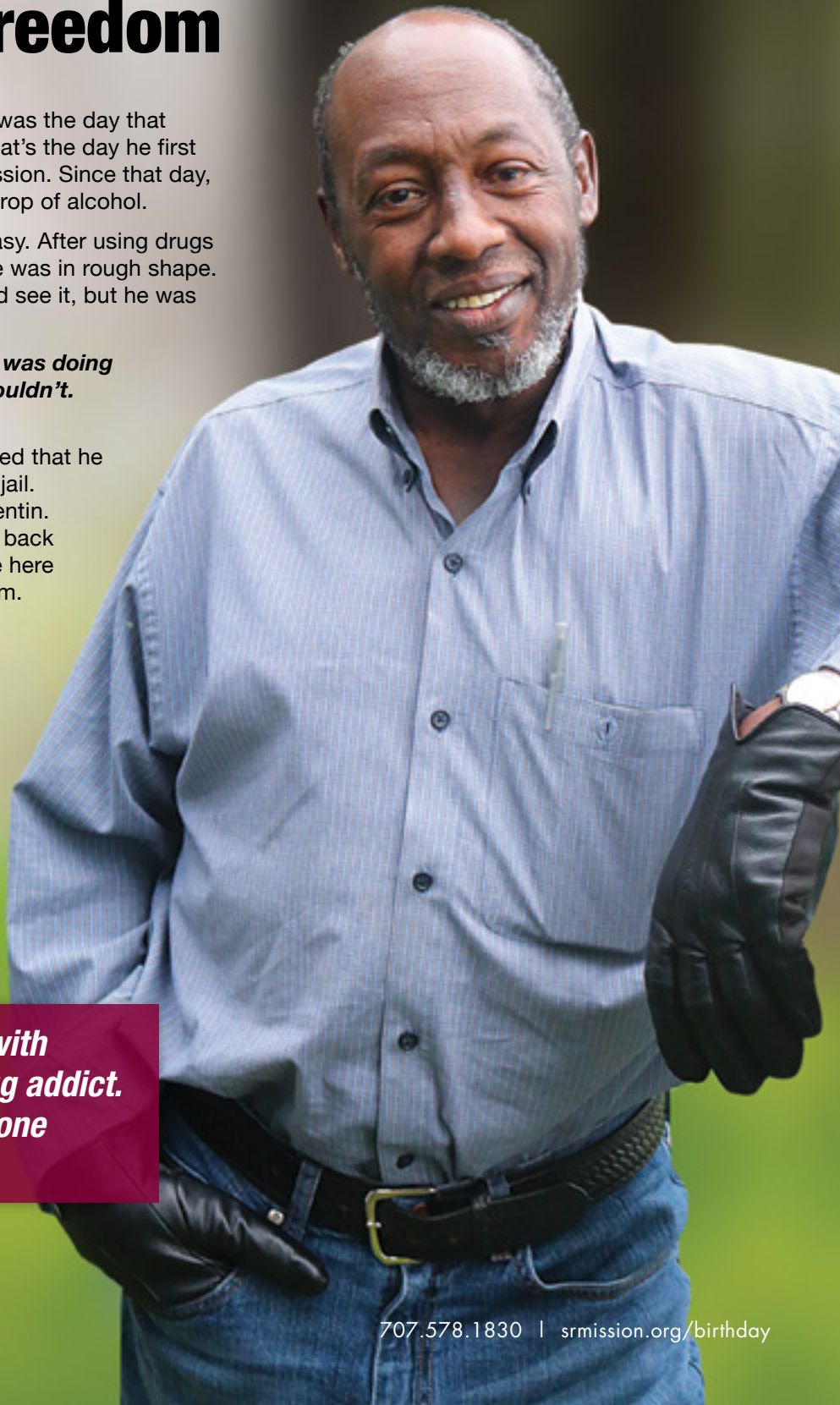
"I felt I could quit doing what I was doing whenever I wanted to. But I couldn't. In reality, I couldn't."

His life had become so untethered that he had spent months in and out of jail. First at Folsom, then at San Quentin. Every time he got out, he'd turn back to drugs. It wasn't until he came here that he realized he had a problem.

"I'd been sleeping down at the bottom of the creek, on a bench," Luther says. "It was raining cats and dogs. I was soaking. I was hungry. And a voice told me to go to the Mission."

Continued on bottom of the next page...

"I don't mind sharing with people that I was a drug addict. This is what God has done for me." – Luther





Birthday #3 of 3: I Met Jesus

Jeff Gilman
Executive Director



The most important birthday any of us ever have is the day we meet Jesus. For me, that day came on a Saturday night in late August of 1978.

I didn't grow up in a Christian home, but I'd heard about Jesus and had begun to learn a little about Him. But until that Saturday night, I was still hesitant in my beliefs.

All that changed when I got in a car accident, and it was my fault. In an instant, my world came crashing down all around me. It was terrible, and I praise God that no one was seriously hurt. But God is so amazing that He can turn even horrible situations into moments of new life. That's what He did for me that day. As I sat on the road in my wrecked car, I realized that I needed Jesus. Right then and there I surrendered my life to Him and I've never been the same.

Of course, when I woke up the next morning, the reality of my situation hadn't been erased.

The car was still damaged, and I still had consequences to face. But I also had Jesus, and a new birthday to celebrate. One that I will never ever forget. And one that has changed the course of the rest of my life.

I'm praying that some of our guests will have their second birthday at the party. That they will be so overwhelmed by the love they feel that they'll decide right then and there to give their lives to Jesus. Will you join me in praying for that, too?



You can give people like Luther another birthday – the day they begin a whole new life!

A New Man

Luther was all alone. He didn't know where the voice came from. He didn't even know what the Mission was, but still he found his way to our door.

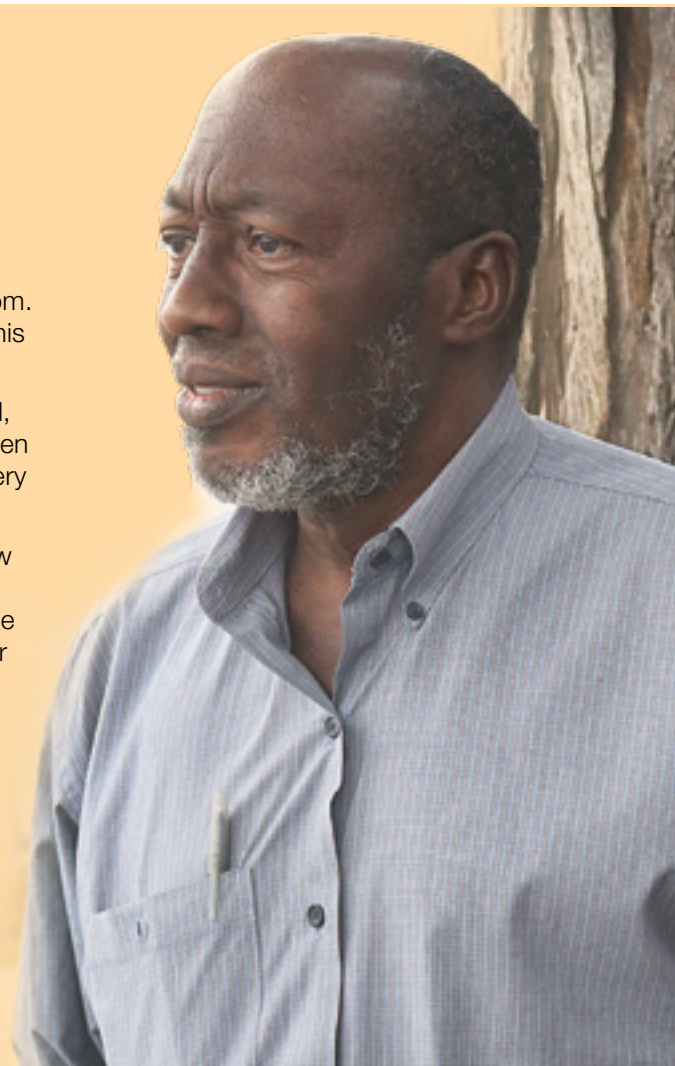
Thanks to the support of friends like you, he was given a good, hot meal, clean clothes and a warm bed to sleep in. That's when he met some men who invited him to join the New Life Recovery Program.

At first Luther scoffed at the idea, but as he talked with his new friends, he realized he had nothing to lose but everything to gain. And gain he has. Luther has grown closer to Jesus, made connections he never thought possible and has been sober for over 12 years.

No Going Back

He loves looking ahead to his next "birthday," when he can add another year to his sobriety.

"I'll never go back to that way of life that I was living," Luther says. "I can't wait to get to 13 years. That's how important my sobriety and that date is to me. I love going to get my chip."



Show Homeless People They Are Important: Send a 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 to the Mission by June 3rd 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 June 7th. Please make sure we have your card by June 3rd.



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



Prayer Points



- Pray for Jessica. She is excited about her future and is already looking forward to giving back. Please pray for continued strength for her as she works towards graduating from our program.
- Pray for Luther. He has had some major health issues in the last few months. Pray for continued healing and peace for him.
- Pray for the person who will receive your signed birthday card.

Volunteer Opportunities



Want to meet the people your gifts are helping? We're looking for volunteers for these upcoming events:

- **The Homeless Birthday Party: June 7th**
- **City Kids Back to School Festivals**
North County City Kids: August 3rd
Santa Rosa City Kids: August 10th
- **24 In Your Car: September 28th**

Contact Trina Brannen at 707-578-1830 or tbrannen@srmission.org for more information or to sign up. If none of those dates work for you, there are plenty of other ways for you to get involved this summer. Contact us and we'll help you find just the right spot!



Your Birthday Gift Matters

Not many people past the age of 10 have birthday parties every year. But still, we have people in our lives who call us, send cards, give us gifts or take us out to dinner to mark the occasion. Birthdays matter. They are a milestone. A reminder of all that God has brought us through and that there is still a future ahead.

It feels good to be recognized. It feels good to be celebrated.

But most of our homeless community never gets to feel that. No one sends them cards. No one hands them a balloon. No one shares a birthday cake with them. No one even tells them they are glad they're alive.

But you can.

You can be a voice that says, "I haven't forgotten you. You are loved. You are celebrated. You matter."

That's what you do when you support the Homeless Birthday Party on June 7th.

Our goal is that every person who comes to the

party receives a personally-signed birthday card and a delicious meal to enjoy.

Please:

1. Sign and return your birthday card by June 3rd.
2. Consider sending a gift. Each \$1.79 helps provide a delicious sit-down meal at the party – and that includes birthday cake.

Your generosity and compassion will show our homeless guests that they matter and point them to Jesus – the One who loves them the most.

Please send your signed birthday card and gift by June 3rd. You can also give securely at srmission.org/birthday

Each \$17.90 you give helps provide 10 birthday meals - and each one can become a turning point and a new reason to celebrate!



REAL CHANGE

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