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Carrying Out God's Work

Dear Friends,

The Christmas Season is a time when we celebrate family memories and traditions. The loving preparation of special meals, sharing the story of the Child laid in a manger, and choosing gifts for the people in our lives. It may seem that the joys of family tradition and deep need are worlds apart – they are incompatible with each other. It may appear that those who are falling on hard times can't enjoy the warmth of the season where we celebrate the birth of Jesus. It may seem that for the homeless, these traditions are either out of reach or never a part of their experience, or both.



Executive Director Jim Castleberry

But things are not always as they seem. You see, at the Rescue Mission in addition to shelter for the homeless, we provide warm meals along with a family atmosphere and gifts to all our residents and their children. We are able to do this because of the generous support of many of our friends.

While you are here, feel free to browse around the site. You will find that Cornerstone residents and community clients discover a bit of family, hope, and the making of new and better memories centered in the life changing power of Jesus Christ.

Every day, our staff and volunteers help hurting men, women and children in our various programs. Your support helps us bring a message of change and new life to the shame and pain of past holiday seasons into experiences they will want to remember.

THANK YOU for sharing your gifts with those in need. With your support and concern for others, we can carry out God's work here. During these uncertain times, we value your kindness and generosity more than you will ever know. We need your help now more than ever.

Blessings,

Jim

A Note to Our Contributors

In response to suggestions made by several of our contributors, we are exploring ways to limit our mailing expenses. Consequently, we have decided to mail out contribution receipts on a quarterly basis rather than monthly. If you prefer to receive a monthly receipt, please contact Mary at 718-8712.

Finding a Silver Lining

We've all heard that every cloud has a silver lining, but we also know it can be difficult to find sometimes. For Jaelyn Swift Eagle, that glittering light is finally revealing itself. But the road to finding it has been a long and bumpy one.

As a child in a small Montana town with only three Native American families, she often found herself the target of name-calling by her classmates and insults from her teachers. At home, she saw her single mother struggle with alcohol and a string of unhealthy relationships.

In 1998, Jaelyn came to Rapid City, to be near her sister. Without stability or positive friendships, she found herself enduring her own struggles with alcohol and unhealthy relationships.

In January, 2008, she was sent to jail. Ironically, she sees that as the turning point in her life . . . the beginning of her success in finding that silver lining. "If I hadn't gone to prison, I'd still be in that crazy, never-ending cycle," she says with a warm, thoughtful smile. Because of the nature of her relationships with family and friends, a condition of Jaelyn's parole was that she enter Cornerstone's Women and Children's Home. She did so on May 13, 2008, and found the stability she now knows is so important. "I had a big problem trusting people," she explains. "Openness and honesty were really hard for me. The caring I found here was strange



at first, but it felt good."

The Home's Program Manager, LouAnn Thudium, saw the challenge Jaelyn faced. "Jaelyn was very insecure when she came to us," she says. "She had not experienced much moral support. We helped her realize what she could do. We try to offer encouragement and guidance to every woman who comes to our Home."

Jaelyn and her baby Pysais now reside at the Cornerstone Apartments transitional housing program. She is also a participant in the Cornerstone Work for Success program that provided her with the opportunity to work as a receptionist at the Home. Due to her success in that role, she is now training to become an Advocate serving other women who come to the Home. She hopes to help other residents learn to meet their needs. She also plans to begin classes toward a degree in Social Work. "I want to help other people find their way," she says, "and to show them that they can do it."

As Jaelyn shares her story, the glow of genuine peace shines persistently on her face. Her confidence and happiness reflect how the light of God's love can change a life. Jaelyn has her silver lining, and her conclusion to this story sums it up perfectly. She gleams, "It was a struggle at first, but with the right people behind me, I've made it. I'm just really, REALLY happy!"

Work for Success

"If they'd just get a job, they wouldn't be homeless!" This is a common belief. However, Cornerstone staff members can attest to the concerted effort that many homeless people make in their effort to secure gainful employment. The Work for Success program was developed two years ago when a parole officer gave a young woman two weeks to get a job, or she would be sent back to the state women's prison. Most people would agree that a good job is hard to find in this economy. Try finding that good job when you don't have a home mailing address . . . or if you have to check "Yes" in felony box on an employment application. Work for Success is a 12 week training program that provides positive work experience and job skills training. Cornerstone residents who are selected for the program are paid minimum wage and given a rent or employment assistance match when they successfully complete the program. We would like to expand this program in order to respond to the number of men and women who would like to participate. You can help by making a contribution. We also need employers who can offer job training op-

Success By Any Other Name...

Success by any other name is still success. Jim Goodrich, Cornerstone Veteran's Coordinator, says that the most important lessons the veterans have taught him is to measure success individually and that successes are as varied and unique as the veterans themselves. Jim says, "I have learned that there is no cookie cutter definition that truly defines just what success really means."

To illustrate his point, Jim shares two success stories he has witnessed at the Mission. One is seemingly small and one seemingly larger, yet they are in fact both significant success stories. One sixty year old veteran arrived here over three years ago; he was completely dependent for what most would consider simple tasks. Gradually, with encouragement and support he became stronger and stronger. One day, he walked into Jim's office, picked up the phone and made a call. For most people, that's simple enough; but, in this instance it was not. The veteran turned to Jim and said that was the first call he had made all by himself in over thirty years. Up to that moment, Jim had always dialed the phone for him and then handed it to him when it rang. That's success! This veteran continues to grow and move forward, and Jim indicates that he has no doubt that this man will soon have his own apartment and live an independent life.

Jim's second "success" story is that of a veteran who arrived here two years ago lost and confused. He repeatedly told Jim he was useless and should just die. He had no family contact and no real friends. He had no job and was unable to build friendships. Gradually, with much attention and prayer, this veteran began looking Jim in the eye when they spoke. After a year and a half, he obtained his commercial driver's license and currently drives cross country for a trucking firm. He continues to call Jim regularly to let him know where he is, what he's delivering and where he's going next. That's success!

There are so many stories like these that happen every day at Cornerstone. Families are being reunited, veterans are being assisted in obtaining appropriate programming. They are obtaining jobs, moving into their own apartments... they are succeeding. Jim adds, "The real lesson is finally becoming clear to me. Success does not always mean a new car, a nice house, kids and a dog. For most of our veterans, success is remembering that they matter, they have worth and they can make it in this world."

Christmas was a great time for those of us who are truly blessed to look back and be reminded how good and simple our lives are. It's was a great time to remember what Christmas is all about and about the most magnificent success of all time, the birth of our Lord and the eternal gift of everlasting life that He brought us. We appreciate your continued support of our veterans here at Cornerstone and we ask that all veterans and those currently serving our country be included in your prayers.

Chili Cook-Off & Homeless Simulation

Have you ever wondered what it is like to be homeless? We have a unique opportunity for you to experience some of the day-to-day challenges that homeless people face! Come join us for the 2nd annual Cornerstone Chili Cook-Off and participate in an interactive Homeless Simulation:

Saturday, January 24th, 2009

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

at Bethel Assembly Church on North Maple

The Homeless Simulation takes about two hours of your time, but will give you a lifetime of human understanding and compassion for the less fortunate members of our community.

If you are interested in cooking, serving and /or eating a delicious variety of chili, please call Mary at 718-8712. Good will monetary and food donations will be received at the door.

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*“I tell you the truth,
whatever you did for
one of the least of these
brothers of mine, you
did for me.”*

- Matthew 25:40.

Sowing Seeds of Compassion

Another year has passed. What did you plant? What did you reap? The New Year is here! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let's yield our ears and listen to the cry of our Father's heart. Let's be bold enough to ask Him one question "Father, what do you want me to plant this year (money, service, gifts...) and where do you want me to plant?"

We invite you to make a vow right now for this year, 2009, to be a year in which you will honor Jesus in this world. Let's take care of our brothers and sisters in Him! Let's love each other the way He loves us and puts His life out for us. There is no greater love than to put one's life for his brethren!

We invite you to consider volunteering your time and sharing your gifts with our organization. We have many opportunities for you to sow seeds of compassion by becoming actively involved in our ministry. Our current needs include:

- Mentors for the Job Skills or Money 101 life skills classes beginning on the evening of January 8th.
- Cooks for the Women's Home and child care program.
- Assistants for the Chili Cook-off and Homeless Simulation on Saturday, January 24th from 10 AM to 2 PM.
- Volunteers for the Homeless Count on January 29th.
- Drivers for the Cornerstone Apartments.
- Other roles that make use of your special gifts and interests for as little as two hours per month.

Come and explore the possibilities during our Volunteer Informational Meeting scheduled at 11:30 on Friday, January 9th in our training room located at 401 Eleventh Street. You are welcome to call Mary at 718-8712 for more information.

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO CORNERSTONE RESCUE MISSION

(The enclosed envelope is for your convenience. We are serving more people every day. Your help is appreciated!)