

HARBOR LIGHT

Muskegon Rescue Mission



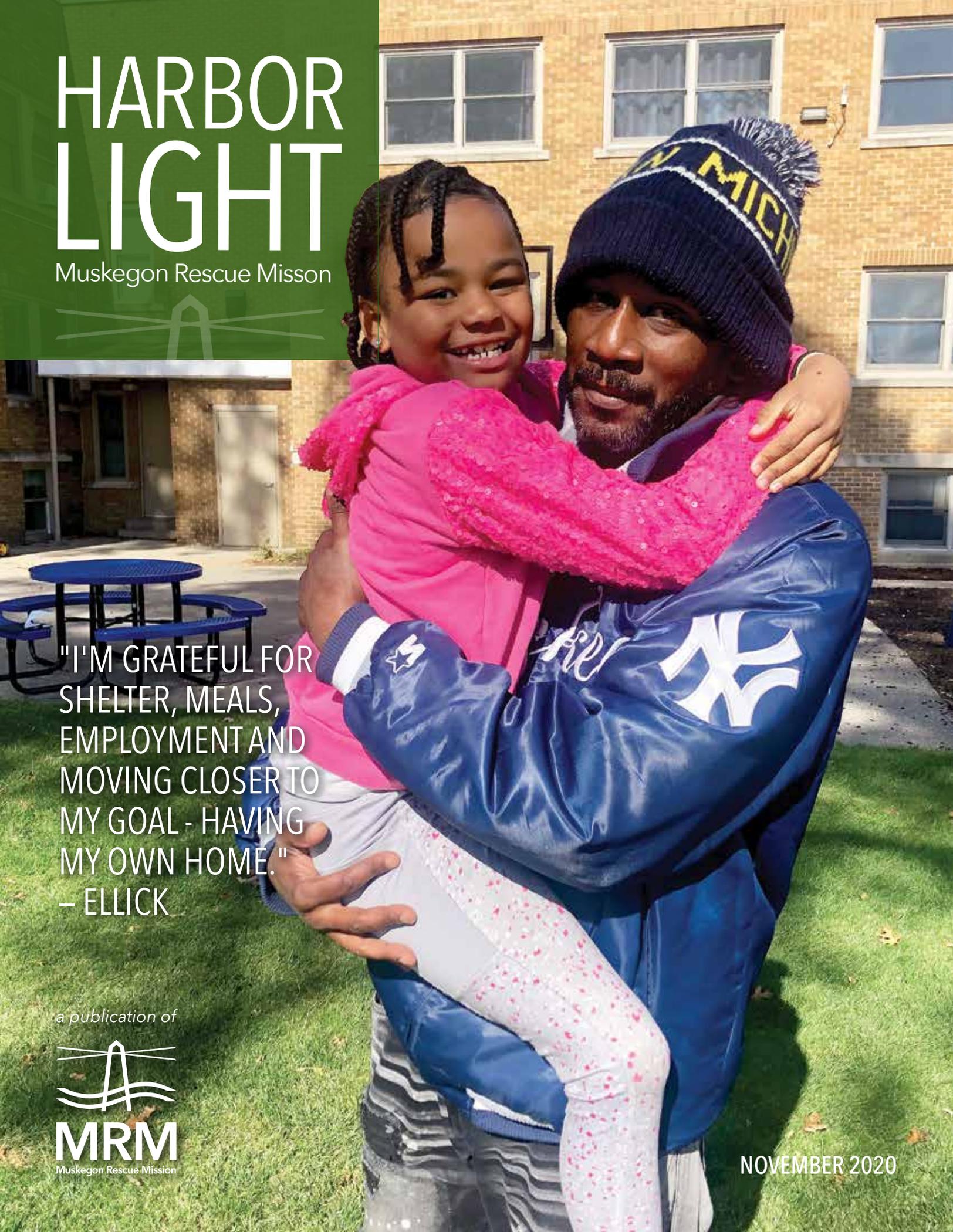
"I'M GRATEFUL FOR SHELTER, MEALS, EMPLOYMENT AND MOVING CLOSER TO MY GOAL - HAVING MY OWN HOME."
— ELLICK

a publication of



MRM
Muskegon Rescue Mission

NOVEMBER 2020





WHAT DO YOU SEE?



Dan Skoglund
Executive Director

If you were asked to close your eyes and paint the face of "Homelessness", what would you see?

Most would easily conjure up the face of an old man in tattered clothes, sleeping in a doorway and smelling of alcohol. You wouldn't see the face of Sara, a college student who is sleeping in her car and visiting the MRM pantry. You wouldn't see the face of Ellick, a single father and his daughter Talana who have no idea where they will sleep or where their next meal will come from. You wouldn't see the face of Sam, an 18-year old boy who aged out of the foster care program and no longer has a place to call home; but we do.

These are the real faces of the homeless who seek shelter, services and compassion through Muskegon Rescue Mission. These faces all have stories to share. They have hopes and dreams, they've experienced disappointment and hardships; but one common thing they

all share is the blessing that YOUR faithful and generous giving provides them - MRM and a hope for a brighter tomorrow!

In this issue of Harbor Light, you will read Ellick's story and see his face, the face of a young, single father struggling to provide a safe and secure life for his daughter. You will read about his journey and his hope for a brighter future for himself and his daughter, Talana.

These are the faces who thank you for your compassion and for offering them a caring hand up during a time in their life when they need it the most. These are the faces you have made a difference to.

Homelessness knows no boundaries, it does not discriminate, it gives no thought to age, and it does not care whether one is young or old, male or female, single or a family. Through your generosity and partnership with MRM you help bring these faces into the light and show them that they matter to God and to our community. Working together, we will have a life-changing impact on their lives.

Serving the community together,



"FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU,"
DECLARES THE LORD, "PLANS TO PROSPER
YOU AND NOT TO HARM YOU, PLANS TO
GIVE YOU HOPE AND A FUTURE."

-JEREMIAH 29:11

YOUR GIFT. YOUR IMPACT.



MRM's Fill the Plate campaign ran from July 24 through October 31, 2020. Thanks to your faithful partnership, we reached our pre-holiday goal of **200,000 meals!**



The Meijer **Simply Give** Fall campaign was a success thanks to the many donors who gave. **The Meijer Simply Give Fall campaign raised over \$20,000 in Food-only gift cards.** Thank you to Harvey Street Meijer and all who participated. It's all about neighbors helping neighbors.



IF ONLY I KNEW THEN WHAT I KNOW NOW.



"He's nice. Daddy's a kind man." shares Talana

Elick, a young father staying at the Family Shelter recently shared his story with us. He grew up in Muskegon Heights under the love of his divorced mother who raised him and his three siblings alone. "I learned how to be a go-getter and get things done by the competency of my mother. She was my strong tower." Sadly, Ellick's mother passed away in 2004, only one month after his release from prison.

Life hasn't been easy for Ellick. He credits spending time in prison for turning his life around 180° from where he was. "I was gang banger. I would just take what I wanted, instead of going out and working for it. I understand that's not the right way. It took me going to prison to learn my lesson, suffer the consequences, and turn my life around."

In November of 2019, Ellick was awarded custody of his beautiful 9-year-old daughter, Talana. Family members contacted CPS because her mother had the children dumpster diving at 2 a.m. so she could resell items for drugs. Talana was having trouble in school; she had missed 87 days of school and was falling behind. The day after Thanksgiving, Ellick took custody of Talana, who is a big sister to his other two children ages 1-1/2 years and 7 months old.

Out of work and on unemployment, with most of his money going to child support for his other two children he found himself left with only \$40 dollars in his pocket after each check. Not wanting to rely on family for support, Ellick turned to MRM for a helping hand. He has been at the Mission since mid-August and recently started working a third shift job. He is learning to budget and save money through the money management program MRM offers and his main goal is to have his own home by March 2021.

Ellick shared "If I only knew then what I know now I wouldn't have gone to prison and spent 7-1/2 years of my life that I can't get back. I would have stayed in school." When asked what he would tell his younger self, Ellick quickly responded, "Work, stay in school, get your education to get a better opportunity for a paying job. Go to college."

He also has a personal goal. He's working on controlling his anger better than he's done in the past. He explained, "The slightest thing would set me off, I'd blow up and I would take it out on the wrong person, she'd ask a question and I'd snap at her." His daughter Talana smiles and shakes her head in agreement, and he continues, "I now count to ten, sit back and calm down, I'm working on that for her."



Talana was anxious to share with us that, "He's nice. Daddy's a kind man. He helps me with school." She told us she wants to become a Veterinarian because she loves puppies and kittens. Ellick quietly encourages her to stay in school and get an education so she can reach her dream.

Ellick says, "I pray every night. I believe in God, I haven't been to church lately, but I know my mother, father and grandma who have passed are watching over me and giving me strength."

One saying from his mother that has stuck with him over the years is "God don't like ugly!" Ellick has worked hard to turn his life around and remove the 'ugly'. He is focusing on seeing the good in things and becoming the hardworking father his family needs. When asked what encourages him to get up each day, he quickly responded, "My family; my three children. They didn't ask to be born in this world and I'm not going to let them struggle, whatever they need I'm going to go the extra mile to get it for them." He's grateful to MRM for the helping hand he has received, offering him meals, shelter, and help finding employment, as he moves closer to his goal of sharing life with his daughter in their very own home.



ADDRESSING LOCAL NEEDS

To better serve shelter guests and the community in Muskegon, we urgently need a Community Resource Center where we can consolidate services that are currently scattered throughout the county. **The City of Muskegon blessed Muskegon Rescue Mission with a 1.48-acre parcel** located at 1747 Seventh St, directly behind our Men's Shelter. The vision is to build a 20,000 square foot multi-purpose facility, which will include a free to market-rate preschool and daycare to help single-parent families who no longer depend on public assistance. The new building will serve as a centralized location for local agencies and services. The MRM Board and leadership team is currently considering plans, timelines and funding options for this vital expansion. Please pray with us and feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Your Future Impact



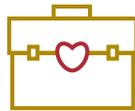
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Combined spots for a total of 104,000 hrs per year in preschool and daycare



16,000+

Hours per year in educational classes



5,000+

Hours per year in case management



12+

Committed and growing parenting agencies



6,000+

Hours per year in counseling



15,000+

Hours per year in job skill classes

THANKSGIVING BLESSING CARDS

As the hymn says, "Count your many blessings, name them one by one, it will surprise you what the Lord has done." MRM is overwhelmed by the outpouring of love expressed on the Thanksgiving Blessing Cards that have come back from our donor friends! Your heartfelt messages of caring, love, and hope will surely brighten the recipients' day. These inspirational cards will adorn the dinner tables for each guest to read and take with them. This may seem like a small gesture, but just to know someone cares may be all that is needed to change a life. Thank you for sharing your blessings!

Encouragements shared:

- 🍁 Sometimes things feel impossible. Remember you are not alone. Keep pressing forward and putting God first.
— Deb
- 🍁 I pray that you are blessed with warmth and shelter from the cold. Rest to renew your body, peace to renew your dreams, and our Lords blessing to smooth your path in the days ahead.
— Kathy
- 🍁 God bless you. You are a beautiful person. God loves you. Trust in Him. Bring your troubles to Him. He will help you handle them.
— Ray & Betty





OUR HOLIDAY PANTRY WISHLIST

After Catholic Charities abruptly closed their Muskegon pantry program in September, 30+ families were left in immediate need of pantry services. MRM met their need, but with additional families to serve, MRM's Food Pantry program is in need of support and donations. You can drop off pantry donations at 400 W. Laketon Ave.

Food Pantry Wishlist

- Peanut Butter & Jelly
- Canned Fruit
- Canned Vegetables
- Cereal
- Pancake Mix & Syrup
- Soup
- Canned Meat
- Spaghetti Sauce & Noodles
- Boxed Mac & Cheese

OUR WINTER WISHLIST



For many in our community, including many of the guests in our shelter, winter brings on stress, the stress of surviving dark, cold, lonely nights, the stress of finding a warm place to sleep and

providing a hot meal for their children, the stress of being able to afford a winter coat, boots, hat and gloves. Winter can even bring the constant stress of wondering, "Will I be able to survive this year?"

With harsh winter months coming, Muskegon Rescue Mission needs your help. Please consider donating one or more of the items from the list below.

With your help, we can care for everyone who knocks on the shelter door. Together we can help those in need in a season of cold uncertainty.

Please consider donating:

- Winter Coats – Large adult sizes, 1X, 2X
- Children's Winter Coats
- Warm Socks
- Winter Boots
- Hats & Scarves
- Mittens & Gloves

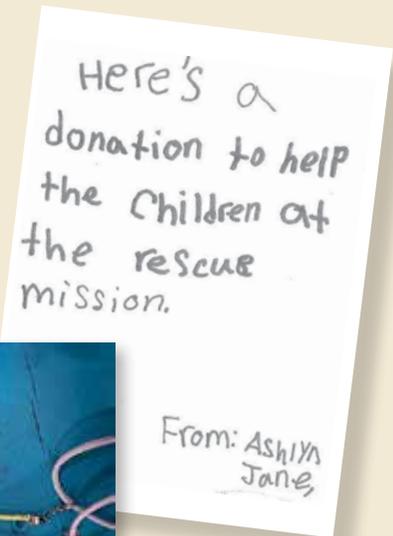
THE YOUNG MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Meet Ashlyn Jane, a ten year old with a big heart! She is a busy, young entrepreneur; this summer she made and sold bracelets, necklaces, masks with beaded lanyards, potted succulents, homemade slime, and held lemonade stands. She decided to take a



portion of her profits and donate it to a charity within the community. Ashlyn presented MRM with \$100 that she had raised through her sales. She chose to donate to MRM because she knew kids her age were staying at the shelter and she wanted to help them. The saying, "one person can make a difference", is certainly true! **Ashlyn's \$100 donation = 50 meals for hungry children.** Thank you, Ashlyn for your donation and your kind heart; you are an inspiration!

She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.
Proverbs 31:20



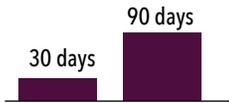


THE REAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

Women's & Family Shelter Stats:



- Reported a 40% increase in guests sheltered. 2 out of 5 people at the bus stop don't know where they will sleep or eat tonight.

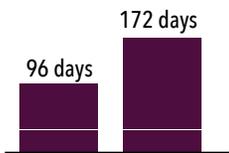


- Length of stay has tripled from 30 days to 90 days

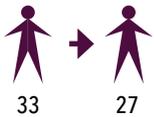


- Due to higher number of guests in shelter, MRM has to provide two breakfast, lunch and dinner serving times.

Men's Shelter Stats:



- Length of stay increased 44%, up from 96 days to 172 days average



- Average guest age dropped from 33 years to 27 years due to the increased number of young adults (18-24 years) now staying at the shelter



Number of guests on the rise

- Reported guest numbers remain typical for this time of year, expect numbers to double or more with cold weather; last year's high was 104 guests sheltered during cold weather

MRM receives daily calls from individuals needing emergency shelter, this includes outside of Muskegon County and our state. These reported numbers are unusually high for this time of year, as we have not reached our peak cold season.



MRM EXPANDS SERVICES

Muskegon Rescue Mission's Spanish Pantry Service opened in September. COVID-19 revealed the need of food in our local Hispanic community and Casa de Oracion (House of Prayer) Church's lead pastor and youth team immediately committed to help



MRM service our Hispanic neighbors. Every 2nd and 4th Wednesday evening a group of six bilingual volunteers donates their time to pray, render a listening ear and provide food and

toiletries to families struggling to meet their needs due to COVID-19. On the first day of this new service, MRM served 12 Hispanic families.



Harbor Light is a publication of Muskegon Rescue Mission and is produced quarterly.

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Your Donations Count
Muskegon Rescue Mission is a 501 (c)(3). **86% of all gifts are put back into life-changing programs.**

