

# HARBOR LIGHT

MUSKEGON RESCUE MISSION TRI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

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*Thankful*

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FALL 2022





**Harbor Light** is a publication of Muskegon Rescue Mission and is produced tri-annually.

#### **Mission Statement**

We exist to demonstrate and proclaim God's love to the less fortunate and homeless people of West Michigan.

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#### **Your Donations Count**

Muskegon Rescue Mission is a 501(c)(3). 88% of all gifts are put back into life-changing programs.



# A thankful heart this holiday season

As the holidays approach, we are reminded to count our blessings for all we are grateful for and fortunate to have. Traditionally, we celebrate with delicious food in the company of family and friends. At MRM, we are devoted to bringing the same holiday spirit to our shelter and community guests.

Volunteers and donors play an essential role in our mission to break the cycle of homelessness by helping us provide needed services and resources. Together, we can make a meaningful impact on the lives of the homeless within our community.



Recently, nearly 300 donors joined us at our annual Fall Dinner to celebrate this year's impact and MRM's future expansion. Donors heard firsthand the heartfelt testimonies of two men in our Man of Integrity residential program.

Joshua shared his story on stage and Shawn recorded a video. In this issue, you'll read Shawn's life-change story and another guest, a young mother, Pearlle, staying with her children in our Women's and Family Shelter. We hope they will give you a deeper understanding of how your faithful support of MRM truly impacts the lives of the people we shelter. They see your gift of compassion as love in action.

MRM is thankful for you and your help in welcoming our neighbors in need to our holiday table. Give thanks this season, for we are blessed.

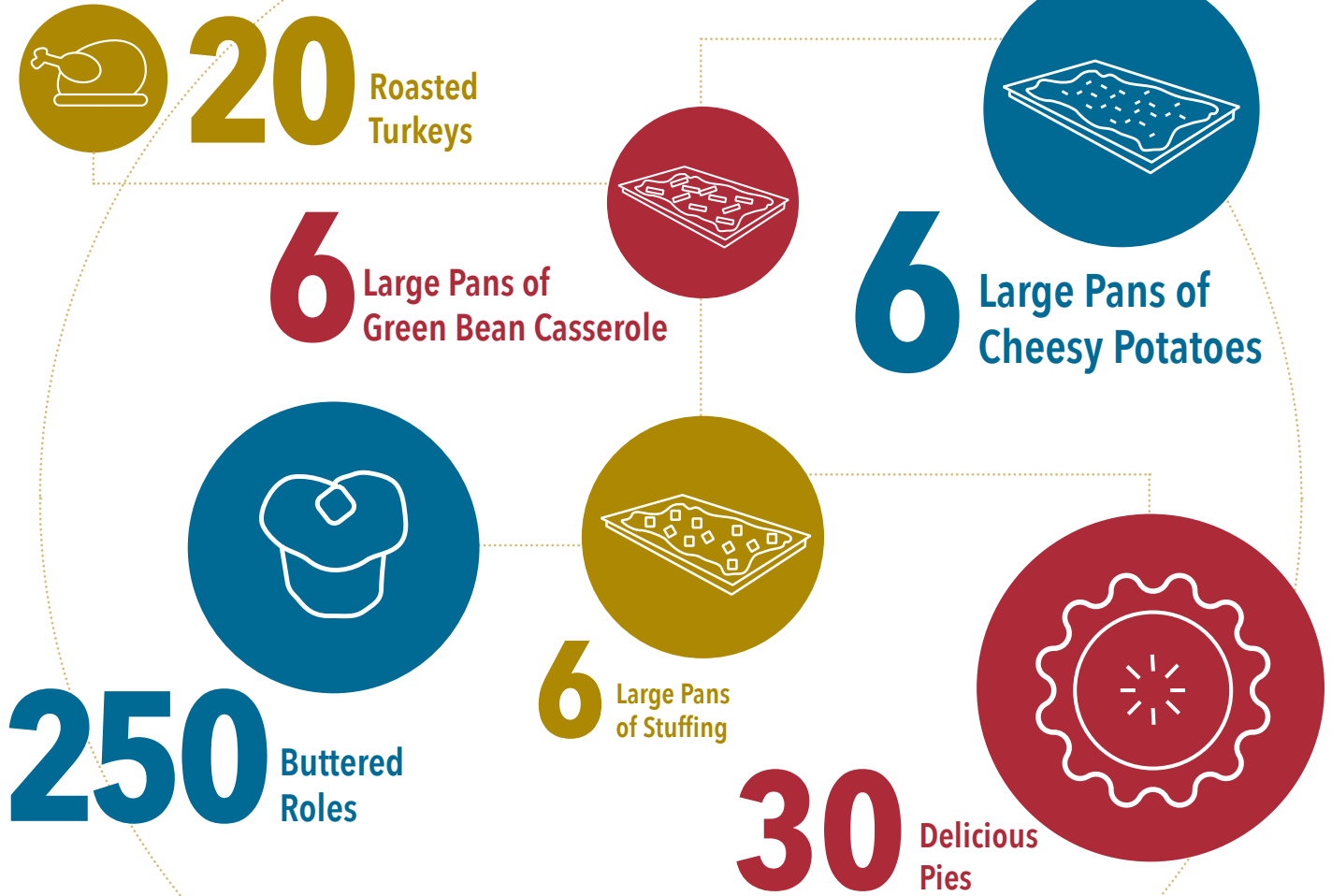
Serving Together in Christ,

Dan Skoglund  
Executive Director

***"For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day."***

*2 Corinthians 4:15-16*

## THANKSGIVING COMMUNITY FEAST



## WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE THANKSGIVING A BLESSING FOR OUR HURTING NEIGHBORS

**W**e are busy gathering, preparing and getting ready for our annual Thanksgiving Community Feast at Muskegon High School cafeteria on **Sunday, November 20**. Your faithful support allows our hungry neighbors to enjoy a delicious home-cooked Thanksgiving meal complete with all the trimmings!

This year homelessness and hunger are hitting people especially hard. The rising cost of food, gas and rent has driven many families to poverty. We are experiencing a dramatic rise in the number of guests seeking shelter, and more women with children are

coming to our doors. **To date, nights of shelter are up over 35% and meals served are up 44% compared to last year!**

***Because of you, there are seats at our Thanksgiving table!***

These are challenging times for many, but with your help, we can provide a meal for everyone. **For as little as \$2.07**, you give a warm, nutritious meal to those hurting in our community. Your support welcomes neighbors to the table this Thanksgiving season with a meal and care that can change lives!

YOU help make this Thanksgiving a celebration instead of one more day hungry and alone.

*"I WAS A LOST SOUL,  
I HAD DONE  
HORRIBLE THINGS -  
**HE FORGAVE ME."***

– Shawn

**A** Footprints in the Sand plaque hung on the wall of his childhood home; he never understood why. He grew up in a Catholic home with his twin sister and brother. At age 5, Shawn's world turned upside down and became a living nightmare. A family friend molested him and Shawn did what he was supposed to do, he told his father. Instead of protecting him as he expected, his father began molesting him. For the next five years, he traded him for drugs or made him sexually engage with others to pay off his drug debts. Shawn never told anyone again.

This horrific experience impacted his life profoundly. As a teenager, he isolated himself from everyone, didn't do well in school, never dated, and Shawn turned to drugs and alcohol to cover up his painful past.

In his twenties, he met a girl and they dated for nine years before getting married. He continued doing drugs, was anti-social and always mad at the world. Shawn worked as a money collector, which meant he hurt people for a living and did terrible things to those who couldn't pay their debt.

Everyone he's known and loved who had cancer has died. When his three-year-old son was diagnosed with Leukemia Stage 3, Shawn lost it. He went on an alcohol and drug binge like never before. He found himself alone in Southern Michigan, divorced, in a stupor on a street corner. He recalls seeing the light shining from a little chapel across the street. Because he was cold, he went inside. As he sat looking at a little cross on the altar, Shawn started talking to God; they discussed many things that day. The one thing he asked God for was to save his son.



*Shawn bargained with God, "If you save my son, I'll stop doing drugs and quit drinking."*

Shawn said, "The warmest, most peaceful feeling filled me in that little chapel. I wasn't cold and shivering anymore. I felt warm and safe for the first time in my life." He continued, "I don't know how to explain it other than God touched me that day. I can still feel it."

God healed his son! Shawn shared, "In eighteen months, my son went from Stage 3 to no cancer, and he's now seventeen. I know God did that! Because of that, I know there's good in this world."



I used to think there wasn't. But because of the power of God and how merciful He is, I wouldn't be here today without Him. It's all because of Him." Shawn continued, "I was a lost soul, I had done horrible things and He forgave me because He loves me enough to let me come back to His flock."

For two years, Shawn was homeless and bounced around helping various people he knew. In November 2021, he came to Muskegon Rescue Mission. When Barry, the Men's Shelter Case Manager, asked him why Muskegon, he replied, "I don't know. God hasn't shown me yet."

Now he understands why, "It's to help these gentlemen, to give them something they don't have right now. That's friendship and somebody who cares about them." Shawn works in the shelter kitchen and said, "That's why I try to give them the best meal I can make. Right now, they have nothing, this is all they have and their meal is more important to these guys than a place to stay." He continues, "I believe that's why I'm here, to help those I can, wherever I can, as often as I can."

Shawn wishes he could have been saved as a child. He knows he lost his way and made wrong choices but is grateful for a loving and gracious God who forgave him. He said, "It's harder for me to forgive myself for what I've done to people. That's why I choose to walk the path chosen for me. It will bring me closer to God and help me understand why this stuff happens, to share my story so other people can stand up. I didn't and it wrecked my life. Now, by the grace of God, I am here. I'm a better man for it!" Shawn shared that he now has a heart that cares and is pleased with the man he's become. He knows this change was all due to God.

Shawn is just one of the men who entered our Man of Integrity program this year. He feels blessed to be a part of this group. The program blends life skill classes, money management, counseling and Bible studies to help men rebuild their lives on a biblical foundation.



More importantly, it has given Shawn a heart that always asks WWJD - What Would Jesus Do? His favorite thing about being saved is doing random acts of kindness for total strangers. "If I have an extra bus pass in my pocket, I give it to them. I'll give them my soda, my lunch, or dinner." It gives him joy.

Shawn absolutely loves working in the shelter kitchen. He calls it the centerpiece of the mission! It's somewhere these gentlemen can go and relax, have a great meal served with a friendly smile and have someone ask about their day. They've been outside, struggling to survive, feeling like no one cares about them, but once they step into the cafeteria, they can relax for a while and enjoy a hot meal and some camaraderie. Shawn knows, "That's priceless to these men."

He's proud of the food he helps prepare. "We eat better here than most people do at their house! We make food with love for these guys!" He recited the menu he's made recently, venison steaks, spaghetti with homemade sauce, bacon cheeseburgers and stuffed cabbage rolls. They have Fish Friday, salmon, lake trout and shrimp scampi. Shawn says, "If we've got it in the freezer and can cook it, I'll make it."

Shawn shared that MRM staff is an outstanding group. They are the most sincere people who genuinely care about how you're doing. He said, "They stop what they are doing and listen. They're not pretending. It's not just a paycheck for them. They love what they do. They care about you and want you to succeed."

When asked what was next for him, he replied, "I'm not sure; only God knows." For now, he's content to work on strengthening his relationship with God and wants to rebuild a relationship with his children.

That decorative plaque now has significant meaning to Shawn. He truly understands it. He knows God carried him through the atrocities of his young life. He shared, "When I balk, He's right there with me. I'm still going because God carries me. He has made me a better person and I wouldn't want it any other way!"



**Visit our website for more stories**  
[muskegonmission.org/changed-lives/](https://muskegonmission.org/changed-lives/)



# COUNTING HER BLESSINGS

Throughout her life, Pearlie has stayed at Muskegon Rescue Mission a handful of times. When life takes a turn for the worse, she knows she has a place to stay. And here, she receives the love and support she's been missing her entire life.

Pearlie was fostered when she was just hours old. This family also fostered her three older siblings and three cousins. She grew up knowing her blood family, but never felt accepted by her foster parents. Life wasn't easy for Pearlie and her siblings.

The first time Pearlie came to Muskegon Rescue Mission, she was seventeen and a senior at Reeths-Puffer High School. Along with her regular curriculum, Pearlie took vocational cosmetology classes and saved up her tip money, keeping it at the school. After accumulating \$300, she decided it would be safer at home. Her foster mother found it and accused her of stealing the money from her and called the police. She wanted Pearlie out of the house. With nowhere to go, the police dropped her at Muskegon Rescue Mission. She was bussed from MRM for the remainder of the school year and never returned home.

After graduation, she stayed in Muskegon Heights, worked in cosmetology and rented an apartment. She later moved to Mississippi to live with her grandmother. While there, Pearlie had her daughter Yasmine, now fifteen and she's been her sole parent.

Moving back to Muskegon with an infant daughter proved challenging. She said, "Life was like a roller coaster - I moved from one apartment to another until I eventually came back to MRM. I needed to get my footing and knew that MRM could help me do that."

*If they are here for Thanksgiving, Pearlie said, "They will embrace it; we'll be one big family! We will count our blessings!"*

Several years later, Pearlie returned to MRM with her 4-year-old son Dentry and 9-year-old Yasmine. She shared that she didn't think Dentry remembers staying at MRM before, but he quickly replied that he remembers playing with other kids and fun toys! Pearlie was surprised to hear this but glad his memories were good ones.

She provided childcare out of her home, but Covid and the stay-at-home working situation left her without a steady, supportive income. Getting further behind in rent payments, she reached the point where she couldn't get caught up. So Pearlie, Yasmine, and Dentry returned to MRM in early August 2022.

You see a mother's pain in Pearlie's eyes when she talks about how hard it's been for her kids. "They are used to having their rooms, playing with neighborhood friends, or having a sleepover." She shared,

***"As a parent, I never wanted my kids to go through what I did growing up. They will always know I love them and put them first. I won't fail them as a parent. That's what keeps me going."***

When Pearlie leaves MRM this time, she's confident it will be her last. She has a stronger belief in herself and is determined to accomplish more than ever. She hears, "You can do this," and believes each MRM stay has strengthened her, drawn her closer to God and made her capable of taking on the world.

Pearlie works in the shelter kitchen, serving meals and cleaning dishes. She said she loves volunteering at the Thrift Stores. She currently spends her day looking for homes and says, "Once I have that, a job will be easy to get!" She's doing what she can to save money for housing. She is working for a Senator's campaign, knocking on doors and sharing the candidate's literature and is also works for a temp agency.

If they are here for Thanksgiving, Pearlie said, "They will embrace it; we'll be one big family! We will count our blessings!"

Pearlie is grateful for the caring people who support Muskegon Rescue Mission. She wants them to know they have provided the love and encouragement she's needed throughout her life and how thankful she is for each of them.





**Fifteen-year-old Yasmine** loves science and wants to become a third-grade teacher. She said, "It was hard here at first. I wanted to leave right away. But now I have friends I can talk to, other kids at MRM who are going through the same things. That makes life easier!" Yasmine continues to ride the bus to Muskegon Heights School; only the office and one teacher know of her new living arrangements.



**Yasmine and Dentry** attended Grace Adventure Bible Camp. They were excited to learn that donors' support made it possible for them to attend and they wanted to say, "Thank you, it was fun and we'd love to go again!" Your Grace Adventure sponsorship leaves lasting memories and impact.



**Ten-year-old Dentry's big smile** and youthful innocence warms any heart. He attends fourth grade at Moon School. He loves board games, particularly chess. His favorite subject in school is Math, quickly reciting his multiplication skill of threes. He wants to be a chef and said that when they move into a house, he wants to cook breakfast to sell to neighbors and give free food to homeless people.





## RISE UP TOGETHER *to Empower Futures*

**We made it!** We are excited to share our Rise Up Together capital campaign is complete!

Construction continues on schedule with an early 2023 Grand Opening target date.

From conception to completion this capital campaign has been guided and directed by the hand of God. Muskegon Rescue Mission couldn't have put this together without Him and the support of private funding

from 250+ partners including local businesses, foundations, churches and individuals. Together we are empowering futures and building brighter tomorrows!

- \$5.2M raised to date.

- Nearly 75% of all 3-Year Pledges have been fulfilled!

- Fund The Finish - furnishings and donations for our Bright Futures Daycare & Preschool and the Community Resource Center continue to be gifted.

We've got some excitement to kick off 2023! Private Tours will be scheduled in February 2023. **Stay tuned for the details on the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and join us in celebration!**



## THANKSGIVING BASKET **GIVEAWAY**

Thanksgiving is a wonderful time when families gather to share a festive meal. It's a hard time for those struggling and in need. We are thankful for the various businesses, churches, schools and individuals who have come together to support MRM's annual Thanksgiving Basket Giveaway. This year we expect to share this bounty with over 600 families in our community. Our Thanksgiving Basket Giveaway will be held at the **Men's Shelter, 400 W Laketon Ave.**

**Monday, Nov. 21, from 8:00 to 11:00 am**  
**Tuesday, Nov. 22, from 3:00 to 6:00 pm**



**Want to get involved?**

Use this holiday as a springboard into year-round volunteer work and giving! Volunteers will help us pack food bags and organize and distribute warm socks, hats and mittens to guests during this special two-day event.

MRM's Thanksgiving Basket Giveaway is made possible thanks to generous donations. A special thanks to **Blue Cross Complete of Michigan and Hazekamp's Premier Foods** for their continued support! Will you help provide a Thanksgiving Basket for those families in need? Give today!

- 650 frozen Turkeys
- 650 boxes of Stuffing
- 650 cans of Corn
- 650 cans of Green Beans
- 650 boxes of Mac & Cheese
- 650 boxes of Brownies/Cake Mix
- 650 pairs of Socks
- 650 pairs of Mittens/Gloves
- 650 Hats/Scarves

Contact Becky, at [volunteer@muskegomission.org](mailto:volunteer@muskegomission.org) or call **231.727.6090**.