HARBOR LIGHT

MUSKEGON RESCUE MISSION TRI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

You Make the Season Bright

How you bring **comfort and joy** to our neighbors in need.

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MUSKEGON
RESCUE MISSION

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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You Make the Season Bright

Dear Friend,

Here at Muskegon Rescue Mission, we're getting ready to welcome every neighbor who walks through our doors this Christmas. It will be a homecoming of sorts, where men, women and children can celebrate this joyous season.

I know a little something about coming home.

I grew up in Muskegon. My mom once processed gifts for the Mission. My grandmother volunteered here in the 1970s, and my great-grandmother volunteered in the 1930s. Four years ago, after nearly a decade in the mission field in Mexico, I got a phone call from Dan Skoglund about a position here at the Mission. It was the right time to come home.

Recently stepping into the role of President is answering a call to further a cause so dear to my heart. I am so grateful for this Mission and for faithful friends like you.

In this issue of Harbor Light, you'll meet some of the neighbors whose lives you've helped transform through your generous support. Thank you for being God's hands and feet and for walking alongside us in this work. Wishing you and your family a very merry Christmas!

Serving Together,

Matt Kooi
President

Witnessing **God's Grace**

Through faith and support, Doris is building a new future.

A mother of six and grandmother of 16, Doris grew up in a family where homelessness and not having enough to eat were familiar realities. "It was generational," Doris says. "We lived in a shelter more than we ever had our own place to live."

That cycle followed Doris into adulthood as she raised her own children. After a housing arrangement ended before its lease, Doris was left with nowhere to go. She came to Muskegon Rescue Mission "because I want to be safe," trusting that God had brought her there for a purpose.

For Doris, Muskegon Rescue Mission has become more than a place to stay.

Through chapel, Bible study and the care of staff, she found a foundation that continues to steady her. "It is all about building your life on God's word. That is the most life-changing experience."

And now, Doris has more than 30 years of sobriety. She also celebrates the progress of her family. Her children are employed, which she connects to lessons she learned here. "I give all the praises to God," she says. "The Lord works through ministries, like the Muskegon Rescue Mission."

Today, Doris is taking steps forward. She is working with staff to find an apartment and preparing to attend Muskegon Community College in January to study marketing and advertising. "I'm excited too," she says.

Doris hopes to use her voice to encourage others and help raise funds for programs that change lives. "I want to grow and I want to be a positive contributing factor to Muskegon," she says.

Even as she works toward housing, Doris rests in God's presence. "I'm homeless right now, but I'm at home," she says. "I want to be a part that's going to make a difference for someone to experience what I've experienced."

Thank you for helping make Muskegon Rescue Mission's shelter, chapel and programs possible. Your generosity helps people like Doris find safety, healing and hope.

A Father **Restored**

Ken lost decades of his life to addiction. Thanks to you, he found sobriety, faith and his family again at Muskegon Rescue Mission.

Ken's story didn't start at Muskegon Rescue Mission – but it's where his life finally began to change.

By age 13, he was moving between foster homes. A high school football injury led to a prescription for pain pills, and by 15, Ken had turned to street drugs. What followed was nearly three decades of addiction – a broken marriage, two children he loved but left behind, and eight long years disappearing from their lives.

"I was bouncing back and forth from the Mission, or I was sleeping on the bike path," Ken remembers. For two years, staff and guests urged him to join our long-term recovery program. He always said no. Then a close friend overdosed.

"Man, that's going to be me," Ken thought. "I can't do that."

He entered a sober living house, then came back to Muskegon Rescue Mission on New Year's Day. This time was different. He joined our year-long recovery program.

"I'm glad I did," Ken says. "That was the smartest thing I did."

Two-and-a-half weeks in, Ken met the Lord. The moment that sealed it came when his teenage daughter told him she wanted to be baptized. "If she can do it, I can do it," he decided. Father and daughter were baptized together that same day.

Before he even graduated from the program, Ken took his first job in eight years – washing dishes at a local restaurant. "I had to humble myself," he says. "Just who wants to be a dishwasher?" He did it for over a year.

Today, Ken has been clean for three years. He's now a full-time Guest Advocate right here at the Mission – walking alongside men who are exactly where he used to be. He sees his kids nearly every day. He and his wife just received their Section 8 voucher and are searching for a home together to co-parent their teenagers.

His hope for the future is simple: "Just get a house and get back with my kids."

"If it wasn't for this place," Ken says, "I probably would be dead."

Because of friends like you, Ken is alive, sober and now moved into his own housing. Praise the Lord!

Christmas Joy at **Bright Futures**

At Bright Futures Daycare & Preschool, Christmas smells like cocoa, sounds like little voices singing "Away in a Manger" and looks like glitter on every table.

Thanks to friends like you, the children who spend their days at Bright Futures get to experience Christmas the way every child should – wrapped in wonder, safety and the love of Christ. All month long, the classrooms come alive with Christ-centered activities: songs about the Savior's birth, crafts glued and glittered by tiny hands and hallways strung with color and light.

Then come the special guests. This December, we're expecting surprises – and, if history is any guide, plenty of squeals when the presents come out. Toys are unwrapped, hugs are given away by the armful and memories are made that these children will carry for the rest of their lives.

In that moment, they aren't thinking about what their family can or can't afford. They're just enjoying the beauty of Christmas – the sparkle of the decorations and the deep-down knowing that they are seen, they are safe and they are loved.

Thank you for making these precious memories possible.

Thanks to You, Christmas Shines Bright

Thanks to generous friends like you, Muskegon Rescue Mission will soon be aglow with the sights, sounds and warmth of the season. Guests, staff and volunteers will gather around shared meals, holiday cheer will abound – and we'd love for you to be part of it.

Mark your calendar:

- **December 18-22:** Christmas Gift Giveaway for current guests and those who have stayed with us.
- **December 23:** Christmas Luncheon at the Community Resource Center, noon. All are welcome for a hot holiday meal and warm fellowship.
- **December 23:** Bright Futures Christmas Celebration. After a month of Christ-centered songs, crafts and stories, the children get a special visit and a gift from Santa.
- **December 24:** Children's Christmas Party for the little ones staying in our shelter.
- **December 25:** Christmas dinner served to every guest at both shelters.

Make Winter Wishes **Come True**

If you would like to make someone's Christmas extra merry, please consider providing gifts for one of the men, women or children we serve! We need gifts for parents and children, Bright Futures Daycare students and participants in our Men of Integrity Program.

To claim an individual and learn how and when to drop off your gifts, please call our admin office at (231) 727-6090 or email us at info@muskegonmission.org.
Thank you for your generosity!

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