

# CHANGING LIVES

128 YEARS OF SERVICE



# THE RIPPLE EFFECT

DENVER  
RESCUE  
MISSION

MEET HARVEST FARM'S PEER LEADERS

SUPPORT THE MISSION BY SHOPPING AT KING SOOPERS

Dear Friends,

It has been more than 30 years since we acquired what we now call Harvest Farm. A lot has changed during these 30 years, but the vision to help men overcome addiction by sharing Jesus in a rural setting has not.

I can remember another CEO of a Rescue Mission saying, "Why does Denver Rescue Mission even have a farm if they are an urban ministry?" He was right that it is unusual to have a farm that is owned and operated by a city-based Rescue Mission. There are only a few of them across the country, many of which we have visited as we made improvements to our New Life Program at Harvest Farm.

What is not unusual is that, at times, people from the rural community—from farms, ranches and small towns—need help overcoming addiction. Many men who have come to the Farm would never go to the city for help. They would feel too out of place to stay in our shelters in Denver and join the New Life Program in the city. But if they can go somewhere that they are familiar with—somewhere more sequestered that has cows, chickens, pigs, and corn stalks—then maybe, just maybe, they might join us. And join us they have over the years, from not only Colorado's rural areas, but from other states as well. Our doors are always open to those who need help. In case you are wondering, we have also helped people from the city in our New Life Program at the Farm.

I think it is significant that most of Jesus' ministry was in rural settings. From rural people to urban dwellers, we all have troubles. Jesus is there for us all, and that is why we have a Farm. We want to see people's lives changed in the name of Jesus, and we will do what is necessary to reach out to people everywhere.

I hope you enjoy reading about the three Peer Leaders featured in this month's newsletter. And I hope that their desire to give back touches your soul like it has touched mine. It is what this work is all about!

God Bless,



Brad Meuli  
President/CEO



## COMMUNITY REWARDS

SUPPORTING DENVER RESCUE MISSION  
CAN BE SOOPER EASY

King Soopers Community Rewards allows you to give to the Mission with each purchase at no additional cost. Create an account at [KingSoopers.com](http://KingSoopers.com), link your loyalty card to **Denver Rescue Mission** and continue shopping. When you swipe your loyalty card at your local store or online (for pick-up only), the Mission will receive a percentage of the total amount purchased.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT LISETTE WILLIAMS AT  
303.313.2414 OR [LISETTE@DENRESCUE.ORG](mailto:LISETTE@DENRESCUE.ORG).**



## Join Our Online Event

Wednesday, October 7 | 4 - 4:45 p.m.

Each fall, we look forward to connecting Harvest Farm and our New Life Program (NLP) participants with the community at our Annual Fall Festival & Corn Maze. Since we can't gather in person this year, join us for an online event showcasing Harvest Farm and Fort Collins Rescue Mission (FCRM). You will meet the leadership team and hear updates about FCRM and recent changes made to the program. You will also get a glimpse into the everyday life at the Farm and meet some of the animals.

To register for this event, visit  
[DenverRescueMission.org/RoadToRecovery](http://DenverRescueMission.org/RoadToRecovery).



# The Ripple Effect

“There is a ripple effect to the gospel that’s inevitable. There’s a ripple effect to true grace. It doesn’t lead us to only sit and contemplate what happened to us. It leads us to proclaim what happened to us—and what can happen to anybody and everybody on the planet.”

– Louie Giglio

**L**ike a stone dropped in a pond creating ripples that move outward, one life changed through Denver Rescue Mission has the power to transform many more. The Peer Leader Program at Harvest Farm embraces this ripple effect and allows it to happen.

The program launched in September of 2019 and invites graduates of the Farm’s New Life Program (NLP), a faith-based rehabilitation for men, to come back and live on the Farm and engage with participants through one-on-one mentorship and group activities.

By spending time with participants and building relationships with them, the Peer Support Specialists (Peer Leaders) are able to encourage and motivate them by listening, guiding and sharing their own experiences in recovery—from the suffering to the victory.

The Peer Leaders help facilitate Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings, participate in Bible studies, plan activities and movie nights, and simply catch up with participants over meals and workout sessions. “It’s the stuff that got them clean and sober too,” said Steve Pietrafeso, peer leader supervisor at Harvest Farm. “They’re leading by example.”

NLP graduates are eligible to apply for Peer Leader positions if they have been living on their own, off the Farm, for a period of at least one year. “They can go out and live life clean and sober without the Farm holding them accountable,” Steve said “They were outside doing recovery, building a community, going to church—doing all that on their own. Now, they can come back and tell the guys, ‘during my lived experience, I struggled with this or be cautious of this.’”

The Peer Leaders are required to complete training through Colorado Mental Wellness Network, an organization specializing in mental health advocacy and Peer Support Specialist certification. The curriculum helps cultivate skills in social-emotional support, advocacy, communication, and coaching.

The current Peer Leaders at Harvest Farm, Graham, Taylor and Aaron, are in recovery from substance use disorders and have been sober for more than two years. They live in a home on the southwest corner of the Farm’s 100-acre property and have full-time jobs outside of the Farm. “It has definitely kept them accountable, which in turn helps their sobriety,” Steve said. “It has helped them put recovery first above everything and then teach that same message to our guys.”

One of the goals of the program is to help men stay on track and graduate. The Peer Leaders intentionally reach out to men who are in the initial phases of the NLP— within the first four months—a period of time that tends to be the most challenging for participants who are in recovery. The Peer Leaders also connect with new participants within the first 48 hours of their arrival to provide encouragement when they’re likely experiencing feelings of uncertainty.

**The ultimate goal? Prepare more stones for the pond and keep the ripple effect going. Because every life changed at Harvest Farm has the power to transform so many more.**

# Meet our Peer Leaders

He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.  
– Psalm 40:2



## TAYLOR

"I was a farmer—a rancher. I was eight or nine when I started getting blackout drunk. Then, as I got into junior high, I tried pills. Once I got to high school, I was still drinking, smoking pot and chewing. I started doing coke. When I was 22 or 23, I had hernia surgery and the doctor put me on pain meds. That rekindled the fire for an opioid addiction. It just got to the point where I couldn't quit. I had a couple of failed suicide attempts. [The New Life Program] was my third rehab. I thought I was going to sit in a classroom and listen to somebody preach about all my poor choices. But when I got to Harvest Farm, it reminded me of home. I could feed the animals, clean their pens and water the fields. I could clear my mind. I just felt like I owed it to the Farm and the guys to help them get back on their feet and be an example. [As a Peer Leader], my deal is going to AA meetings and sharing my experience, strength and hope with them. Another way I interact with them is in the weight room. We talk about lifting or talk about life or sobriety. **I just remind them that their worst day sober is still going to be a thousand times better than any best high they've had.** They've got to keep the faith that a better life, a healthy life, sober life, a new life, is possible."

## The Impact of the Peer Leader Program\*

\*Numbers reflect September 1, 2019 – June 20, 2020.

\*\*Retention is the ability to keep participants in the program until graduation.

2,015

Number of times Peer Leaders connected with participants

## GRAHAM

“When I was younger, I was always in trouble and getting kicked out of schools. Liquor is what really started a downward spiral in my life. I started drinking at 14. By the time I was 17, I was physically dependent on alcohol. When I was 18, I got locked up. I went through withdrawals in there. I got locked up again after spending time living under bridges. That’s when God changed my life. While I was incarcerated, He changed my heart and my mind. December 5, 2017 at approximately 3:45 p.m. is when I last did drugs and drank. I went to Harvest Farm, and Jesus continued doing work in me. Hanging out with good people was revolutionary for me in my recovery. I loved that we had to go to church every Sunday. Now, I’m a youth leader volunteer at my church. I volunteer every Wednesday and have spoken at about 10 schools. **[Being a Peer Leader] gives me a sense of purpose. I never had purpose. I used to live on top of roofs and under bridges. I used to live in this cardboard box. That was the lowest point in my life. There was really no reason to live. Now, it’s the complete opposite. I have a reason that I’m here.** Quite often, guys come and talk to me. These one-on-one relationships are really important, because they see that I made it out. I went through what I went through to help others. None of my struggle was in vain.”



## AARON

“I had a pretty normal childhood. I’m from Estes Park. I struggled with [alcoholism] for about 17 years. I went through periods of sobriety. I was always going back and forth and fell off the wagon again. I can’t tell you exactly why—it just happens. I couldn’t take care of myself. I couldn’t pay for anything. My grandmother told my mom about [Harvest Farm]. I was terrified. I didn’t know what to expect. **I didn’t realize there were people out there who actually cared that much.** It definitely renewed my faith a lot, which was something I had given up on. I’ve always been that guy throughout life that people come talk to, which is funny because I’m an introvert. I’m the older one of the three [Peer Leaders]. I’m 39, so you can see that a lot of the older participants are drawn toward me. I usually have the most success just hanging out with them. We usually just barbeque and talk about life. I take a group to church every Sunday. I’m also doing a men’s small group. I’m continuing my career as an electrician. Someday, I want to be a full-time addiction counselor and try and help people. I feel like it might be kind of a calling.”

Your gifts are making a profound difference in the lives of our New Life Program graduates, who in turn transform the people and communities around them.

To continue fostering this ripple effect, donate today at

[DenverRescueMission.org/ChangingLives](https://DenverRescueMission.org/ChangingLives).

12.5

Average number of hours per week that a Peer Leader spends with participants

6%

Increase in retention\*\* from participants’ first 30 to 60 days in the program, compared to the previous year before the Peer Leader Program was in effect



**What inspired you to get involved with the Harvest Farm Run Club?**

In October 2012, about four months into my time in the New Life Program (NLP), I started leading the club and made it what it is today. Typically, up to 10 participants join each week. Once a participant has proven that they're dedicated to staying in the club, I reward them with a pair of running shoes donated by Runners Roost in Fort Collins. Before COVID-19, I took the guys to a race each month and they got to see how much they've improved. This is huge because some of these guys had never been proud of themselves in their entire lives.

**How have you seen the participants grow through this group?**

The running group allows me to see these guys literally transform their lives. Many of them show up completely broken. Week by week, I get to watch as they piece their lives back together. They gain back the weight that drugs and homelessness had taken from them. Their faces begin to fill out and their skin regains color. They quickly go from being unable to walk a mile to seeing how fast they can run three. I occasionally have guys who work up to running 10 miles and more.

**How have you been able to impact the participants during group runs?**

I try to inspire them with different things I read, like Bible verses that focus on turning to God for strength. We talk about this once-in-a-lifetime chance they have been given to build new lives, form new healthy habits, learn to eat right, exercise, and take care of their bodies. I try to show them that the discipline it takes to be a dedicated runner is the same discipline it takes to achieve sobriety and live healthy lives.

**Why do you think Harvest Farm is important to our community?**

Harvest Farm is a place overflowing with God's love and hope. The staff work tirelessly to help men build new lives. I believe this program is indispensable, not only to the Northern Colorado community, but to the entire nation. Before I knew the Farm existed, I had become hopeless. I knew I needed help, but I also knew I could never afford it. Without this program, countless other men and I would not be alive to tell our stories. I do not have the words to describe how much I love this place and everything that it stands for.

*Chris Copenhaver is a graduate of the New Life Program at Harvest Farm. Eight years ago, he was on the verge of self-destruction. Today, he is an inspired endurance athlete breaking into the field of elite ultrarunning.*

**OUR CORE STRATEGIES**

**EMERGENCY SERVICES**

People are invited inside, off the street where their immediate needs are met and critical relationships are built with Mission staff.

**REHABILITATION**

Men living with an addiction are equipped with work readiness skills, receive help to overcome destructive habits, find permanent housing, and begin a new life.

**TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS**

Families and individuals in need receive case management, develop life skills and save for permanent housing.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

People struggling in our community receive assistance with food, clothing, furniture, household items and holiday meals.

**LOCATIONS**

- Lawrence Street Community Center:** Meals, restrooms, showers, laundry, clean drinking water, and access to Mission staff for encouragement and guidance 
- Lawrence Street Shelter:** Overnight shelter for men and chapel 
- Holly Center:** Overnight shelter for men assigned weekly and lockers for storage 
- The Crossing:** Transitional program for families and rehabilitation program for men 
- Harvest Farm:** Rural rehabilitation program near Fort Collins 
- Fort Collins Rescue Mission:** Meals, shelter and programs toward achieving self-sufficiency 
- Ministry Outreach Center:** Central warehouse facility including food, clothing and furniture distribution 
- Administration & Education:** Entry point for Mission transitional programs and home to the Mission's administrative and development staff 
- 48th Avenue Center:** Overnight shelter for men, operated in partnership with the City of Denver 



P.O. Box 5164 | Denver, CO 80217 | 303.297.1815

