

FEBRUARY 2021

CHANGING LIVES

129 YEARS OF SERVICE



Where Are They Now?

**DENVER
RESCUE
MISSION**

HOW YOU HELPED THIS FAMILY OF NINE FIND STABILITY

SPREAD THE WARMTH THIS WINTER

LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Dear Friends,

The theme for this month's *Changing Lives* newsletter is: Where Are They Now? We are always interested in hearing about how our graduates are doing, and we thought you would be too. This also caused me to ask, "Where are we now? Where is Denver Rescue Mission after all these months of the pandemic?"

On my desk is an index card that has a sentence on it that I have kept for nearly a year. I received it in March at our monthly Mission leadership team meeting right before the pandemic really hit—right before we knew what was happening. I had asked our team to anonymously write down a prayer request and place it in a basket. When the meeting ended, we all reached in and took out a card with the idea that we would pray for that request. It read:

Fearful of not being effective or prepared for upcoming demands, challenges and changes.

Wow, were those words fortuitous! I cannot tell you the number of times I have looked at that card, picked it up, and asked myself, "How could we have ever been prepared for this?" Not knowing what would happen or how we might have to flex to help people experiencing homelessness could have made us all fearful. But we have managed—somehow, by the grace of God—to not only persevere through this pandemic, but to find a way to do more. Often, the way was not clear. We had to be ready to adapt to a changing environment while placing our staff and volunteers on the front lines—at risk of the coronavirus—to serve people in need.

This card has been my prayer, not only for the person who wrote it in less stressful times, but for the Mission as a whole. I have prayed that we would not be fearful and that we would trust in God to guide us. I have prayed that we would be courageous and have what it takes to meet all the demands, challenges and changes asked of us. And I have prayed that God would stop this horrible disease that has impacted so many people.

We want to see graduates of our STAR Transitional Program, like the Houston family featured in this newsletter, flourish as they meet the demands of these last few months. It takes great courage to do what they have done. Thank you for your financial gifts, which allow us to share what God has provided. We march on courageously.

God bless,



Brad Meuli
President/CEO



2018

You may remember the Houston family from our July 2018 newsletter: Boy Meets Girl. To read more about how Wayne and Jeanette met and how the Mission supported them in their time of need, visit DenverRescueMission.org/Houstons2018.



2020



**CBS4 AND DENVER RESCUE MISSION
ARE JOINING FORCES TO HELP
SPREAD THE WARMTH THIS WINTER!**

Learn more at CBSDenver.com/SpreadtheWarmth.

**SPREAD
THE Warmth**



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Where Are They Now?

The Houston family experienced homelessness for two years, moving between the homes of family and friends. With nowhere to go and in dire need of help, Denver Rescue Mission was there for them at just the right time. Now, about a year and a half after graduating from the Mission's STAR Transitional Program, this family of nine is settled into a seven-bedroom duplex. It's because of your support that during a turbulent season of their lives, their experience at the Mission not only led them to a stable home, but left them with heartfelt memories.

Wayne, Jeanette, and their seven daughters, Shantavia, Olivia, Jayla, Jalissa, Alicia, Araiah, and Alexia, spent two years living at The Crossing. They made a mark on Mission staff, not only because they were one of our largest families, but also because of their unavoidable closeness, strength and love.

"When you see such a big family, it just shows how resilient they are," said Jaquella Brennan, the family's former case manager. "That's a lot of mouths to feed! The kids were always so respectful—so loving. It was beautiful to watch their family dynamic."

Before coming to the Mission, Wayne got laid off from his job and could no longer afford paying rent. "It constantly felt like I let my family down because I wasn't able to keep a roof over their heads," he said. "Jeanette helped take care of the kids while I was working and trying to find places for us to go. Having a big family is stressful on all parties when you're living with other people, so that was hard. But, as a family, we made it easier for each other."

Wayne and Jeanette heard about the STAR program, which helps working families secure stable housing and transition to self-sufficiency, from Wayne's mother, who used to volunteer at the Mission. For Wayne, the biggest takeaway from the program was learning how to better manage his money to ensure he was able to pay bills. "For a lot of families, unhealthy spending habits contribute to the cycle of poverty," Jaquella said. "When they learn how to have a healthy relationship with money, it looks so much different."

With seven daughters to raise, Jeanette appreciated the support from the Mission's youth program. "It was a lot of help with all of them being in school," she said. "They did tutoring, [received] help with their homework, and at the same time, they learned respect and manners."

Wayne and Jeanette attended a parenting class as part of the program, and the collaboration with other parents provided valuable tips that they implement in their home today.

The Mission helped the Houstons secure a Section 8 housing voucher when they graduated from the STAR program, which allows them to pay only 30 percent of their income on rent. They found a duplex in Barnum, a neighborhood in West Denver, with seven bedrooms—ideal for the seven girls whose ages range from three to 16. "It felt really good," Wayne said. "It's really nice having our own house keys again."

"It's really nice
to have our own
house keys again."

-Wayne

Through the Mission's vehicle donation program, they received a donated 1994 Chevrolet Suburban, which is big enough for their whole family.

After graduation, Mission case managers often follow up with former STAR families to check in. "It's nice [for the Houstons] to hear a familiar voice and know that if anything were to go wrong, they still have people they can reach out to," Jaquella said. "They have a lot of people in their corner who want to see them win."

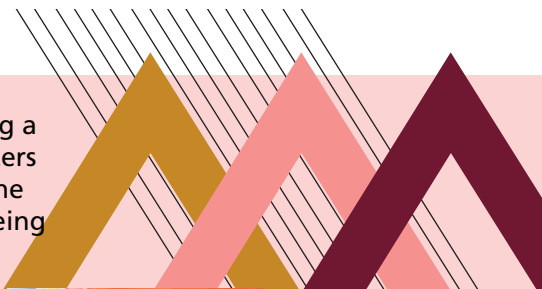
The COVID-19 pandemic recently caused a few hurdles for the Houstons. Wayne lost his job at Home Depot and is currently receiving unemployment compensation while he looks for a new job. Jeanette is helping the girls as they all pursue remote learning.

But, because of their time in the STAR program, the Houstons have the tools to handle adversity that comes their way. "[Our goals are] to stay on top of our bills, keep a roof over our heads and keep us all together as a family," Wayne said. "The only thing I can say is thank God for the Rescue Mission." ■



With your help, we can provide bright futures and a path to stable homes for families like the Houstons. Join our Mission today at [DenverRescueMission.org/ChangingLives](https://denverrescuemission.org/ChangingLives).

The Crossing provided a season of fond memories for the Houston children. During a time of groundwork and preparation for Wayne and Jeanette, their seven daughters loved spending time in the Denver Broncos Youth Center and making friends at The Crossing. "They still talk about going back and visiting, even after a year of not being there," Wayne said. "I think it had a really good impact on all of us."





Three-year-old Alexia was a newborn when her family first arrived at Denver Rescue Mission. She spent her first two years living at The Crossing, the Mission's residential facility, where her family received guidance and support as part of the STAR Transitional Program. Now, she loves having the space to run around in her home and play with her six older sisters.

Thank you for making it possible for kids like Alexia to grow up in a stable home.

THE MISSION in my words




JAQUELLA BRENNAN

Jaquella Brennan is a case manager for the Mission's STAR Transitional Program. She previously worked as an economic literacy educator as well as a housing case manager for Family Abuse Center. She is in the process of becoming a certified addictions counselor and is passionate about working with marginalized populations.

Will you describe your role as a case manager for the STAR program?

I conduct orientations when new participants join the program. I meet with my participants every other week, but I see them all the time. They love stopping by and giving updates. When a participant first joins, I conduct assessments to see what barriers they have to accessing stable housing. I get them connected to resources and make sure they meet the program's goals. I was an economic literacy educator before, so I know the importance of stable housing and finances, which are key indicators of whether participants will experience homelessness again. We also talk about rebuilding relationships with family and friends. Creating a space where they can talk is really helpful for them. I'm not asking them to be perfect, I'm asking them to show up and try. It's progress, never perfection.

What's your favorite part about your job?

I really love the rapport building of case management. A lot of participants haven't had great experiences with social services. Some have never been homeless before or have had so much trauma in their lives, so they have a lot of walls up. I'm grateful that they are allowing me on their journeys. I'm only here for a tiny piece of their lives, but I get to support them and remind them that God loves them and sees them. I really enjoy working with this population, because people don't have to suffer if they have access to resources. If you just give people a chance, you're going to be amazed at what they can do. I want to love people the way God has loved me. He has loved me so well, and I pray that my participants feel the same way.

Why are you passionate about working at the Mission?

I love that God is present here. The Mission does an amazing job of providing a safe foundation for participants to grow. We plant the seeds, and we may not be able to get to see them bloom immediately, but I know that in a year or two or even three—even 10 years down the line—those seeds will bloom. I am so empathetic to people's needs, because I know what it's like to go without and how life-changing it is for just one person to see you. If I can help just one person, that's beautiful. And I'm grateful that we get to help hundreds every day.



THOUGHTS?

We want to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to Newsletter@DenRescue.org.

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



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