MORE THAN A ROOF

THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS GAVE DAVID HOPE

HOMELESSNESS RESOLUTION STARTS IN OUR SHELTERS
Dear Friends,

One of the best things that has happened to Denver Rescue Mission because of the pandemic has been the implementation of 24 hours a day, seven days a week sheltering (or 24/7 sheltering). I say this because we have been given more of an opportunity to speak into men’s lives than ever before. It is no surprise to any of us that when we are rested and feel secure, we are able to make the best decisions for ourselves. I know when I am very tired and stressed, it is often difficult to see things clearly. This is also true for the men we serve.

Because we have moved to 24/7 sheltering at our 48th Avenue Center with 453 beds, we are helping more men resolve out of homelessness. This newsletter includes some thoughts from a couple of our staff who work with men every day, talking about the benefits of 24/7 sheltering.

To say that this has been hard to implement would be a gross understatement. We have had to go from one shift at night to three shifts daily and have added nearly 100 staff and plan on adding 40 more, as we work to bring the right people on our team. The positions we are hiring for—whether emergency services coordinators (front-line staff), custodians, peer navigators, guest service coordinators, case managers, or chefs—not only require people with big hearts for loving God and others, but with an ability and desire to develop relationships with the people we serve.

We are trying to “love up” on the people who come to us for help, and to do that, we have to be relational, earning the right to be heard. When our staff develops a relationship with someone and that person decides that they want to change, when they get a little hope in their eyes, it is like nothing else in this world. Sometimes people experience homelessness just a short while and they need a short stay to resolve their homelessness. But sometimes they are like David in this month’s newsletter, who has been fighting this fight for 20 years.

However long someone has been experiencing homelessness and despair, we are here for them with our offer of hope through Jesus. Thank you for walking alongside us with your financial, prayer and volunteer support. We continue to be here for all who need us.

God Bless,

Brad Meuli
President/CEO
We Make Sure Our Shelters Are:

So Our Guests Can Focus On:

**Safe**
There is always someone watching out for the safety of our guests and staff.

**Forming Healthy Habits**
In housing, you have to be thoughtful of how you treat your neighbor, how loud you play your music and where you can throw your trash away, so it is beneficial for our guests to have an awareness of how their behavior impacts those around them.

**Secure**
With the locker underneath the beds, guests can go out for the day, get things accomplished or go to a meal without carrying their medication or important documents around with them.

**Getting Resources**
Having a reserved bed allows guests to have a little stability. We can then get them messages about a housing connection or a medical or mental health appointment more quickly.

**Sanitary**
Thanks to our custodial team, our shelters are kept clean and sanitary for our guests.

**Changing Their Lives**
The clean environment allows staff and guests to focus on having valuable conversations. For example, if a guest says, “It’s cold in here,” we will respond with, “Let’s get you into a place where you can control the thermostat,” to communicate that they have agency to change their experience for themselves.

**Serene**
We work to make our shelters an environment where our guests can sleep with both eyes closed.

**Reaping the Benefits of Sleep**
When guests know they’re safe and can sleep soundly, their physical and mental health improves, which then allows them to focus on their next steps into housing.
David spent 20 years sleeping in tents, struggling with addiction and feeling like life would never get any better. But when the kindness of strangers saved him from some of Denver’s coldest nights, he began to have hope that there was more to life than living on the streets.

There were many acts of kindness that brought me to tears, because after living that way for so long, you start really feeling like no one cares—why would anyone want to help me? Look at me. Look what I am. Look what I’ve become.

I had a camp in an open field, with no one else around. I didn’t have a heater and the forecast was negative seven degrees for two or three days in a row. Someone showed up a couple times, not even knowing I needed something, and brought me a bottle of propane with a connector and heater you can attach to it. That was a lifesaver.

You want to hug them, but you don't want to get too close in fear of their reaction. Because when you're sitting there—your fingers and hands filthy, your fingernails dirty underneath and your clothes dirty, and there's this person pulling up in this really nice car and they're dressed really nice—there's an amount of shame that you carry with you. It's debilitating in a way because your self-esteem, your self-worth is in the toilet. Look where you're living. Look how you're living. That's not the way someone who has a healthy self-image would live. But you have that desire in your heart to say thank you. Just thank you. You saved my life—do you even know this? And that’s what makes those special moments really life changing.”

After so many years, David began to wonder is this all there is? Desperation took ahold of David and brought him to our Lawrence Street Shelter (LSS), and that’s when he realized he had an opportunity to change his life. Thanks to the encouraging staff and the resources available to him, he was motivated for a future unlike his past.
Not only did he receive a hot meal and a bed at LSS, but he reconnected with his love of music. Emergency Services Chaplain, Jay Earl Krebs, gave David an opportunity to play his guitar anytime he wanted, and that simple act of trust to be responsible with his guitar, was a pivotal point for David.

“He was so encouraging. It doesn’t matter what you look like, what you’re wearing or what you smell like, he’ll pull you alongside him and he just cares. He tipped the scale for me as to whether or not I wanted to seek help.”

Now, David is in the New Life Program (NLP), our rehabilitation program for men at The Crossing, and is excited about the future. In learning about family wounds and the dynamics of family in his classes, he is restoring his relationships with his own family.

“I’m talking to my two oldest daughters now and I have four grandkids that I’m going to go see when I graduate,” David said. “I have goals set now and realize how attainable goals really can be when you just buckle down and decide to do something.”

But most of all, he is grateful to God and for the Mission for turning his life around. “You have the saying, ‘Hope Starts Here,’ but nobody really gets that until they are neck deep in this program,” he said. “God is really good at taking a broken person and making them into something new and beautiful. That’s what he’s doing with a lot of us guys here—I see a lot of guys changing.”

“There were many acts of kindness that brought me to tears...”

Scan to Give!

Because of you, men like David receive more than a roof at our shelters—they get a chance to change their lives.

What does KeyBank’s partnership with Denver Rescue Mission look like?
When I stepped into the community relations role, I decided to make an investment in the Mission. [Ever since then], we’ve been trying to think outside the box of how we can make an impact and how to get my employees at KeyBank more involved. In partnership with the Colorado Avalanche in the month of March, we donated $100 to the Mission for every Avalanche assist. We see the faces on the streets, but there’s so many faces that we don’t see, so this was a great way for us to make an impact for those we don’t see.

Why do you think it’s important to support both those we see on the streets and the people we don’t always see?
I have realized that you just never know when something devastating is going to happen. I think people don’t really want a handout, they just want a hand up, and to me, that’s what the Mission does. It is up to us as community to not turn our backs on the homeless. I’m just so proud that KeyBank has made the decision to partner with the Mission because I believe when you help one person, you’re helping several others within that family. Whether it’s a mom who worries about her son or someone who’s on the streets, you’re helping multiple people.

What has your volunteer experience been like at the Mission?
I’ve been aware of the Mission since I was a little girl, and it just always stayed within my heart—the impact you make on community. [People] can give donations, but I think it’s so much more impactful when you get a group of volunteers to stand side-by-side. KeyBank loves to come alongside and partner and sometimes that looks like doing what we call Neighbors Make a Difference Day, where we close our branches and our headquarters across the country and go out and volunteer for half a day. The Mission is very nice to take a group of our employees and it gets filled right away because people want to get involved with what you stand for.

What would you say to encourage others to get involved with the Mission?
Going and serving the food, the [guests] tell you thank you for doing what you’re doing and it’s just so impactful. You walk out of Denver Rescue Mission different than how you walked in and that to me is rewarding. Taking a few hours of your time will transform you, change your life and make you look at life a little differently.

Volunteer With Us!