

JUNE 2023

CHANGING LIVES

131 YEARS OF SERVICE



A Family's Path to

HOPE

**DENVER
RESCUE
MISSION**

Dear Friends,

Some of you may have already heard, but as valued supporters of the life-changing work we do, I wanted to share directly with you that I recently announced my retirement after 24 years as President/CEO. This has been carefully planned and was approved by the Board of Directors in the fall of 2020, with the idea that the succession plan would be put into place in 2023. The Board is currently in the process of working with a search firm with the intent of a smooth transition by fall of this year, and I will stay on as President Emeritus until April 1, 2024.

I am sure that I will have an opportunity to say more at a later date, but I just wanted you to know how much I have personally appreciated your generosity as we have sought to help every person who comes through our doors.

This month's *Changing Lives* newsletter is titled, "A Family's Path to Hope" and talks specifically about MaDonna and her children's search for a better life. Because of your generosity, she has hope that she did not have before. Thank you!

She is not alone. Over the years, we at the Mission have seen so many men, women and families find their way to a better life. With your help and God's divine work, we have seen transformation as our wonderful staff come alongside people who are hurting, develop relationships with them and share the love of Jesus.

So, thank you again for your support—financially, through prayer and by volunteering. I have been blessed and humbled to see God work in so many ways; no one but God could have orchestrated the many blessings I have had the pleasure to watch happen at Denver Rescue Mission over these last two and a half decades.

Grateful for you,

Brad



Brad Meuli
President/CEO



CELEBRATING DADS



We're sending all of our Mission men some extra love this *Father's Day!*



Helping Even More Families

The Crossing now has six rooms dedicated for families in crisis situations. These families literally have nowhere else to go and may have higher needs. We are able to come alongside them and help them address their needs to help them move more quickly into stable housing.

HOUSING BARRIERS FOR FAMILIES

We helped more people than ever get into housing last year.

LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

ONLY 20%

of those experiencing homelessness would fill all of the currently available, affordable housing.



INCOME ISN'T ENOUGH¹

82

Work Hours Per Week

TO AFFORD

\$1,856 Fair Market Rent

@

\$17.29 Minimum Wage

HALF of all Colorado renters are **cost-burdened**.

COVID BENEFITS EXPIRED + INFLATION

EXPIRED

Evictions

Medicaid

SNAP

INFLATION

Denver

7.9%

United States

7.5%

Pre-Pandemic

2%

CHILDCARE EXPENSE



Even for those who can afford this, there are not always openings in daycare centers, which may not allow parents/guardians to work.

Sources:

- The National Alliance to End Homelessness 2022 conference
- National Low Income Housing Coalition: 2022 Out of Reach
- HUD User: FY 2023 Fair Market Rent Documentation System
- City and County of Denver: Denver's Minimum Wage
- Denver Post: Meet the people being priced out of Denver as surging housing costs outpace wage growth
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: January 2022 Consumer Price Index
- Brightwheel: 2023 Cost Guide for Denver Daycares and Preschools

1. All numbers reflect affording a two-bedroom in Denver County in 2023 without spending more than 30 percent of income.

2. The range of costs across age groups for full-time, full-day care in Denver.

A Family's Path to HOPE



When relationship difficulties and addiction drove MaDonna's family apart and into homelessness, she felt heartbroken, hopeless and alone. She came to the Mission seeking a pathway out of her situation, and here she found the resources she needed to bring hope back to her family.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

A mother's love is like no other. Whether celebrating small victories, like a child taking their first steps or being there to wrap them in a hug when they are sad, mothers would do just about anything for their kids.

MaDonna is no different and loves each of her children with all her heart. When a series of relationship difficulties intermixed with addiction caused MaDonna to lose those who meant the most to her—her children—she was heartbroken.

On a night in February 2019, MaDonna let her son spend the night with his father, not knowing that he would take him the next day. She did all she could do to get him back, but with no success. Things spiraled quickly after that.

"I lost everything. I lost my apartment. I lost my car—I crashed it. I got in with a bad crowd really quick," she remembered. "I went from never using drugs since I was like 17 years old . . . and by May, I was addicted to drugs."

All MaDonna could think was, *what's the point?*

"Nothing looked like it was ever going to get better," she said. "It used to be my sob story that I went into right before I got high."

MaDonna spent the next couple of years struggling with addiction and living on the streets most of the time. That was her reality when she found out she was pregnant with her daughter MaDelynn.

"That's when I realized that I had to decide whether I was just going to let my story be that I didn't have my kids, the world was against me and nothing worked out," she said, "or if I was going to admit that sometimes things don't work out but the choice is what are you going to do next? You're still here. You're still breathing. Today's a new day. What are you going to do now?"

You are making a difference for so many families. Thank you for showing MaDonna, MaDelynn and Elliott that they are not alone.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?

MaDonna set out to change both her perspective and her circumstances. She worked hard to get sober and bounced between hotels and different programs around Denver, seeking any support she could get.

When she found Denver Rescue Mission, MaDonna had started taking online classes and was pregnant with her son Elliott. Shortly after they joined the STAR Transitional Program, the Mission's transitional program at The Crossing, MaDonna began working and things started looking up.

"The really nice thing about being here is that when I get home at night, I know that we're safe. I know that if we're hungry we can eat food and I know that I can wash all my laundry for free," she said. "Our room is comfortable, and the affordable [program fees] have been the most helpful thing."

With two young children to support and having her family's most basic needs met, MaDonna has also grown through the onsite, life-changing spiritual and emotional support. She has taken classes on anger management, relationships and budgeting, learning life-long skills. But most of all, she has found self-worth again.

"When you realize what you're doing is wrong and you have to turn around and face it all, the great thing about knowing that God loves you is that you don't have to face it alone," she said. "You don't have to face fault, guilt and that forever shame of not being able to move forward. I think that's a great part of this program here is that it allows people to revalue themselves in something that's permanent and something that's real."

As MaDonna continues the program, she is saving as much money as she can as she works to get into housing. Having a drug record makes it very difficult for many people like MaDonna to qualify for housing. It is a major barrier and now that MaDonna is making more money in her job, she is close to being ineligible for other programs and benefits as well.

"I'm making like 21 dollars an hour, I'm working more than full time, I'm getting overtime every week, and I still am struggling to find housing," she said. "There are a lot of people in between who, maybe their income is high enough that they are having to pay for their own health insurance and their own daycare, but that middle ground is really difficult to navigate through."

For single mothers like MaDonna, there are many extra costs that come into play when it comes to raising children. "I have two babies and I drive them 15 miles to go to daycare and then I have to drive 15 miles back to work," she said. "So I'm working right now but if any one of those things falls apart—the daycare, the transportation—and suddenly I'm not working and then I'm right back where I started."

As MaDonna navigates the obstacles that come with parenting and the housing process, she is grateful to the Mission for being an extra support. While at The Crossing she was able to obtain her associate degree in psychology, with which she hopes to help other families so they don't have to experience the things she went through.

"You can't do it alone and you shouldn't have to," she said. "Everybody deserves to have a warm meal and somebody who cares." ■

"I think that Denver Rescue Mission reminds people that God loves them. People who have literally lost all of the hope that they had."



Give today to extend a helping hand to even more families at DenverRescueMission.org/ChangingLives.

Scan to Give!



THE MISSION in my words



VRNDA DASI NOEL

Vrnda has a heart for serving others. Before starting Ability Access in 2007, she was a school bus driver, worked in real estate and was a hospice volunteer. As a non-facility-based company, Ability Access comes alongside those who are differently-abled through community service and interaction.

What initially inspired Ability Access to get involved at the Mission?

We began volunteering every Thursday in 2007. At that time, I was an employee for Developmental Pathways (DP). Just a couple years later, DP closed our program, and I went out on my own to open my agency, Ability Access. Over the years since 2007, we've only missed Thursday holidays and a few times when I was out of the country to visit family.

What has kept your group supporting the Mission for so long?

My agency is client driven. Therefore, I take them to do the activities they choose. Several of the people I bring have been there since the beginning. Everyone who participates in the group thoroughly enjoys coming. They enjoy being of service and helping feed people by serving lunch on Thursdays at The Crossing.

How do Ability Access's values align with Denver Rescue Mission's values?

The core values of Ability Access are to help every person participate fully in their lives, learn how to advocate for themselves, participate in new and enriching experiences, enjoy integration in their community, gain/maintain job skills, make and nurture independent friendships, [participate in] selfless service, and so much more. No doubt our values cross over in many areas.

What is the volunteer experience like for your group every week?

They love it! They know what's expected and jump right in to set up the dining room for lunch. They take so much pride in their service. Laura is the "salad queen," LC greets everyone and scans their card, Sean serves on the hot bar, Hunter serves the sweets, Stephanie serves the drinks, and Chris runs dirty dishes back to the dishwasher with a smile as big as the sun. When Clay gets to come, he hands out napkins. Each of them enjoys talking/interfaces with the residents and staff. They have made long-time relationships there, many of whom they will see out in the community randomly and have conversations with.



The Ability Access group alongside Mission staff at The Crossing.

OUR CORE STRATEGIES



EMERGENCY SERVICES



REHABILITATION





TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS





COMMUNITY OUTREACH


LOCATIONS


Lawrence Street Community Center: Meals, restrooms, showers, clean drinking water, and access to Mission staff for encouragement and guidance 


Lawrence Street Shelter: Overnight shelter for men 


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 access to resources and services 

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: 24/7 shelter for men, operated in partnership with the City of Denver 

Volunteer With Us!



DENVER RESCUE MISSION IS A PROUD MEMBER OF:



MISSION MEMBER CERTIFIED EXCELLENT



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