

CHANGING LIVES

132 YEARS OF SERVICE



A MEAL OF *Meaning*





Dear Friends,

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

It is far easier to not give thanks, unless things are perfect and going according to our plan. But this is not what scripture tells us to do. This passage tells us to rejoice ALWAYS, to pray always and to give thanks in ALL circumstances, not FOR all circumstances—even when the job is not going well, finances are difficult or family problems arise. It is easier to complain and not give thanks and certainly not to think this may be God's plan.

I have been working in this ministry field for almost 13 years, and something I'm excited about implementing this Thanksgiving in our Denver and Fort Collins shelters are large sheets of paper that read, "I am thankful for . . ." At my previous Mission, many people thought there would be nothing written, because how could those who seemingly have so little be thankful? How wrong they were. The sheets were filled with dozens and dozens of thankful praises, such as:

"I am thankful God is always watching over me" "My family, my friends and Jesus"
"Waking up this morning" "Being alive"
"A warm bed and good food" "A coat in cold weather"

These made me ask myself the questions, "When was the last time I was thankful for a coat, a bed and waking up? Am I thankful in all circumstances or do I complain about what I don't have or something not going my way?"

My faith has grown deeper and become more authentic because of the guests we serve. They understand better than I what it means to rejoice and to give thanks in ALL circumstances.

I look forward to sharing with you what our guests are thankful for this Thanksgiving season.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Dennis Van Kampen | President/CEO

THE MISSION in my words



Pete Davis

Pete has been volunteering since 2018 and his employer, DeLine Box & Display, has helped supply boxes for the Mission's Turkey Drive and Thanksgiving Banquet in-a-Box event since 2019.

What inspired DeLine Box & Display to help support the Mission during Thanksgiving?

Thanksgiving is a time when many people and organizations focus on giving back and helping others. DeLine Box's inspiration to support comes from a combination of gratitude, a sense of community and the desire to give others a reason to feel hopeful and cared for.

What is one of your favorite Mission memories?

With Denver weather being so unpredictable, one never knows if it will be t-shirts or parkas when volunteering for the Turkey Drive. We have had some hot days and some super chilly ones but no matter, generous folks always come through to donate!

What would you say to encourage someone else to get involved with the Mission?

It's an incredible opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those in need. Imagine how much brighter someone's day could be because of your support! Your involvement can range from donating your time, resources or skills, and every bit helps create a ripple effect of kindness. It's a chance to connect with others, share in the spirit of giving and see firsthand the impact of your generosity. Why not take this opportunity to give back? Join us in supporting the Mission and help create positive change in our community!

A MEAL OF *Meaning*

A meal ensures nourishment and a sense of community. During the Thanksgiving season, a hot, traditional Thanksgiving meal hand-prepared by Mission chefs helps our guests and program participants know they are not forgotten.

Since childhood, every person creates memories surrounding food, from cooking in the kitchen with loved ones to enjoying traditional meals during the holidays. For generations, meals have meant so much more than physical nourishment—they have brought people and cultures together.

Ryan Peterson, Denver food services manager at The Crossing, has always known the importance of a meal at Denver Rescue Mission. Thus, he felt inspired to bridge the physical importance of a meal and the emotional connection of a meal with the creation of “A Meal of Meaning.”

“A Meal of Meaning” is an opportunity for a New Life Program participant whose work readiness portion of the program is in the kitchen at The Crossing. Once a month, Ryan and the other chefs select someone who has consistently had a good attitude and work ethic, to then prepare a meal that means something to them.

“Jesus replied, ‘They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.’”
-Matthew 14:16



1,237,402
Meals Served
Last Year

Q&A WITH CHEF RYAN

Why do you think it's important to share meals with others?

"It's in the Bible. When you feed somebody, there is a deeper connection. People communicate better when there's food involved. People are more susceptible to being nicer. I just feel like food can bring people together."

What inspired you to start "A Meal of Meaning"?

"Most of the guys, when we are cooking meals, start reminiscing about when they were at a better point in their life. And so, I wanted to give them the memory of when they were younger, put them in a happy place to remember better times and show them that somebody still cares."

What has the reaction been from the men who have been selected?

"They are so appreciative. They're like, 'Me?! You want me to?' They give me a hug or give me a handshake, and they just say, 'Thank you, chef.' They always get nervous, but we reassure them, 'Everything's gonna be all right. We're here to help you.' They're very proud of receiving their bio that I put in a frame for them, and I give them a certificate with their name on it. It just shows them that they're appreciated, and I recognize their hard work."

How have you seen the guys grow or benefit from getting to share their meal?

"The majority of the time they're about to phase out of the kitchen and are looking for a job. A lot of them apply for jobs and they get discouraged. I'm just like, 'Man, you can do it. Remember how scared you were with 'A Meal of Meaning'? But you didn't give up. You kept going, and everything turned out.' A lot of these guys are used to people calling them failures, or they can't kick an addiction, or they're not worthy of being in society. That breaks them down. Once I show them that, 'Hey, you can still do it,' it gives them self-confidence. Most of the time, it makes the guys reflect on where they're at in their life and making somebody in their life proud of them. I've seen nothing but positivity come from it."

What does it mean to you to prepare a Thanksgiving meal for those in our programs?

"It's my way of showing my thanks back to everybody. It means a lot because I cook from my heart. Everything I prepare I want to make sure it's the best that I can possibly provide. Just to see everybody happy, thankful, full, and coming back for seconds, thirds, fourths, and fifths—it just makes me feel like I've done my job."

What is your Thanksgiving "Meal of Meaning"?

My grandfather Marvin's stuffing. He and my grandmother owned a restaurant, and he was a chef in his younger years. He never taught me the recipe, but I remember just sitting at the kitchen counter and watching him make his stuffing. I remember all from my memory on how to make it. My grandfather passed away about two years ago, so I just keep him alive in my heart by still being able to share a part of him with everybody, even though he's not here. All he wanted me to do was to be successful and be the best person I could be in the kitchen. And before he passed, he told me he was happy and proud of me."



Jerry's CINNAMON ROLLS



" . . . a meaningful and treasured part of my life, filled with warmth, love and the joy of family."

"Before my mother passed away, I was 12 years old. I had a cherished family tradition of gathering in the kitchen with my younger sister, Tracy. Cooking together was a way for us to bond and create lasting memories. Our culinary journey began with making meatballs from scratch and preparing homemade linguine and a big pot of spaghetti sauce. As the sauce cooked, my family and I would chat and laugh, sharing stories and enjoying each other's company.

We would make homemade dough for cinnamon rolls, spreading a generous amount of butter, brown sugar and cinnamon across the surface. As the cinnamon rolls baked, the kitchen would be filled with a delicious, sweet scent that was simply irresistible. I loved to watch them bake, anticipating the moment when they would be golden brown and ready to enjoy. This shared experience in the kitchen was a meaningful and treasured part of my life, filled with warmth, love and the joy of family."

Lloyd's ENCHILADAS



" . . . represents family, tradition and love."

"This is my grandma's recipe. One of my most cherished memories is the aroma that would fill the house as the enchiladas baked in the oven. It was a scent that promised warmth, comfort and a full stomach. My siblings and I would gather around the kitchen, eagerly waiting for the timer to go off so we could dive into the delicious meal. We would laugh and chat, sharing stories about our day while savoring every bite. This dish is more than just food to me; it represents family, tradition and love. It reminds me of the importance of preserving our heritage and passing down traditions to future generations."

Omar's FRIED CHICKEN



" . . . brought my whole family together."

"Red beans and rice, fried chicken and cornbread hold a special meaning. They remind me of my family and my hometown of Biloxi, Mississippi, particularly my grandmother. There's something about this meal that brought my whole family together. The red beans are made with smoked turkey and the fried chicken is finger-licking good! We are all a 'family' here in the New Life Program and I loved sharing this meal with my 'family.'"



THANK YOU FOR HELPING MAKE EACH MEAL MEANINGFUL FOR THOSE IN NEED. Help fill plates and hearts this Thanksgiving at DenverRescueMission.org/ChangingLives

Scan to Give!

Happy Thanksgiving

A Year Later



You met Ralph and Lisa's family in last November's newsletter. They are thankful for:

Home

"Just knowing we have our own place—it's helped me sleep at night." -Ralph

Family

"I'm happy all my kids decided to come back with us. When they were younger, I put them through a lot. I'm going to spend the rest of my life making it up to them." -Ralph

Food

"Everybody likes the fact that they can go into the kitchen, open up the fridge and if they want pop or milk or ramen noodles or whatever, it's there." -Lisa

The Crossing

"If The Crossing didn't help us, I know we wouldn't be here right now." -Brehanna

2024 THANKSGIVING TURKEY DRIVE LEAD SPONSORS

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EMERGENCY SERVICES

Meeting the needs of the most vulnerable



REHABILITATION

Equipping men through a life-changing program



TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS

Transitioning people into stability



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Providing essential needs for daily life



December 10



ColoradoGives.org/DenverRescueMission

LOCATIONS Lawrence Street Shelter | Lawrence Street Community Center | The Crossing | Ministry Outreach Center | Holly Center Administration & Education | 48th Avenue Center | Harvest Farm | Fort Collins Rescue Mission

DENVER RESCUE MISSION IS A PROUD MEMBER OF:



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