

# CHANGING LIVES

133 YEARS OF SERVICE

# DAD'S LAST WISH



**DENVER  
RESCUE  
MISSION**

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.  
Romans 12:2 (NIV)

Dear Friends,



I knew a man named Lee who struggled for decades with addiction and homelessness. In fact, every single night for decades, you knew he was in one of three places: in jail, in the hospital or at the rescue mission intoxicated. Decades!

Many looked at this man and judged him. They said things like, "He should not have started drinking, he did this to himself," and "Get a job." Some called him terrible names. The funny thing about judgment is that we often judge without knowing the full story. For example, Lee did not simply decide to start drinking. Rather, as a young child, his parents made him start drinking. He was addicted before he had a choice. That began the decades-long cycle of addiction, homelessness and crime.

It seemed the whole world had given up on Lee, and truthfully, he gave up on himself. He had been housed several times only to end up back on the streets within months. He had been to recovery programs that never seemed to work for him. Then one night, he looked up at one of our staff and said, "I'm done, help me." The whole world may have given up on Lee, but God never did and because of that, neither did the rescue mission staff.

Lee entered a detox program, then he entered the recovery program at the rescue mission. He eventually moved out of homelessness and into housing. He spent the last years of his life housed, sober and volunteering at the rescue mission with men who were struggling just as he had.

A local media outlet heard about Lee's story and asked to do an interview. Lee agreed. The last question he was asked was this: "What advice would you have for someone who is struggling right now with the same things you struggled with?" Without missing a beat, Lee said, "I would tell them, give Jesus a chance, it will stick!"

In this newsletter you will read an incredible story of the journey of a father and son. The story in part is about a God who never gives up on us and always loves us. No matter how long it takes or how difficult the circumstances. Denver Rescue Mission will never give up on anyone because God does not give up on anyone.

Thank you for making our work and these stories of recovery and redemption possible! We could not do it without you. The need has never been greater, but our God is greater than our need!

  
Dennis Van Kampen | President/CEO

## THE MISSION in my words

**Dorian is the pastor at Cornerstone Chapel and has volunteered as a weekly Bible study leader for the New Life Program (NLP) since 2018.**

*Pictured: Dorian (bottom right) with NLP participants in his Bible study*



Dorian Christian

### **What is one of your favorite parts about connecting with the men in the New Life Program?**

A couple of guys came to church for a barbeque, and they kind of paused and looked at each other and said, "It's been a while since I felt like I was a normal guy." There's something about homelessness and addiction that isolates these guys so terribly. It can go both ways—the addiction can isolate you, and people tend to overlook you. So for me, that's been a rewarding thing to hear—the "Wow, you care about me. You know my name."

### **How have you seen Charles specifically grow during his time in the program?**

Charles is beyond just wanting to do the minimum to get through. He sees a bigger vision. He wants to be useful in the Kingdom. It's a

unique thing when the Lord calls somebody to something like that. He's insightful and he has really good questions. He seems to just glean from anybody he can have the opportunity to glean from. I can't take any credit for that, but I get the joy of being along for the ride.

### **How would you encourage someone else to get involved with the Mission?**

It has definitely grown my faith, no matter how many times I watch the Lord transform somebody's heart and mind. The Mission is a good place for all of us to love people we otherwise wouldn't be involved with. It's one of the reasons I've tried to incorporate it into the life of our church. There are still guys from five to eight years ago who people in our church still remember and pray for by name. I can only give attribution to the Lord for that kind of impact.

# DAD'S LAST WISH

This is the story of two men — a father and a son — who share more than just their name. Fifteen years apart, both found themselves in the Mission's New Life Program, each finding the hope that saved their lives.

Charles' journey began with abuse he endured as a child, leading him to use drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism for most of his life. His ex-wife also struggled with drug abuse, and the instability of their relationship led Charles to raise his son (also named Charles) mainly by himself.

Years later, both father and son were struggling with addiction and living amidst instability and broken relationships. When it became too much for Charles to keep living with his son, he went to Denver Rescue Mission.

"Ever since that first night I came to the Mission, things started going right for me," Charles stated in the Mission's January 2011 *Changing Lives* newsletter, where his story was featured.

The main thing to change in his life: Charles went from being an atheist to becoming a Christian. "Things I wasn't too hot about, like going to Bible study and church, became things I enjoyed. I was surprised how much my thinking changed," he said in 2011.

Charles graduated from the New Life Program in 2010, received a vehicle through the Mission's vehicle donation program and moved into an apartment, where he remained for the following five years.

His son remembers that time, sharing, "My dad graduated from the program, and I was homeless in another state. He had stable housing and a job. So, I moved in with him, but made a bunch of mistakes, started going to jail and stuff. One day he was sick, and he had heart surgery. I didn't keep up on the bills and when he came back out of the hospital, he found out he had cancer, and we lost the apartment. He was doing well, taking care of me, and I was getting worse and worse and worse."

Charles ended up in hospice, and his son continued to see him regularly despite the instability of his own situation. Sadly, he passed away in 2018 with one final wish for his son:

**"The one thing my dad told me to do before he died was to make sure I graduated this program."**

**FATHER**

# SON

Growing up, Charles remembers wishing he was a Christian, wishing that he could believe in what the Bible says. Yet, he was raised by an atheist father and surrounded by the instability that comes with two parents who struggle with drug addiction. Eventually, his interest in faith disappeared completely.

After following a similar path as his dad—struggling with drug use and experiencing homelessness—Charles woke up one day in prison completely changed.

**“I was woken up one day, and God told me that He took the evil spirit that was in me and said, ‘It's done.’ From that moment on, I was a Christian. I had had a dream about my dad being in this program and made the decision before I went to court the next day to come to this program.**

**They dropped the charges. I was out within five days after being told I was going to be in prison for three years. They dropped me off at the Mission downtown and then was in this program within a week, by no doing of my own. Since then, I have not used, and I never will use again.”**

From then on, Charles went from wishing he could believe in God to becoming a Christian, praying regularly and receiving as much spiritual education as possible, including going to school for apologetics and pastoral science. His relationship with his chaplain, Jonnell Ashley, and the other chaplains and Bible study leaders at The Crossing have also been instrumental to his spiritual growth.



“When Charles first entered the New Life Program, he shared with me that the only pursuit in life that mattered to him in the past was money,” said Jonnell. “As he has progressed through the program, he now believes a life of obedience to Christ is the only path that leads to success, wellness and peace.”

Jonnell himself graduated from the New Life Program in 2005 and later became staff at the Mission. "Hopefully I'm going to follow in his footsteps," said Charles. "I'd actually like to work at the Mission as a chaplain in the future. Because of what I went through, my evangelism will be different, and God did that on purpose. By being on the streets and around gangs, drugs and violence, God is now using that to help me learn and to help other people."

The transformation that has happened in Charles' life has been more than spiritual. His work readiness at the Ministry Outreach Center has equipped him to work again full time. He transformed physically with dental work, gaining healthy weight, learning to walk again after injuries, and starting to run and box through the nonprofit Back on My Feet. He has maintained sobriety. He obtained a driver's license, social security card and birth certificate.

"It's an insane amount of stuff that has happened in six months," he said.

But the thing he is most grateful for? "That the Holy Spirit decided to talk to me that day. It had nothing to do with me. I woke up a Christian, and the Holy Spirit has directed my every single step."

When thinking about how his dad would feel seeing the transformation he has made, Charles said,

**"He would be extremely happy. He would be like, 'You finally got it.' This program saved his life, and it saved mine too. It is a testament to God, for both of us."**



85%

A child experiencing homelessness is 85% more likely to be an adult who will experience homelessness\*

*\*National Alliance to End Homelessness*

"The investment of the donors has kept me in this program and has saved lives."  
-Charles

**Help stop generational homelessness.**



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# HIS FATHER'S STORY



Charles had never had a copy of his dad's newsletter story until now. In that story you will read that he used to go by the name Chad. It was after his father passed away that he decided to go by his legal name, the same name as his dad, so he could continue hearing the name of the father who meant so much to him.

Read his father's story at [DenverRescueMission.org/DadsLastWish](https://DenverRescueMission.org/DadsLastWish)

## LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY



It only takes 20 minutes to impact future generations.

Create or update your Will for FREE at [GiftWise.com/DenverRescueMission](https://GiftWise.com/DenverRescueMission)

## conversations on a BENCH

World Homeless Day  
October 9-10



Nationwide event, including Dennis Van Kampen, President/CEO | Tune in



### OUR CORE STRATEGIES

#### 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



Volunteer  
With Us



**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

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