The Gift That Keeps on Giving

Every Christmas we celebrate an amazing gift given to us by God. But have you ever stopped to think about that gift and how unremarkable the packaging was? Jesus was a common looking baby, given to a poor, common looking couple. If you had seen Him in His mother’s arms on the street, you never would have guessed the awesome nature that lay just under the surface.

It’s the same way at the Phoenix Rescue Mission. The gift of a meal may seem simple at first… even ordinary. But the potential behind it to change a life can be enormous. Just ask Richard, a soon to be graduate of our recovery program. One simple tray of chicken, rice and salad turned out to be more than a meal – it was the first step to a bright new future.

Sitting alone in his motel room, Richard was at a loss at what to do next. He couldn’t afford another week’s rent. Another few days and he would be out on the streets for good. Alcohol had cost Richard everything – his job, his home, his future – all of it sacrificed to an addiction he could no longer control. But despite all these looming issues on his mind, Richard’s stomach reminded him that he had a more immediate concern.

He was hungry.

Richard hadn’t eaten in days and the pain was starting to become unbearable. He remembered his friends telling him of a place in south Phoenix that served free food - and not just peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, but real, hot meals. The more he thought of it, the hungrier he became. It wasn’t long before he found himself a good distance from his motel, walking southbound towards the Mission.

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At the Mission, we're always seeking to do things better, to save and redeem lives more effectively and therefore more abundantly. In keeping with that goal, I've got some exciting news I'd like to share with you concerning a big change coming to the Changing Lives Center.

Recently we've hit an important milestone. To date, there are a 100 people living at the center, 70 of them women, 30 of them children, all of them finding hope for a bright new future. It's an incredible sight watching these women and their children blossom under the care of our dedicated staff.

Just think... we've more than doubled the people we are serving at the Changing Lives Center from 40 in January 2013 to 100 today! Our goal is to increase the Changing Lives Center to serve 170 women and children by the end of 2014.

Thank you so much for the prayers and support that makes progress like this possible! Without you, the lives of these women and their children would be very different and Phoenix would be a much darker place.

On behalf of all of us here at the Mission, I’d like to wish you and your family a safe and very Merry Christmas!

Cardinals’ Jay Feely a Real ‘Game Changer’ for the Mission

At this year’s Early Bird Thanksgiving Dinner served by the Arizona Cardinals, the Phoenix Rescue Mission recognized Cardinals kicker Jay Feely with the “Game Changer Award.”

Feely has served at the special dinner for the homeless four consecutive years, since he started with the Cardinals organization in 2010. Feely has a servant’s heart, always taking the time to speak with someone and always making sure he signs an autograph for the children eating at the shelter.

Thank you Jay Feely and family for making the Early Bird Dinner an annual treat for our guests.
As far back as he can remember, Dwayne has always struggled to do the right thing. His heart has always yearned to help others and to see the people around him succeed. But despite his good intentions, he’s always found himself heading in the wrong direction.

Dwayne remembers, “My mother always told me ‘You’re going be the good kid; you’re going to do the right thing.’ It just never seemed to work out that way.”

His troubles started at age 13 when his friends offered him marijuana for the first time. Dwayne knew the danger and managed to deflect their offers for a while, but eventually he gave in to peer pressure. Throughout his teen years he experimented with alcohol and by the time he hit his 20’s he had graduated to using methamphetamine.

After marrying and fathering a son, he did his best to put away the drugs and keep his problems away from his family. He wanted to protect them by keeping it hidden, but it got out of control. Eventually his wife discovered his secret. Just two years after tying the knot, Dwayne lost his family to his ever increasing addiction.

“I was a mess,” he says. “I stopped taking care of myself. Losing my family broke me away from the meth, but my addiction to alcohol got deeper and deeper. It was a downward spiral.”

A DUI and a two-year prison sentence later, Dwayne was searching for an out. He was attending a court-ordered AA meeting when a fellow member pointed him to the Phoenix Rescue Mission.

Dwayne recalls, “I wanted to find a place where I could turn my life around, where I could finally find a way to do the right thing. This guy in AA said to me, ‘You’ve got to try out the Mission. They’ve got a great drug and alcohol program.’ I’m so glad I followed his advice. The Mission showed me what I had been missing all along – a relationship with Jesus Christ.”

During recovery, Dwayne has found plenty of opportunities to fulfill the craving he’s had in his heart for so long.

“I’ve always wanted to help,” he remembers, “but my addictions always got in the way. I started drinking, started doing drugs and I lost the ability to fill that need. This place has given me the opportunity to turn it around and finally be the good kid that I’ve always wanted to be – the kid mom always knew I would be. They’ve given me sobriety and everything I’ve needed to set my path straight.”

So far, Dwayne has completed our Foundations course and has graduated to Inner Healing, the second stage of our recovery program. Along with his course work, he’s assisted with chapel services, worked in our kitchen as one of our cooks, manned the front desk and is currently applying to help in our Community Engagement program to give tours and answer the volunteer hotline.

“I love it here; this is the greatest place I’ve ever been. I want to share my story and help as much as I can. It’s my calling. It’s what is in my heart.”

If you know someone who needs help, contact the Phoenix Rescue Mission’s Tranformations Program at 602-233-3000 or prm@phoenixrescuemission.org.
The Gift That Keeps on Giving

When he arrived, he was starving and made an immediate beeline for the cafeteria. He ate a home-cooked meal. His stomach now full, he was free to concentrate on his other problems. He asked the front desk if they knew of anywhere close he could go to find help with his addiction. He was surprised to find that what he was searching for was just a few steps down the hall.

For the next year, under the direction of our experienced recovery staff, Richard would receive the exact help he needed to defeat his addiction and get his life back on track.

Today, thanks to the hard work of our team of counselors, chaplains and support staff, Richard is sober, he’s turned his life over to the Lord and has been baptized. He will be graduating from our recovery program in just a few short weeks! Richard still can’t believe how something as simple as a tray of food could initiate such a huge change in his life.

“I would have missed this opportunity if it wasn’t for that first meal!”

Like many of our graduates, Richard is eager to give back. Currently he’s a part of our community engagement program, helping those in our community find hope. He’s also undergoing training in our Servant Leadership program, learning how to become a mentor to men and women still stuck in their addictions.

Richard wants to make sure that the gift he received at the Mission doesn’t stop with him – he’s doing his best to see that this gift is one that keeps on giving.

Thank you so much for the support that makes stories like Richard’s possible and we hope you have a very Merry Christmas.

Want to see more stories like Richard’s? Visit our website phoenixrescuemission.com/newsletter.

COMING EVENTS

Saturday, Dec. 21 Adopt-a-Family: The Adopt-a-Family program helps 300 families this holiday season provide gifts for their children. You can adopt a family now. Maximum spending is $50 per child.

Monday, Dec. 23 Family Fiesta and Toy Distribution: Children and their families who rely on the Mission for services, eat a special dinner and get to pick an unwrapped toy from our Star of Wonder Boutique. Can you help with a toy drive? We need toys for all ages – 6 months to 14 years. Contact Sofia to register your toy drive.

Hope Totes for Winter Relief: The Mission’s Hope Coach hits the streets six days a week, providing life-saving supplies to the unsheltered homeless. The program is in need of supplies for winter relief, such as blankets, warm socks, hats and gloves. We also need hope totes built in a gallon-sized zip lock bag containing toiletries, bottled water, snacks such as protein or granola bars.

For more information on these and other holiday activities, please contact Sofia Ontiveros, Volunteer Coordinator at 602-346-3363 or email sontiveros@phoenixrescuemission.org.

Mission Mileposts

Phoenix Rescue Mission would like to thank you for a tremendous year. As you can see, your support really made a difference for men, women and children in the Phoenix area:

(Figures from July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013)

- Total Meals Provided: 316,407
- Bed Nights of Shelter: 67,940
- Permanent Job Placements: 99
- Volunteer Service Hours: 22,375
- Bottles of Water Distributed: 365,470