



**Volunteers at the Eugene Mission helped sort donations in the warehouse as part of a project to connect guests with educational and spiritual resources.**

## Focusing on What Matters Most



It's easy to let life's challenges, distractions and uncontrolled busyness pull us away from our most important and God-glorifying priorities. As we see with so many of our guests at the Eugene Mission, disconnection from God, self and community results in every kind of pain and difficulty.

As we continue into the new year, we are putting on the mind of Christ to re-focus on our priorities of sharing Hope, loving guests and teaching them what a safe, secure and healthy relationship looks like. Our best example of harmony, truthfulness and love in relationship comes from Jesus.

In his ministry here on Earth, we see calm determination and profound purpose in everyday service, a refusal to become distracted, consistency in approach and grace toward the brokenness and pain abundant in the people to whom he was ministering.

Though we are far from perfect, we seek to grow in Jesus' likeness as we follow after his example. Jesus provides the perfect roadmap, and we hope to produce fruit in his name.

*"Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." John 15:4*

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus called 12 men to his side to be his disciples and friends. No one can achieve anything significant alone, and Jesus' example shows us that we need more than just one good friend to share in life's burdens and joys

and to foster the gift of companionship. As Jesus gave out of his strengths, he also taught his disciples to focus on sharing the good they had to offer, to minister out of a place of abundance and to see that God is interested in making his love and provision evident in the flesh.

Jesus also understood the importance of withdrawing to recharge, as we see him slip away to pray on mountainsides and in quiet groves of trees. He prioritized his relationship with God and prayer and remained grounded in the love of his Father.

After scores of miracles, including raising a man to life, the crowds would have made Jesus king, but Jesus resisted the temptation of taking pride in his success. Jesus gloried in humility and moved resolutely forward to his ultimate purpose, to sacrifice himself to save the image bearers he so loved.

Jesus said he did only what he saw his Father in heaven do. It's easier to stay focused when we know where, or to whom, we should look. We can't always trust our own blurry perceptions or judgments, but we know we can trust God, and there's peace in the tumultuous road to wholeness when we know our eyes are trained on the one who will never let us down.

*"Hear my voice when I call, Lord; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, Lord, I will seek." Psalm 27:7-8*

In celebration and gratitude,

*Sheryl Balthrop*  
Executive Director

# Drawing Strength to Focus on Your Purpose

When Caitlin found herself on a bus from Salem to Eugene amid a drug-induced psychosis, she knew a few things were true: She felt trapped in her mind and she needed help.

After she and her husband moved to Oregon, she had 17 days clean and then developed an eye problem and convinced herself she was going to die. If she was going to die, she might as well use.

“Once I relapsed, I started going into psychosis and was detached from reality,” she said. “Instead of dying and moving on, I thought I was just going to be trapped in this hell reality.”

She felt hopeless, but something kept her moving forward. Shortly after arriving in town, Caitlin found herself at the Eugene Mission, unsure if anyone could help her and mired in a belief that God thought she deserved her pain because she had used up all her chances.

As soon as she walked into the Rescue Shelter, she felt secure. “I had this feeling like, ‘wow, I can’t even believe a place like this exists. I’m safe. I can relax.’ I couldn’t wrap my head around that.” From the Rescue Shelter, she moved into the R<sup>3</sup> program and has been sober and growing ever since.

“It’s sometimes referred to as the gift of desperation – you reach a certain point where you’re willing to do whatever it takes to be different,” Caitlin said. “For me, I didn’t think I would die of drug use. I thought I would go crazy and be stuck in that reality forever. Because I don’t want to go back to that place, I’m willing to do whatever it takes.”

Her sense of willingness is re-forged daily, and even minute by minute on the more difficult days. She listens to counselors, reads her Bible, prays twice a day and goes to church every Sunday. If her sponsor tells her she needs to act, she does it.

Drug addiction is like living with a fierce enemy that’s inside you and which has a one-track mind – just use. Caitlin says she needed an equally strong sense of determination to grow and change, as well as a team of supporters to encourage her, tell her the truth, and lift her up.

## Foundational Struggle

Caitlin knows now it was God who led her to the Eugene Mission and it is God who lends her his strength. If you want to build anything worth building, whether it’s health, a ministry of service or a family, you need rock-solid determination and a belief that God is upholding you.

The founders of the Eugene Mission knew what it meant to face resistance in their quest to establish a ministry that has now served tens of thousands of people throughout Lane County and beyond.

In the forward to the book, “Nevertheless: The Story of the Eugene Mission,” founding Executive Director Ernie Unger writes: “I can think of no challenge so great as the challenge to separate alone with God until one has a clear direction from Heaven...The Eugene Mission became a reality because we first sought and found the mind of God in the matter. Once that was settled, the path was clear



Program guest Caitlin is staying focused on her recovery by maintaining bonds with her community, growing in her faith and choosing to do the next right thing.

even in the darkest hours of opposition.”

There was a time in Unger’s life when he thought existence on Earth was “pure misery.” After his conversion to Christianity in a tent meeting, his life changed and he found a new purpose.

“The Lord...miraculously delivered him from old, sinful habits, had helped him settle a mountain of old debts, and had given him the grace to overcome personal loss. As he thought of these things there was born in his heart a great compassion for broken men and their many problems,” the book recounts.

## Overcoming With Support

When Unger took over as the leader of a small chapel ministry in Eugene, the ministry had \$5 in the bank, \$1,500 in debt, no building and a city that wasn’t supportive of Christian ministry.

The story of how difficult it was to find a plot of land for a permanent home for the Mission sounds like fiction: there were roadblocks, miles of red tape, a near riot at a building inspection, and endless delays. Unger’s vision, support from the board of directors and certainty that God wanted the Eugene Mission built kept the project going to completion.



Former Eugene Mission Executive Director Ernest Unger faced opposition and challenges in his work to grow a ministry that has now served tens of thousands of guests.

When Caitlin considers her most important priority these days, she has the same certainty and clarity as Unger: “The most important thing for me is to stay clean and sober. If I can’t do that, everything else will fall apart,” she said. “The way I do that is praying to God, asking for help, continuing to work the spiritual program, be of service, and stay connected to the recovery community in Eugene.”

And yet, Caitlin is aware of the trap of future promises, like the kind made by people who have just entered recovery when they say they will never use again. “Just live for today...if you can stay clean just for today, you’ve won,” she said.

The stuff of major victories is made day by day with your purpose in mind and joy in your heart.

“I see hope in everything now,” Caitlin said. “There’s so many opportunities that could open up to me as long as I keep doing the next right thing.”

***“The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O Lord, endures forever – do not abandon the works of your hands.” Psalm 138:8***

# Last Month's Notable Numbers



**100's** of men, women and children received Hope, a healthy temporary living environment, all necessities, & relational engagement, programming, and navigation services



**1,327** volunteer relational engagement hours with guests



**8,142** class, vocational training and life skill hours



**42,916** meals served to unhoused individuals



An R3 program guest is the delighted holder of a certificate declaring that she finished a course on renter education.



Women's Life Change guests joyfully display their creation for an event.



*Women's Life Change guest Frances is growing through service and activities in the program, including her life skill shifts in the Learning Center.*

# Letting Jesus Write a Better Story

When Frances lost her husband of 33 years, she had to face a life without the person who had kept everything together. They were professionals who had a nice home, good cars and life insurance, but Frances didn't know who she was, or what she would do without him.

When doubt that she couldn't handle her life crept in, she turned to gambling in bars to occupy her mind and keep her fear at bay. She also enjoyed the company of strangers who would stop and chat for a minute over a drink and then leave her alone.

Frances' situation deteriorated quickly and when she received a call from the Sheriff's department after stealing a purse, she knew she had hit the bottom of her pit.

Frances began calling phone numbers for detox centers and ended up at Bridgeway, and from there, she entered the Women's Life Change Program at the Eugene Mission. "I never thought I would agree to an 18-month program, but it's Christ centered, and I thought God put me here for a reason," Frances said. "Taking that purse was like God saying, 'this is it.'"

Her daughter told her she needed a team of people to help her, and that's what she's found with Women's Life Change. She has begun a deep work to address the root of her insecurities and fears, and says she wants Jesus to write the next chapters of her story, not fear.

"I have hope – it's knowing I'm going to be happy and have a great life that is so much simpler than it was before," she said.

## Ways to Give

Unlike traditional homeless shelters or services, the Eugene Mission helps our guests identify, address and overcome the issues that brought them to our doors. Guests of the Eugene Mission enjoy a safe and sober campus, like skills classes, vocational training, sober recreation and hobby development. All of this is achieved with zero public funding. We appreciate your investment and partnership in the lives of our guests.

- Schedule a tour and consider volunteer opportunities or financial partnerships. **Contact Miket@eugenemission.org**
- Become a monthly sustaining supporter at **eugenemission.org/giving/**
- Remember the Eugene Mission in your estate planning: FEIN #93-0563797
- Schedule a visit for breakfast or lunch with your church, small group, friends, etc. We are usually available Monday-Wednesday. **Contact Beths@eugenemission.org**
- Donate using the envelope included with this newsletter