



## Celebrating Life Change



We are pleased to dedicate this newsletter to six courageous guests who will be walking the stage at our annual Life Change Graduation. We celebrate our Life Change participants for their courageous commitment to life transformation.

Oregon statistics on substance abuse do not paint a pretty picture.

While Oregon had the third-highest addiction rate in the country last year, our state ranked 47th out of 50 states in treatment options. This inverse correlation is not good. Addiction costs Oregon an estimated \$6.7 billion annually. Substance abuse costs families and individuals an additional inestimable toll as it is often an insurmountable barrier to maintaining relationships, employment, health and housing.

The Eugene Mission recognizes the brutal suffering caused by substance abuse and supports its guests in their sobriety. We are committed to changing the terrible trajectory of substance abuse and providing a pathway out of addiction. Recovery is a critical piece of the journey off the streets. We recognize the recovery journey takes time, dedication and resources.

*"....and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."*

*Colossians 3:10*

The Eugene Mission's Life Change Program embodies our commitment to walking this journey with our guests. The Life Change Program provides 12 to 18 months of intensive residential relapse prevention services to address the root causes of addiction and the mental, spiritual, emotional and neurochemical aspects of recovery.

We currently have 26 men in the program and our six graduates are an inspiring example of what life change truly looks like. We also celebrate the opening of Women's Life Change later this month. All of this is made possible with the grace and mercy of our Great God and by you, our supporters and donors, who believe in second chances and in the hope and wellness that sobriety brings.

In gratitude,

*Sheryl Balthrop*

Executive Director

## Life Change Graduation 2022

**6:00pm June 17, 2022 | City First Church, 730 W 8th Eugene, OR 97402**

*"Behold, I am making all things new." Revelation 21:5*



## Joshua Trenton

Joshua Trenton came to the Eugene Mission in July of 2021 from the Buckley Detoxification Center.

"I had a seizure at work and that meant a blood test at the hospital," says Joshua. "Let's just say it was positive."

Joshua worked in the restaurant industry in Southern Oregon and when asked to describe his days, he shared, "I would start my day with a drink, then go to the liquor store during my break, drink at work and then go home and continue drinking." Joshua described himself as a "functional alcoholic" and then admitted, "that was the alcoholic justifying the alcoholic."

When Joshua walks the stage at the Life Change Graduation, he will be one year sober and working full time at Glory Bee Distributors.

"I have a job that is really a future for me," he says. "I love being back to work and on a career path. There is no looking back for me."

When Joshua arrived at the Buckley Detox Center a year ago, he described that as a time of profound hopelessness.

"My sister drove me to Buckley," says Joshua. "I didn't think I would make it one day. After four days at Buckley, I knew I needed an intensive program. They recommended the Life Change Program."

"I remember thinking 'wow, a whole year,' but that time flies," shares Joshua. "It is the real deal and you get out of it what you put into it. The structure of daily schedules, being on time, coursework, counseling sessions and group process. It really works and it goes by really fast."

Joshua's favorite part of the Life Change Program was the field trips and activities. Joshua fondly remembers the camping trip up the McKenzie and deep-sea fishing.

"I had never been deep-sea fishing before, and I had never been deep-sea fishing sober!" says Joshua. "There were so many 'sober firsts' for me: going to the movies, bowling, camping. It was so much fun and there were no drugs or alcohol. It was kind of amazing."

Joshua has been reunited with his family and with his daughter who is ten years old.

"My alcoholism cost me my relationship," says Joshua. "I look forward to being the dad my daughter deserves."

Joshua plans to stay in the Eugene area, working and enjoying family time.

"My next step is to begin to find housing while I live at the Eugene Mission and save for my future."

## Santiago Sorocco

Santiago Sorocco came to the Eugene Mission early in the summer of 2021 after losing his housing and future to alcoholism.

"Alcohol was definitely my drug of choice," shares Santiago. "I would try to justify that I was a 'functional alcoholic.'"

Santiago is a Marine Corps veteran with a love for science and marine biology.

"I wanted to go to school after the Marine Corps to become a marine biologist, but life started to happen," he says.

Santiago and his wife had a child, then another, and then twins. Santiago went to work to support the family.

Santiago tells of a house fire and one of the twins perishing. The children's mother left one evening for dinner out with the three surviving children and never returned.

"I didn't know where they were for decades," shares Santiago. "There was a lot of pain and struggle over the ensuing years."

Santiago was living in his car when he decided to give the Life Change Program a try.

When Santiago walks the stage at the Life Change Graduation, he will be one year sober, working full-time at Brun's Apple Market while going to school full-time at Lane Community College.

"The more you study science, the more evident it becomes that this is the work of a Creator," shares Santiago. "This is God's design. It is undeniable in my mind. God has become number one in my life."

Santiago's favorite memory of the Life Change journey happened on a deep-sea fishing trip out of Charleston, Oregon. An essential element of the Life Change Program is field trips and outings to learn how to recreate and enjoy leisure time in sobriety.

"The weather got really bad and the water was choppy," says Santiago. "I stood out in the rain and just pondered the dream of pursuing marine biology with that great big ocean all around me. It was a very emotional experience for me."

Santiago shares that the patience and guidance of the Eugene Mission staff and volunteers is likened to teaching a child to ride a bike.

"They are there to help you get your balance, even as they take their hand off the seat and run behind you," relates Santiago. "As you work through the program, they are there to put their hand back on the seat if you need it."







2021 Life Change Ceremony



## Darren Banks

Darren Banks came to the Eugene Mission in early 2021 after multiple unsuccessful attempts to overcome addiction to alcohol, marijuana and methamphetamine.

“My life had become completely unmanageable,” shares Darren. “I could not

function as a parent, a human being or in my profession. I would self-isolate and I became suicidal.”

When Darren walks the stage at the Life Change Graduation, he will be over a year clean and sober, with a new outlook on life, sobriety and faith in God. Darren was recently re-licensed as a residential contractor and has returned to working in the trade he loves but lost to his addiction.

“I love remodels, roofing and building decks, but framing is my all-time favorite part of construction,” shares Darren with a huge smile. “It is so satisfying to take a pile of lumber and turn it into a dwelling—a home.”

Darren’s addiction spiraled out of control when he began using methamphetamine in addition to chronic alcoholism.

“I was unreliable, not showing up to jobs,” he shares. “Ultimately, I was living alone in a trailer in Saginaw. I had lost all hope.”

Darren came to the Eugene Mission after hearing about the Life Change Program.

“I needed more than just a 30-, 60- or 90-day program,” explains Darren. “I needed time spent with mentors and

people who could model for me what sober living looks like. I needed to commit to the year-long process. I needed to know God and to surrender this burden.”

Darren shares that his favorite part of the Life Change journey was the time spent with program staff and the community volunteers who teach classes and lead outings for community service and recreational activities.

“I have acquired a community of friends and mentors that support me in my faith and sober lifestyle,” says Darren. “I am not alone in this. The Mission staff have been incredible.”

Most important to Darren is the restoration to his son, three older brothers and his mother who is in hospice care.

“One of my brothers had disowned me,” shares Darren. “My son didn’t speak to me for five years. Now they get to see sober Darren. We are back in communication and it is such a blessing.”

## David Acosta

David Acosta came to the Eugene Mission’s Life Change Program early last summer seeking help for self-destructive thinking patterns and bouts of alcoholism.

“I worked for four decades in a family construction business,” shares David.

“Every day was filled with hard work followed by one big party afterwards. I had a major drinking problem but I was also a workaholic. I had no idea how to achieve any kind of balance in life.”

When David was in his 20s, he received several DUIs that resulted in jail time and despair. Shortly after being released from jail, David’s younger brother died by suicide after ingesting crystal methamphetamine. That devastating loss was the beginning of David’s quest to end his own self-destructive tendencies. David sought spiritual guidance and dedicated his life to Christ. David quit drinking and while he lived a sober life,



*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”*

*2 Corinthians 5:17*

he wasn't "sober minded." He was still caught up in patterns of thinking and behaviors that held him captive.

David shares that he sought out the Life Change Program at the Eugene Mission because he needed counseling and help overcoming compulsive thought patterns and fears.

"The counseling portion has been my favorite part of the program," says David. "The staff were mentors and coaches for me and I have a completely different outlook on life than I did a year ago."

When David walks the stage at the Life Change Graduation, he will be free from alcoholism and from co-dependency that ruled his life for four decades.

"I lived my life like a puppet," says David. "I needed to learn about myself, who I am and what healthy boundaries look like. I had to learn how to constructively express myself and relate to others."

As David approaches graduation, he is working at Albertson's in the Bakery Department.

"I'm not a big 'sweets' person but I love customer service and working with the public," says David with a smile. "We also make really good sourdough bread. I have a better perspective and I feel very hopeful and grateful."

David, along with all the Life Change Graduates, would like to extend deep gratitude to the community of donors that inspire Hope and help change lives by supporting the Eugene Mission.



## Michael Garcia

Michael Garcia came to the Eugene Mission's Life Change Program 16 months ago to overcome chronic alcoholism.

"This is the longest stretch of sobriety I have had in my adult life," shares Michael. "I used to party with friends but, ultimately, there wasn't

anyone who was willing to drink with me. I would drink until I blacked out."

When Michael walks the stage at the Life Change Graduation, he will be over a year free from binge drinking with full-time employment at a job he loves, friends who have shared his recovery journey and a growing faith in God.

"I work at Forrest Paint Company (now called Technical Coatings), and I really enjoy the work and the people I work with. I feel truly blessed," shares Michael. "I used to wake up hung-over and would head to some dead-end job, barely getting by. Now I have a future and I'm doing something that helps people."

Michael committed to the year-long Life Change Program when he realized he was trying to get sober for his parents and what he really needed was to take himself and his sobriety seriously.

"I was in another program thinking I would fake it until I could make it," he says. "I was trying to get sober for everyone else but me. The Life Change Program has provided structure for me to get my priorities straight and change my thinking patterns."

Michael shares that his favorite part of the Life Change journey has been learning how to enjoy recreation without alcohol.

"I've learned that I can have fun, go to movies, go bowling, go to football games without having to have a couple of drinks first," he says.

Most important to Michael is an honest relationship with his parents and his nephew Rocky.

"I get to be Uncle Mike again," shares Michael with his affable laugh. "I used to call my parents and check-in briefly and pretend I was in recovery. Now we have long, honest conversations. It's really great."

Michael looks forward to his future with plans to stay close to Eugene and his newfound sober network.

"I'm looking forward to saying 'Go Ducks!' without a drink in my hand," says Michael.

## Ways to Give

- + Financial support for the Eugene Mission as we work with our guests to overcome the barriers and challenges that brought them to our doors.
- + Remember the Eugene Mission in your estate planning will or instrument. FEIN#93-0563797.
- + The Eugene Mission gratefully accepts vehicles, furniture and household goods in good condition (no pet stains) to bless guests moving into housing.
- + Diapers sizes 4, 5 and 6.
- + Gift cards to Costco and Chef's Warehouse.
- + Fresh salad greens are always appreciated.
- + Bacon, coffee, and creamer cups.

## Prayer Requests

Please pray for our guests who are working diligently towards housing and employment. Please pray for our Women's Life Change Program that will begin this month. May our guests find strength in their faith and sobriety. Amen.