

MILESTONES

Recovery happens in relationships.

SEPTEMBER 2023

The Man Everyone Knows

EVERYONE ON THE STREETS knows Hopper. They have for the past 26 years.

For the first 11, it was because of the chaos he created wherever he went. An alcoholic with a terrible temper, Hopper was in constant trouble. Police officers, social service workers, and shelter staff all over town knew his face and his name. Many of them had come up against his rage more than once. He'd even been kicked out of a few shelters and recovery programs.

Here at the Mission, we knew Hopper, too. He regularly came in for meals, eating then leaving.

"I had no real relationship with God, myself, or people in general," he says.

10 Years of Meals

But we could tell that underneath the anger there was a man battling deeply damaging trauma who desperately needed God's healing. So we were kind to Hopper every chance we got. And . . .

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"At 9 years old I discovered drugs and alcohol . . . By the time I was 13, my life was turning south, and I was already an alcoholic and addict." — Hopper

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The Man Everyone Knows

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for 10 years, he survived on meals from the Mission — meals that friends like you provided.

Then, one day, when he decided he was finally ready to make a change, he knew we were the best place to come. So he came in, and we accepted him into our 12-month Residential Recovery Program.

“The first phase of the program did a great job in starting to steer me away from my old behaviors . . . At the same time, I was being reintroduced to Christ and Christian living,” Hopper says. *“I was starting to realize that the SBRM and the 12-step program I was involved in were ‘We’ programs. ‘We’ do this together or ‘We’ die alone.”*



Not One Relapse

Hopper graduated from our program in 2008. In the past 15 years he hasn't relapsed — not once. Today, he has an associates degree in drug and alcohol counseling, a place of his own, a car, a job, and a dog.

He hasn't been homeless for 15 years, but everyone on the streets still knows him. Now, he works as an advocate for the homeless community, steering people to the Mission when he can, being a loving presence and a voice for those who can't stand up for themselves.

In the last few years, he's seen even more people in need of help.

Our Community Is Hurting

“A lot more people have lost their jobs, lost their homes and then started up with their addictions again, being trapped in isolation for a couple years,” he says.

But Hopper won't let them fall through the cracks. He knows that anyone can experience the transforming power of Christ, and he knows it often starts with something as simple as a hot meal.

“I think more meal sharing between everyone can build community in Santa Barbara,” Hopper says. *“I did a study with the homeless at Alameda Park and one of the questions I asked was, ‘What is it you're missing the most being unhoused?’ One of the top answers was being part of the community.”*

Community happens through meals, which is why we always want to make sure we have enough for everyone. You can help feed someone in our community for just \$2.65!

“I wouldn't be alive if it weren't for the Santa Barbara Rescue Mission.” — Hopper



A Personal Update

I DON'T TYPICALLY INCLUDE personal news in our newsletter because this is about the work God is doing in our midst at the Rescue Mission. But given my leadership role here, there are occasions where circumstances in my own life become part of the story.

For 26 years, I was blessed to be married to Trish. When she died in 2019, after a heartbreaking battle with ALS, the grief and pain for me and our kids was overwhelming. Because Trish and our children were visible participants in our ministry, the entire Rescue Mission grieved alongside us and sustained us as we walked through an incredibly painful season.

My personal heartache has given me additional empathy for people who are limping through life burdened by hardships. While my circumstances were different from the people who come to the Rescue Mission for help, I understand how it feels to not be able to hold out hope after life deals devastating blows.

But we hold out that God is faithful. There is light after the darkness. There can be joy after the heartbreak. That's ultimately the message of the Resurrection, isn't it?

That hope is what the men and women we serve crave so desperately. And that's what we work so hard to help them believe.

I'm grateful that my own story now includes not only heartbreak to feed my empathy, but also hope I never anticipated. Over the last two years, God's grace has come to me through a relationship with Kirsten Moore and we were married in July.



Kirsten is widely known in our community not only as the basketball coach at Westmont College, but also as one who has walked through her own journey of widowhood. Kirsten loves Jesus, works hard, and is an amazing mother.

Kirsten and I are learning how to lean on each other. We've found this impossible and improbable joy in the midst of grief. God's gracious care is surprising at times.

I've only shared parts of my personal life with you to point to how God is faithful even when it seems that all hope is lost. That's the message our world needs. That's the message that the men and women we serve need. That's the message we all need.

And because of your faithfulness, this is what we here at the Rescue Mission are all about.

Rolf Geyling
President



A New Way to Earn a GED

Hopper has been living his new life for 15 years. And while he's worked at a few different organizations, he's always worked. Having a source of income is critical in staying off the streets. And that starts first and foremost by having a high school diploma or GED.

But in the past, everyone had to start from scratch and retake all the tests in order to pass. A lot of the guys were only missing a few credits, so Leo Rios, who supervises our Learning Center, figured out how to make the process as simple as possible.

"Rather than having them relearn most of the stuff that is required to pass the GED, I inquired from different sources what programs are available that allows them to complete their missing credits," he explains.

And in the past two years, over 10 men have received their high school diploma or GED while at the Mission. Currently there are 5 men attending City College.

"I teach them not to sell themselves short, because living here is expensive . . . if they want to stay in Santa Barbara, they have to earn a living wage. So I try to maximize their skills," Leo says.

Four people are currently working towards their diplomas or GEDs and several others are on deck to start soon. With so many people passing their exams, Leo has seen a surge of interest in the Learning Center.

"They are like, 'Wow, if this guy can do it, then I can do it,'" he says. *"It becomes a domino effect."*

Congratulations to those who have recently earned their diploma or GED. We know it's hard work and we're proud of you!



In addition to working on a high school diploma or GED, in the Learning Center, residents can:

- Complete DUI courses
- Take online certifications classes
- Learn basic computer literacy skills, including typing and application navigation
- Find help with résumé and cover letter writing
- Prepare for job interviews
- Learn about college enrollment and orientation
- Find help with essay composition



Please Pray

- Pray for God to work in the hearts of the men and women who keep coming to the Mission for meals. Pray that they will choose to take the next step towards healing and sign up for our 12-Month Residential Recovery Program.
- Pray for Hopper as he continues to advocate for people experiencing homelessness.
- Pray for the men who are working towards their diplomas or GEDs in the Learning Center.
- Pray for safety, health, and healing for all of our hurting neighbors who are on the streets tonight.
- Pray for our Women's Auxiliary as they organize our annual Bayou event.

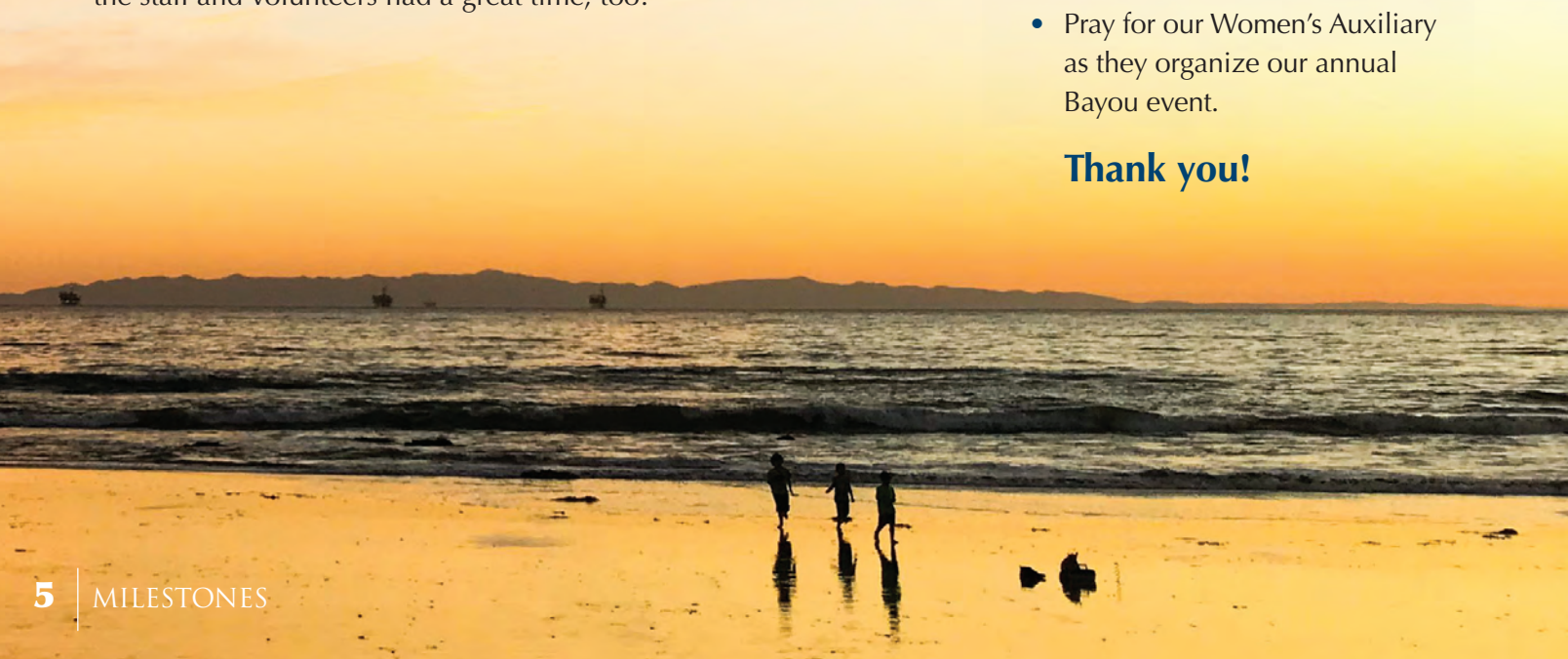
4th of July BBQ and Raffle Report

As you can see by the photos, this year's 4th of July BBQ was a rousing success!

We had a variety of activities designed to bless our homeless neighbors. The food, as usual, was incredible. And the raffle prizes, sponsored by the Women's Auxiliary, were a huge hit — especially the backpacks and gift cards.

Thank you to all who made it possible to pull off such a great event. Our guests felt seen, loved, appreciated, and cared about. And all the staff and volunteers had a great time, too!

Thank you!





Each \$2.65 you give provides a meal for one person in need!

Give \$2.65. Change a Life.

After living on the streets or advocating for the homeless community for more than 26 years, Hopper knows that one of the biggest barriers to transformation is lack of community.

We've seen that here, too. In fact, it's woven through every story of every person who has ever come through our doors.

That's why focusing on relationships is so important to us, and we know that one of the best ways to begin building relationships and establishing trust is through meals.

And we can't provide meals without your help. Will you send a gift today? Each \$2.65 you give will help feed one person.

As we head into the fall and winter months, we'll have even more people coming to us for meals. That means not only do we need more food, but we have more opportunities to build relationships, share God's love, and help people experience lasting transformation.

Meals from friends like you changed Hopper's life. And the meals you give today can change someone else's!

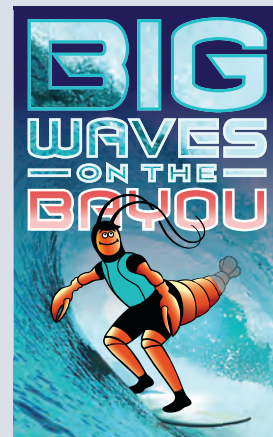
Please give generously. Every \$2.65 meal can help to change a life!



LESS THAN ONE MONTH AWAY:

Saturday, October 7

Two O'Clock in the Afternoon



The 22nd Annual Benefit for the Santa Barbara Rescue Mission

Paddle on over to Santa Barbara's most beautiful destination — the Beach at Rancho Dos Pueblos — and select from an array of Silent Auction gifts and getaways at the 22nd Annual Benefit for the Santa Barbara Rescue Mission!

Come enjoy food and music, and get ready to bid on your favorite auction items!

To find out more or to purchase tickets, visit: sbrm.org/bayou

MILESTONES

is a publication of



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