

MILESTONES

Recovery happens in relationships.

CHRISTMAS 2023

A desperate phone call, a train ride, and a new life

THREE THINGS CHANGED Susan's life forever: A phone call. A train ride. And friends like you.

After decades of addiction, and years being homeless, Susan was desperate. So she made a phone call to her sister, Laura, who had graduated from our Women's 12-month Residential Recovery Program at Bethel House three years before.

"I was at the end of my rope... without resources and friends, and help and love," Susan says. "I was in a bad space."

Thankfully, her sister picked up, and knowing that the Mission could help her, she bought Susan a train ticket to come home to Santa Barbara.

Continued inside

INSIDE:

Christmas Traditions | 3

Brand New Transitional Shelter Pilot Program | 4

The Mission's Christmas Feast | 5

Change a Life This Christmas | 6

A desperate phone call, a train ride, and a new life

Continued from cover

"I got into Santa Barbara on Thursday. That following Monday, I was at Bethel House."

The only reason Susan or her sister could come to the Mission to get the help they so desperately needed was because of the generosity of friends like you. And with the childhood they had, they really had no other options for getting the kind of help that would actually heal them.

Trauma On Top of Trauma

Susan's dad was an alcoholic and was a real monster when he was drinking. She grew up in constant fear, never knowing what mood he would be in or what he might do to her.

"He was physically abusive and sexually abusive," she says.

And so, Susan did what the rest of her family did.



Above are Susan and her mom celebrating Susan's birthday.

"I've drank and used since the age of 16," she says. *"I think what kept me in it for so long was underlying issues that I didn't take care of."*

But when Susan was accepted into our recovery program, she finally had the space, time, clinical care and support to work through all that trauma.

"The Rescue Mission gave me a chance to live for a year and to just be with myself, and offered a lot of opportunity for growth there," she says.

Eight Years Sober

Susan graduated in 2016. She's still sober and so is her sister! They all live together here in Santa Barbara where they grew up. Even though Susan's dad passed away while she was in our program, she was able to go and see him before he died, which helped with her healing.

Now, not only is their family sober, they are giving back. Susan sponsors women at Bethel House.

"Bethel House was just a savior for me," Susan says. *"There's not many places like that in this world. I'm just forever grateful to the Santa Barbara Rescue Mission and Bethel House."*

It Couldn't Happen Without You

Your gifts and support are what keep Bethel House and the Mission open so that people like Susan can do the hard work of recovery in a safe, loving environment that leads to lasting change.

Your Christmas gift today will help restore and transform more lives!



Christmas Traditions

MOST FAMILIES HAVE Christmas traditions. Maybe it's that presents are opened in a specific way on a specific day. Or it might be important that your Christmas dinner have the "right" dishes.

As I get ready to celebrate my first Christmas married to Kirsten, a lot of people have asked me what kind of celebration we'll have and what kind of traditions we'll start.

It's no surprise that we already share similar Christmas traditions.

Being a basketball coach, the holidays are often full of travel for Kirsten, so she spends a lot of

time with her team. Spending time at the Mission at Christmas has always been important to our family. You might be thinking, "Rolf, that's not the same at all!"

For both of us, our Christmas tradition is making sure that our celebration not only includes our family, but goes beyond our family.

To us, celebrating the birth of Christ happens beyond our homes — it happens on a college basketball team, and it happens here at the Mission. It happens on city streets, in airports, and in friends' homes.

I hope you'll include in your Christmas traditions extending your love beyond your family and friends. You'll find that the more love you give to others at this time of the year, the more joy you'll experience. I know you'll feel the difference.

Merry Christmas.

Rolf Geyling
President



Have you ever wondered?

Rolf Answers Your Most Frequently Asked Questions

Question: *Is it really harder to be homeless this time of year compared to others? Our weather is so mild.*

Answer: *Of course, in places with extreme winters, this time of year can be deadly for people*

experiencing homelessness. Santa Barbara is no exception and winter here can be dangerous to one's physical health. But from an emotional standpoint, the holidays can be harder than any other time of year wherever you live. Weather doesn't affect grief, but the holidays do. In our society, you can't ignore

the fact that it's Christmas, which means if you're homeless, everywhere you look there are reminders of everything that you've lost. That's why the holidays are harder – even here in Santa Barbara.

If you have questions for Rolf, send them to newsletter@sbrm.org

Transitional Shelter Pilot Program

There's something new happening at the Mission — a Transitional Shelter.

For years, we've seen that some of the guests staying in our emergency overnight shelter would benefit from more care. With this new program, we'll have long-term, transitional housing and focused support systems, connections to other community services, and assigned case managers.

The Pilot Program Is Already Open!

The program just opened with room to accommodate up to 14 men and four women. We're in the process of repurposing an underutilized space for the women.

"We're structuring it like a transitional shelter," Jeri, our Homeless Guest Services Manager, says. "Participants will meet with their case manager once a week and come up with a goal and exit plan for each person. It will look different for everybody."

"We'll be working with a lot of the community providers," Jeri says. "So each person will have a team around them, including the Rescue Mission, but also outside of the Rescue Mission with other care providers."

There's Nothing Else Like It

This type of program isn't available anywhere else in Santa Barbara, and with our shelter beds full most nights, this is the best way we can think of to help more people get the lasting help they need. In the future, we'd love to have an entire facility dedicated to this type of program, but we're starting small to see how it goes.

We'd greatly appreciate your prayers!



Kylen our case manager and Priscilla. They have been working together on various things. But today, Priscilla was able to get her new glasses (that she is wearing) which took a lot of effort. Kylen is working with Priscilla to secure her medical and Medicare benefits.



This is a photo of Jeri with Ana — who received housing.



The Mission's Christmas Feast

Each Christmas, we serve 300 meals at a special feast. But the celebration involves a lot more than food. It's a festive day that celebrates Christmas in all the ways that many of our homeless neighbors are missing, including with holiday activities like building gingerbread houses, and gift giveaways!

Christmas Giveaway Items Needed

Every Christmas, our Women's Auxiliary hosts a special giveaway so that every guest receives at least one brand new item. Because so many men and women come to us with nothing but the worn clothes on their backs, getting something brand new is an incredible blessing.

But to make sure there's enough gifts for everyone this year, we could use your help.

We especially need:

- Shoes (*all types and sizes, especially work boots*)
- Sweatshirts
- Sweatpants
- Hats
- Winter coats
- Backpacks

You can either make a financial gift so that the Women's Auxiliary can purchase items, or drop off brand new items to the Mission up until December 13. Contact Rebecca Weber at rweber@sbrm.org for more information.



Festive, filling, and fun, the Christmas Feast is open to anyone in need in our community.



New shoes are one of the most popular gift items.





Each \$93.15 you give provides a day of food, shelter, and proven Christ-center addiction recovery for one person.

Change a Life This Christmas

For better or worse, the holidays are about one thing: family. And for people like Susan, that can be a landmine. In fact, a decade ago it would have been. But the amount of healing that has occurred in her life and in her family is miraculous.

It only happened because of friends like you.

This Christmas there are a lot of families torn apart. There are parents wondering if their children are still alive.

There are moms and dads sleeping on the streets, and children who know how to use Narcan but don't have enough to eat.

And while our ministry can't save everyone, we can certainly save some. And not just save them, but help them live changed lives in lasting ways — Susan is proof!

But that can only happen with the continued support of partners like you. Will you give a Christmas gift to change another life today?

Please send your gift by Dec. 20 to help in time for Christmas!
You can also give instantly online at:
sbrm.org/hope



Above: Barney Melekian, our Bayou Honoree with Rolf.

The 22nd Annual Bayou fundraising event, Big Waves on the Bayou, was a blast!

For the second year in a row, we were at the Beach at Rancho Dos Pueblos, and it couldn't have gone better. As the waves crashed and people bid on the silent auction, our community connected and celebrated the incredible ministry happening here. Erin shared her story of transformation and received a standing ovation. God was gracious and allowed us to raise \$600,000 to offer help to even more of our hurting neighbors!

A big thank you to everyone who donated and participated, and special thanks go to our hardworking Women's Auxiliary, staff, and volunteers.

MILESTONES

is a publication of



535 East Yanonali Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93103
805-966-1316
sbrm.org

