

Milestones

Recovery happens in relationships.

CHRISTMAS 2024

Miracle ON YANONALI STREET

Van (pictured above) has played dozens of roles as an actor, including Kris Kringle in *Miracle on 34th Street*. But if it wasn't for friends like you, he never would have had his own miracle here on Yanonali Street.

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Santa Barbara
Rescue Mission

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Miracle

ON YANONALI STREET

VAN SAYS HE WAS born with theater in his blood. *"I've been doing it for about 40 years,"* he says.

"My mother and father started what was once Aspen Playhouse in Aspen, Colorado, where I was born. And my sister, she's been a working actor in Hollywood for over 40 years. Our mother was a director."

Van wasn't very old when he decided he wanted to be an actor, too. But a love for acting wasn't the only thing Van's mom passed on to him. She also passed on an addiction.

"I learned to bartend when I was 11," he says. *"I started drinking and drugging when I was around 13."*

A Celebration Turned Tragic

Van finished high school and had started taking acting classes, when he got his first DUI.

It didn't stop him from drinking. After all, most of his theater friends did, too. After finishing school and going on several auditions, he was hired for roles in two movies. He was thrilled and went to celebrate with friends at a local bar.

The celebration ended with a bang.

"I was walking across Sunset Boulevard, heading home, and I got hit by a car," Van says.



Van at work (above) in some of his favorite acting roles from various local theater productions.



A NOTE OF FRIENDSHIP FROM ROLF GEYLING

What's Your Tradition?

ISUSPECT YOUR FAMILY has Christmas traditions. Maybe it's who gets to put the star on the top of the Christmas tree. Or maybe it's that pie that has to appear on the dinner table. Or maybe it's the specific way presents are handed out and opened.

Traditions are important to families. They create lasting memories, often across generations. They convey a sense of belonging. They pass on a family's heritage. And of course, they anchor us to a shared history.

I believe that if you're reading this newsletter, part of your Christmas tradition is caring about others and helping people in need.

I hope you will continue to care about other people as your Christmas tradition. The need is great, and you can make a difference.

But I hope you'll also talk about that tradition. Talk about how you

actively help people in need at Christmas, and how, like other traditions, you help year after year.

It's not bragging, it's your heritage, your family's shared history. You should encourage others to participate. By encouraging others to participate in your tradition of giving, you will help them grow as well. It's brave to talk about caring for the outsider and the less fortunate, but it's what "we" do, right?

I hope this Christmas is a cherished season of traditions for you and your family and that your support makes it possible for others to start their own season of traditions.

Merry Christmas.

Rolf Geyling
President

Have You Ever Wondered? Rolf Answers Your Frequently Asked Questions

Question: *What is Christmas like for people who are experiencing homelessness?*

Answer: *On one hand, Christmas is just like any other day for someone who's homeless.*

On the other hand, it's a reminder of all they don't have.

Almost everything connected with Christmas is about family and gifts. Christmas will remind someone on the streets of the family they aren't connected with, the friends they

miss, and the life that they've lost.

This can be a painful time. But pain often propels someone to make a life change. That's what we pray for.

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

He was thrown about 40 feet and was injured so badly he had to turn down the movie roles. But he still kept drinking, barely making ends meet for years.

Evicted from a Shed

"I couldn't stop drinking," he says. "I was working two jobs, and I could not pay the rent. So, I ended up getting evicted from a shed. But it was a nice shed."

One night, the hopelessness he'd been trying to chase away with alcohol wouldn't leave.

"I was the loneliest, scariest I'd ever been in my life," he says. "I ended up holding a knife to my throat, trying to figure the quickest and cleanest way to cut my throat."

Thankfully, Van put the knife down and called his cousin. She came and took him to the hospital. A few hours before he was released, someone on staff gave him information about the Santa Barbara Rescue Mission and our programs here.

"I kept reading it and said, 'That's where I got to be.'"

A Life-Changing Holiday Season

"On November 19, 2014, I walked into Santa Barbara Rescue Mission, and my life changed," Van says. "I knew I was in the right place right away."

Van completed our 12-month Residential Treatment Program and graduated in 2015. That same year, he acted in a play sober for the very first time.

Nine years later, he's still sober and still has the job he got through the help of our staff in the Learning Center. He's got his own apartment and in his spare time acts as much as he can. He's even had the opportunity to play Kris Kringle in Miracle on 34th Street!

He knows the only reason his life is so good is because of God working through partners like you.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you," he says.

You can be part of other life-changing miracles when you give a Christmas gift today!



Van graduating our Treatment Program and worshipping with fellow graduates.

The Mission's Christmas Feast

Our Christmas celebration is December 19 and we serve 300 meals at this special feast. But it 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 holiday activities like:

- Building gingerbread houses
- Playing games
- Gift giveaways and more!

Because the city has been shutting down many of the parks and places people used to go for hot lunches, we're expecting we'll have even more people join us this year.

Your gift will help make sure there's enough for everyone!



Christmas Giveaway Needs

Because so many men and women come to us with nothing but the clothes on their backs, our Women's Auxiliary hosts a special giveaway during our Christmas Feast so that every guest receives at least one brand new item. To make sure there are enough gifts for everyone this year, we could use your help.

We especially need:

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

You can either make a financial gift so that the Women's Auxiliary can purchase items or drop off brand new items at the Mission up until December 11. For more information, please contact Rebecca Weber at 805-966-1316 or rweber@sbrm.org.

Something as simple as a new shirt or backpack can become a beautiful reminder of God's love.



Bayou Update



Pictured L-R: Diego (Bayou speaker), Kiah (Board Chair), Rolf (President), Rob (Bayou honoree)

Thanks to friends like you, the 23rd Annual Bayou fundraising event, Passport to the Bayou, was an incredible success!

We celebrated all the ways God is changing lives through the Mission's ministries.

Diego shared his story of transformation and received a standing ovation.

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

Milestones

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**Santa Barbara
Rescue Mission**

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A higher standard.
A higher purpose.



Be Part of the Next Christmas Miracle

The miracle of transformation and recovery can only happen with the continued support of partners like you!

Thanks to someone like you, Van, and others like him, are living new lives.

They are sober.
They are off the streets.
They are sharing God's love.

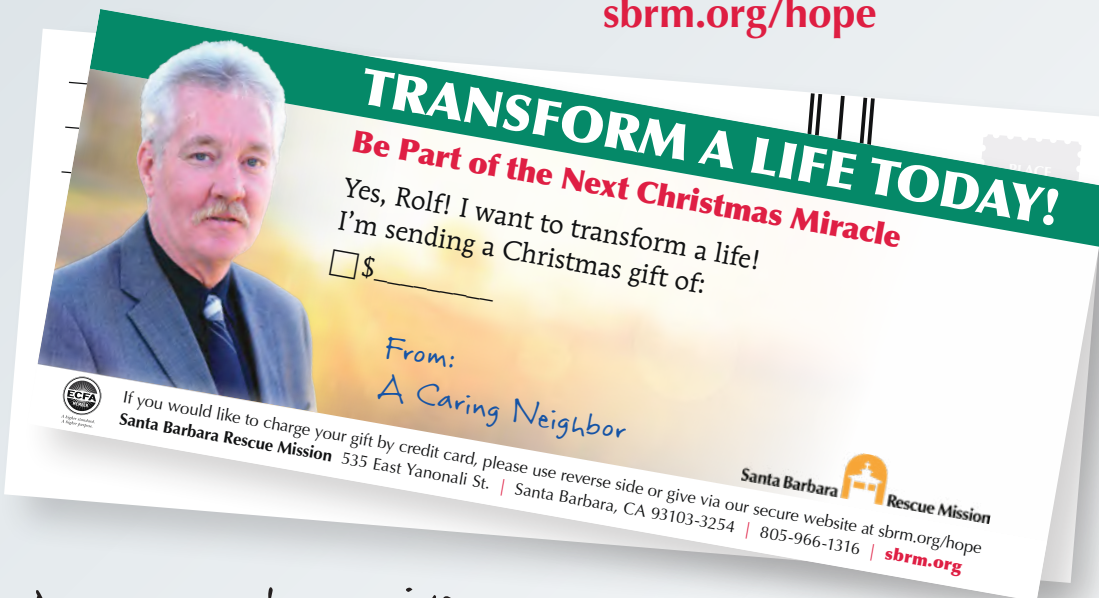
But others in our community aren't. Instead of spending the holiday with family or friends, they will be hungry, alone with nowhere to turn for shelter except the Mission.

Many of them are praying for a miracle — for the chance to change their lives.

Together, this Christmas, we can give it to them. Will you help by sending a gift?

Even though it costs \$93.15 to provide a full day of care — including meals, shelter, and Christ-centered treatment — any amount you give will be part of the miracle of changing a life.

Please send your gift by Dec. 22 to help in time for Christmas! You can also give instantly online at: sbrm.org/hope



Any amount you give will make a difference, especially this time of year!

Give online at: sbrm.org/hope

