

You help people like Jordan reclaim their lives

“I was at my lowest point.”

“I had every advantage possible in life,” Jordan remembers.

“I came from a good home and had the opportunity to attend university. Things started changing when I turned nineteen. My entire focus was my drug addiction.”

It did not take long for Jordan to use his drug of choice daily. His grades slipped and he lost his job once the pandemic occurred. “Everything started getting progressively worse as my issues with addiction intensified, and I experienced significant mental health challenges.”

Jordan did not respond well to prescription drugs after he started receiving treatment. “I was sober when I started taking medication, but life only seemed to continue getting worse,” he says.

Jordan eventually relapsed with his world seemingly crumbling around him. **“School, work, and relationships disappeared. One night, I found myself with nothing left at all. I was at my lowest point. I made the decision to help myself and learned about the Phoenix Program at the Downtown**



Mission shortly afterwards.”

When Jordan arrived at the Mission, staff were there for Jordan and got him settled into a dorm.

Chris Thibert, a Phoenix addiction counselor, says, “We treat all kinds of addictions here—alcohol, gambling, opiates, crystal meth, marijuana.”

Because of generous donors like you, the Mission offers the only free 90-day addiction recovery program in Windsor. We use cognitive behavioural therapy, which focuses on helping

participants develop positive ways of thinking and solving problems.

Chris explains, “Our psychologist, Dr. John O’Rourke, has expertise in treating clients affected by trauma and abuse. I have lived experience as an addict and started my recovery at the Downtown Mission. After I got clean, I went to college and became a certified addiction counselor.”

Chris goes on to say, “More young people are asking for help. Referrals to Phoenix come from agencies across the city. Taking



“For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.”

— PSALM 27:5



Thanks to you, the Downtown Mission offers sanctuary to the most vulnerable among us—whether it’s from the elements, life circumstances, or the fear in someone’s mind.

We are here because of your generosity. You make it possible for our neighbours in need to find shelter in “the sacred tent” and security “upon a rock” that the Mission provides.

continued from page 1

drugs has become normalized, especially among teens. There are lots of hurting individuals in our community who need a chance to succeed.”

Jordan couldn’t agree more. “I’ve turned my life around and am planning on going back to

When we think of last winter, we’ll remember the soaring food and housing prices that have made life even more difficult for the people we serve. But above all, we’ll treasure the fact that you’ve been there “in the day of trouble.”

From emergency shelter to hot meals, your support gives a glimmer of hope to everyone who comes through our doors. And, just as important, you are at the heart of the Phoenix Recovery Program for somebody like Jordan (See our cover story) and the Enterprise Program for somebody like Aaron (See page 3). Both programs are desperately needed here in Windsor-Essex.

With the warmer weather, we expect more of our unhoused neighbours will be living outside. I ask that when you see them, please remind yourself that they are

someone’s brother, sister, child, or parent. God asks us to help them, not to condemn them.

And please keep in mind that families will come to our Food Bank more often in July and August. It’s a devastating fact that some of our community’s children go hungry in the summer when school meals aren’t available.

Through all of these challenges, I am hopeful that our staff, volunteers, and caring donors like you will pull together, to offer food, sanctuary, and the chance of a new life.

With thanks for everything you make possible,

Rukshini Ponniah-Goulin
Executive Director

school. I owe my recovery to everyone who believes in the Phoenix Recovery Program and supports it financially. Thank you for helping me. I promise to pay it forward. Addiction can happen to anyone, so we have to take care of each other.”



Your support builds skills, confidence, and opportunity

People across the city are asking the Downtown Mission for job training—and receiving it thanks to you .

“I had tears in my eyes. That’s how overwhelmed I was by the positive change in our students. You could see their confidence—they’re ready to work and contribute to our community. I’m profoundly grateful to our donors for their support of this program.”

That’s Sharda Yadav, manager of the Downtown Mission’s Enterprise Program, describing the graduation ceremony for its most recent participants.

Enterprise is a job-readiness initiative that teaches men and women the skills they need to enter or re-enter the workforce. Sharda says, “One hundred percent of our students are on social assistance. They want a better life. They want to support themselves and their families. That’s why they sign up for Enterprise. They hear about the program’s success through word of mouth and from other organizations in the city.”

Participants are from a range of backgrounds and ages. Many need to upgrade their computer skills, learn how to write effective resumes and cover letters, and practise their interview techniques. They also discover how to market their strengths and experiences.

Sharda says, “We bring in



facilitators with various expertise and provide one-to-one training if someone needs extra help. And we connect our students to things like English classes and whatever support they need.”

In-class sessions focus on technical skills, communication, and teamwork.

On-the-job training is another important component. Sharda explains, “We place participants in different positions here at the Mission and at some local businesses. For example, if someone wants to work as an administrative assistant, we’ll make sure they get the right

experience helping out in a department at the Mission. If someone is interested in cooking, we’ll arrange for them to volunteer in our kitchen. Participants receive a small honorarium for their time.”

Enterprise graduates have gone on to find employment at Service Canada, local restaurants and hotels—and start their own businesses.

Aaron, recently graduated from the Phoenix Recovery Program, has just completed the six-week Enterprise course.

“I lost my long-time security job because of alcohol. With

Linda Fengler: Eight years of gratitude and giving back

Drop by the Downtown Mission, and chances are you'll see Linda Fengler either scrubbing pots in our kitchen, serving lunch to guests in the dining hall, or gathering up towels to be laundered.

"I'm here almost every day, doing whatever needs to be done," says our long-time volunteer. "The staff's great and I really like helping out."

Linda relates to our neighbours who depend on the Mission's programs. After moving to Windsor from Toronto, she struggled with a back injury and couldn't find an affordable place to stay.

"I ended up at the Mission," she recalls. "They gave me a roof over my head and a hand with my taxes. I stayed for almost two years. They

even helped me get an apartment within my budget."

Chatting with Linda, you can hear the joy and dedication in her voice.

"I keep on volunteering because the Downtown Mission changed my life. It would have taken so long for me to find a home on my own. If you want to make a difference, stop by and ask what you can do. It's the best feeling to give back to your community."

Thank you to Linda and to each and every one of our big-hearted volunteers. We couldn't keep up with the needs here in Windsor-Essex without you. Your time and commitment are precious gifts.



continued from page 3



Enterprise, I'll be able to return to the workforce. I've upgraded my computer skills and shadowed security staff at the shelter. Sharda is helping to reinstate my security license and I'm exploring getting my forklift license. I've got a purpose again. I don't know where I'd be without this fantastic program."

Sharda adds, "Enterprise supports students for up to 90 days after they graduate. We set them up for success. **I'd like to say thank you to our donors. Not only for giving opportunities to our students, but for making our community stronger and more inclusive.**"