

You are at the heart of life-changing stories like Derek's

Thank you for providing hope, healing, and recovery

"I have great parents. They taught me right from wrong. But when I became an addict, I was lost," Derek says. "I forgot my morals and values. I damaged my body and had no spirituality. I almost lost my mind."

Derek recalls his life before he entered the Mission's Phoenix Recovery Program for adults struggling with addiction, which is supported by people just like you. At that time, he'd been in and out of jail and was selling drugs.

"My family wanted to help me, but they didn't know how," he says. "Then one day I ran into Chris Thibert, who I knew before. Chris



Chris Thibert, Downtown Mission
Staff member

told me he was sober. In fact, he'd gone back to school and was an addiction counsellor at the Mission. He encouraged me to try Phoenix."

Though he'd been unsuccessful at many treatment centres in the past, Derek enrolled in the 90-day program and "something clicked."

"I got educated about addiction in a whole new way," he explains. Through counselling sessions with psychologist Dr. John O'Rourke, Derek discovered that recovery involves much more than giving up drugs: he would need to go through a grieving process.

"I helped out at the Mission, cleaning up and giving back however I could. Having structure and responsibility was a game-changer."

"I'd been on the streets and using drugs since I was a kid. Now, suddenly, I had to put my old life behind me and give up the people I thought were my friends. I had to deal with my grief and I'd never done that before."



Derek, a Mission success story because of YOU!

While grieving, Derek re-learned to love himself and others. "I helped out at the Mission, cleaning up and giving back however I could. Having structure and responsibility was a game-changer."

Derek also credits his progress to finding a church. "My higher power is Jesus Christ. I need spirituality," he says with a smile.

After graduating from Phoenix, Derek transitioned to Enterprise, our donor-supported job-readiness program. "I received training and learned how to write a resume and search for a job. Eventually I was hired full-time at the Mission."

Derek provides security at our building and is trained in first aid. "I make sure the Mission is safe for

“For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on earth...”

— SONG OF SOLOMON 2:11-12

Winter is finally over. We were challenged by the increasing need in our community, but truly blessed by the kindness of people like you. Thank you for giving hope to your neighbours, sometimes the only glimmer of hope they've ever experienced.

Beginning December 1, when our Shelter was full, our dining room also became an overnight Warming Centre. Every night, you helped up to 40 more people (in addition to the 96 residing in our Shelter) get out of the cold and be cared for by our compassionate staff.

Then, in February, the Mission joined with other organizations to provide a Warming Bus. On that very first night, 21 youths and adults boarded to find safety and support. This was an important step as it enabled our staff to reach out to individuals who can't or don't regularly come to the Mission.



Your generosity plays a huge role in building relationships with these new clients and connecting them with desperately needed services.

On Saturday, February 24, the Mission hosted our thirteenth Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser. We enjoyed an inspiring evening, rallying together to help everyone in Windsor struggling with hunger, homelessness, and hurt. If you

were among our 37 teams and 282 walkers—record numbers!—thank you for your passion and for shining a light on the growing need here in our city. A shout-out to all of our sponsors, especially Ground Effects Ltd., our lead sponsor.

If you weren't able to attend our Annual General Meeting in April, I'd like you to know that your contribution to our work was gratefully acknowledged. We thank all of our amazing donors and volunteers because you make our work possible.

Thank you again for sharing your compassion as we strive to provide food, shelter, and hope. God bless you this spring!

Rukshini Ponniah-Goulin
Executive Director

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everyone who comes through the door," he says.

As a mentor and counsellor, Chris is proud of Derek's sobriety and accomplishments. "I'm an addict myself, sober for almost 9 years. Derek is a huge success. He's got a lot of potential and I'm encouraging him to go to college

for addiction counselling."

Addiction recovery and job training programs work very effectively together. One of our graduates just entered law school, and in the last two years, all of our Phoenix graduates have found stable housing.

Chris is quick to point out that

both Phoenix and Enterprise depend on the generosity of Mission donors. **"Donor support is critical. Our donors are the reason that Derek and our other participants are alive, employed, and contributing to our city."**

Thank you for making a profound difference to so many.

The Sanctuary Program

“I’d never been homeless before...”



Sean was crying.

He’d never stayed in a shelter before, and now he found himself inside our doors.

“I was sleeping on the street. I wanted to get sober, but I needed help. Then, someone told me to go to the Mission,” he says.

Thanks to your support, the Sanctuary Program, our Shelter, gives 96 people experiencing homelessness a safe place to sleep at night, along with access to showers and hygiene products.

Our staff are at the core of the Shelter, welcoming guests and connecting them with the help they need most. This can be anything from getting them into Phoenix, our addiction recovery program, to arranging legal help to fight an eviction to booking medical appointments.

Savanah Newton, a Mental Health and Wellbeing Facilitator at the Mission, says, “Our Shelter is the biggest one in Windsor. Our guests are people living with homelessness and addiction. But, we’re also seeing more elderly people who have lost their homes and growing numbers of refugees. My job is to help with their immediate needs and defuse crisis situations.”

Sean knows what it’s like to face a personal crisis. “The staff could see I was scared. They invited me into a private office and we



talked. I told them I’d never been homeless before. They said they’d give me a bed and help me come up with a plan to get sober. Then, they took me on a tour of the building. I was still anxious, but they supported me,” he says.

After three months in our Shelter, Sean joined Phoenix. Then,

“...thank you to anyone who supports the Mission. I’m living proof that you’re making a difference.”

our on-site Housing Worker found him an affordable apartment.

Last year, in partnership with other organizations, we helped 90 adults and youth move into stable housing. We couldn’t have done it without your support.

Sean has been sober for six months and is working part-time.

He says, “I still drop by the Shelter

to share my story. I want people to know that even though I hit rock bottom, the Shelter staff believed in me and now I believe in myself. In fact, I’m planning to take a Social Service Worker course. I’d like to say thank you to anyone who supports the Mission. I’m living proof that you’re making a difference.”

Every day, people who have never been homeless before are coming to the Mission. Back in 2021, there were approximately 470 unhoused people in Windsor. By 2023, that number climbed to 512.

Our Shelter receives partial funding from the Provincial Government, through the City of Windsor to ensure we can be open 365 days a year. But donors like you are crucial to helping those staying in shelter and finding safe housing are cared for and have the basics like food and hygiene supplies while in shelter. **Thank you for being there for those who need you most!**

Meet Paxton

Warming hands and hearts in our community

Ten-year-old Paxton doesn't like to see people living on the street. "I want them all to have homes," he says.

So, when his church organized a mitten drive to provide a little more warmth to the homeless people we serve, Paxton was eager to pitch in—by organizing a mitten drive at his school.

"I was very nervous and I wanted my mom to email my teacher," Paxton says. But she encouraged him to talk to his teacher and

principal himself. "I knew I had to be a leader," he explains.

After Paxton's principal made an announcement about the drive, the students were eager to help. Paxton was responsible for visiting each classroom to collect the warm, cozy mittens. "Some of the little kids in grades one and two tried to give me their own mittens. But when I explained that they could keep their mittens and buy new ones, they brought them to school the next day."

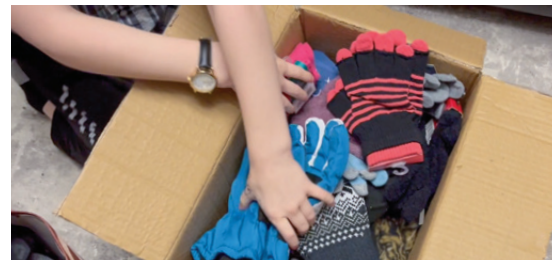
Within a short time, Paxton had gathered 147 pairs of mittens. He, his little sister, Sadie, and his mom, Meagan, were excited to deliver them to the Downtown Mission. "I felt happy that I could do it," Paxton says.

Meagan adds, "My husband and I are really proud of Paxton. He understands that other people have needs and he took the time to help. It's very heartwarming."



Paxton encourages other kids to support the Mission. "We need friendship to build a better community. Anyone can help. Any kid can help."

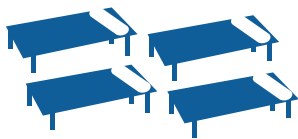
Thank you to Paxton and to our volunteers of all ages! Your commitment provides care and comfort in so many ways.



This is the incredible impact your generosity makes! Thank you.

Nights Sheltered

men & women
31,129 nights

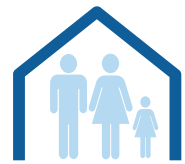


Served 123,227

hot meals to individuals,
more than **283** each day



Supported
210 adults and **360**
youth through their
Recovery Journeys



Housed 90

individuals (**58** in partnership
with Housing Information Services)



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