

# Family Care Settles Into New Home

It's pleasingly bright and cheerful. There's enough elbowroom to efficiently serve clients and display merchandise.

And it's all on one floor! Welcome to the Erie City Mission's new Family Care Center. Now at 717 French St. in the former Erie Book Store location, the refurbished storefront has enabled the Mission to expand assistance to needy families who rely on Family Care for food, clothing and other essentials.

And perhaps the most exciting news of all, thanks to continuing and generous public support, the Family Care Center rang in 2007 by increasing service to needy families from once per month to once per week.

"We're happy with the new location because it is so much brighter and bigger," said June Adam, coordinator. And clients utilizing the facility are similarly excited.

The old Family Care location was tucked away in the basement of the Mission's main facility. That operation spanned several rooms and was accessible only by stairs.

Challenging is perhaps the most tactful way to describe a 65-year-old woman's climb up those stairs while toting a bag of canned vegetables and other groceries.

The new facility, with about 50 percent more space, consists of a reception area with seating for 30 clients and separate spaces for grocery-store items and clothing displays.

A staff member or volunteer assists each client with item selection, based on need and preference. Bags were pre-packed



A bright, more cheerful atmosphere awaits clients, staff and volunteers at the new Family Care Center on French Street.

at the old location, which invariably led to item substitutions at the time of pickup.

Several clothing racks feature items generously supplied by Ruth Socash through Marian's Next To New, a second-hand store on West 26th Street.

"We have a very nice clothing area where clients are able to select items," said Dan Quigley, director of operations. "Before, everything was all jammed into one room and we had to have people bring the clothing up to them."

It's so much brighter, too, thanks to full-size storefront windows. A large mural featuring colorful flowers hangs near the entrance.

The entire facility was cleaned, wall surfaces repainted and new carpeting installed.

Location is another bonus. Family Care's new home sits just three blocks from the old site. Also attractive was the lease extended by Sumner Nichols II, the building's owner. And special thanks to PNC Bank for a grant to help provide new children's books.

Family Care operates two days a week with the help of dozens of volunteers.

The lofty goal of increasing services to once a week could only be achieved, and can only be maintained with increased public support from various

agencies, such as the Second Harvest Food Bank, and our valued donors.

"There is a huge increase in the amount of food and clothing we're giving away," Quigley said. "There is a need."

The old Family Care space will house the Mission's new outpatient drug/alcohol treatment program.

### How can you pitch in?

- ✓ Help sort and display food, clothing.
- ✓ Assist clients with item selection.
- ✓ Contribute non-perishable food items.

## Car Enthusiasts Shift Into Gear To Raise Funds For The Mission

Jack Kovacs, president and CEO of the Erie City Mission, accepts a \$1,000 check from Lake Erie Classics car club president Cos Helsel and Jim Falkenhagen. The money was raised from 50-50 ticket sales, and t-shirt sponsorships at summer car cruises held each week at Liberty Park.

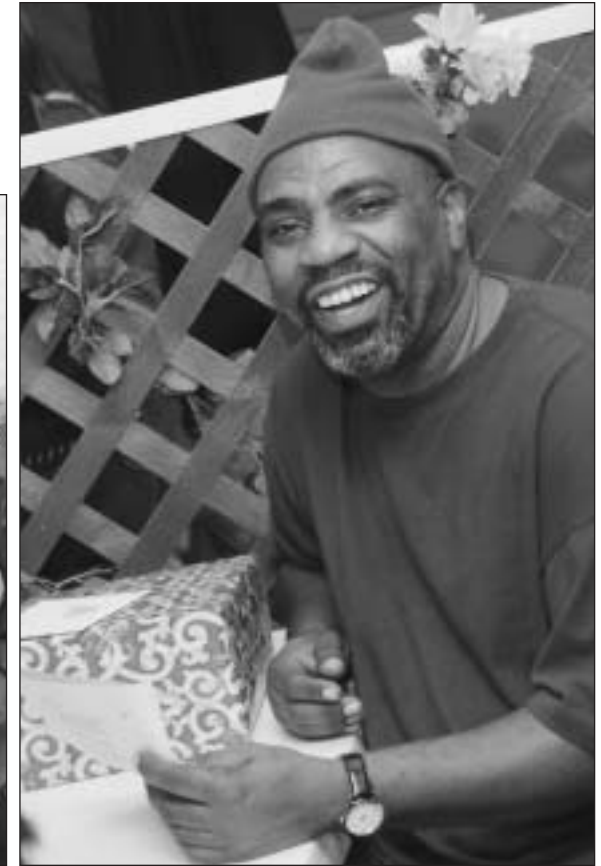


ERIE CITY MISSION

A Beacon of Hope  
Since 1911

# The Beacon

1017-1023 French Street • Erie, PA 16501 • www.ericitymission.org



**Feed The Hungry ... Help The Homeless ... Rescue The Lost  
It's What You Help Us Do Every Day At The Erie City Mission**

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

With the New Year, we have an opportunity to look upon all the blessings that God has provided for the Mission, its staff, volunteers, and the individuals and families who have benefitted from our services. You know that God works through people to bless others. The Mission has been blessed by so many of you who have a heart to feed the hungry, help the homeless, and rescue the lost. We could not have been in existence for 95 years without the kind, generous, and continuing support we receive from our community.

This past year, we have made great strides ... the Mission became more visible and better known in our community. We have reached out to numerous individuals, groups, organizations, churches, and businesses, through luncheon meetings, tours, talks, television, and radio. Our goal is to assure that we are firmly connected and committed to the betterment of our community ... working together to help change lives ... one at a time.

With the timely move and expansion of our Family Care Center to the former Erie Book Store location on French Street, we now offer the food pantry to families once a week, instead of only once a month. With this change alone, we have the potential to increase family visits from 4,500 to over 20,000 annually! We have also significantly increased our offerings of free clothing and household items for the families served. Already, we have helped more than 100 new families ... families who were not previously served by the Mission. Praise God! Because He is able, we are able to meet all of these increased needs.

During the Thanksgiving week, a record number of 1,100 families received turkey baskets. For the prior year, the Mission distributed 630 turkey baskets to eligible families. In essence, we were able to almost double the number of families who were helped in 2006. Regarding our program of free meals to the public, although the final figures are still being tabulated, we have increased the number of free meals, from 140,000 to approximately 150,000 per year.

Our sincere gratitude is extended to all of you who have been faithful partners with the Mission. Your help and support throughout the year allow us to meet the increasing needs of the individuals and families who are hungry, homeless and spiritually lost.

Yours in Victory,  
Jack Kovacs, President



Jack Kovacs



### 'The Beacon'

The quarterly newsletter of the Erie City Mission

### Board of Directors

Art Lubomski, Chairman  
Chuck Pauley, Vice-Chairman  
Greg Paulding, Secretary  
Margaret Dutkowski  
Al Ganzer  
Rob McBride, Esq.  
Namon McWilliams  
Rick Prokop  
Dr. John Tucker  
Dr. Barbara Valenzuela

### Newsletter Editor

Roger Coda

### Contact us at:

Erie City Mission  
P.O. Box 407  
Erie, PA 16512-0407  
814-452-4421  
www.eriecitymission.org



## Our Newsletter Gets A New Name

It's been known as "The Messenger" and "Lifeline" among other names over the years. And now, 2007 brings to you "The Beacon."

"The Beacon" more adequately reflects the logo by which we have come to be known -- The Beacon of Hope since 1911.

We hope the Beacon continues to shine light on the needs of those we serve and on our gratitude to those who help.

## CALENDAR

### Help The Homeless Week

Feb. 17-23

Numerous events planned to raise awareness

### Public Easter Meal

Sunday, April 8  
Noon to 1:30 p.m.

## Mission Part Of Erie County's 'Home Team'

The Erie City Mission is proud to be an active member of Erie County's Home Team.

Founded in 1997, the Home Team consists of local government representatives, service providers, business owners, consumers and concerned citizens.

This coordinating group works together to eradicate homelessness in the Erie community. For additional information about Home Team, call 456-5670.



Sisters of Christ Missions & Community Service of Linesville brought 17 handmade quilts for Erie City Mission clients. Why? "To keep people warm and happy, and because we're sisters of Christ," was their response. Donnamae Rudler made most of the quilts. Betty Maynard is its president.

# Outpatient Drug/Alcohol Care Begins

The Erie City Mission has expanded its outreach into the community by launching a new outpatient drug/alcohol treatment program.

"It's part of our continuum of services to those who are suffering from addictive disorders," said Jack Kovacs, Mission president.

Outpatient care, together with the inpatient program established in 2004, form the Mission's new Hope Center Addiction Treatment Services ministry.

Adding outpatient treatment to a program that already delivers inpatient services is a logical step, Kovacs explained. It complements the other and enables a client who needs additional care to remain in a familiar setting.

In the past, the Mission referred clients to outside agencies following inpatient treatment.

Outpatient treatment enables a client to maintain employment and live at home. The client may also reside at the Mission during treatment. Both Mission programs include group and individual counseling and are faith-based, said Susan Williams, clinic

director.

The Mission anticipates receiving new referrals for outpatient services from the county Drug Court system, which requires offenders to continue employment.

"There's a big need for outpatient services as funding is cut more at the state and county levels," Williams said. Donations to the Mission help defray costs not covered by government sources.

The Mission anticipates accommodating up to 100 clients in outpatient or intensive outpatient services," Williams said.

Dianna Allen, who recently earned an M.A. in rehabilitation counseling at Edinboro University, has been hired as an

outpatient counselor. She recently finished an internship in the Mission's drug/alcohol rehabilitation program as part of graduate study.

The former Family Care Center at the Mission has been remodeled into private offices and meeting space for the new outpatient program.

### What It Means

Graduates of the Mission's inpatient drug/alcohol treatment can remain with the same support team to prevent a relapse.

Erie gains a new outpatient drug/alcohol treatment option.



## Lawyers Help Mission Buy Turkeys

Erie attorneys James Pitonyak and Anthony Logue present Erie City Mission President Jack Kovacs with personal checks to help purchase turkey baskets for the needy at Thanksgiving.

## 'Tis The Season At The Mission



A winter coat giveaway sponsored by the Wesley United Methodist Church and Christmas Shopping Party at the State Street Thrifty Shopper that featured entertainment and pictures with Santa ushered in the holidays for the Erie City Mission.

# 'Help The Homeless Week' Declared

Erie City Mission invites you to get involved during "Help the Homeless Week" in Erie County. The goal of the Feb. 17-23 campaign is to raise awareness of homelessness and poverty in our community, in addition to raising funds to help the Mission continue to feed the hungry and house the homeless.

Look for "Help the Homeless Week" events at churches, schools and businesses.

**How Can You Help?**

- ✓ Hold a fundraiser -- Let's see how creative you can get! (We will highlight some of the best ideas in our next newsletter.)
- ✓ Stage a food or clothing drive.
- ✓ Sell paper lighthouses, provided by

the Mission, for customers to sign and display in your business.

- ✓ Distribute literature, also provided by the Mission, about homelessness and poverty.
- ✓ Keep the hungry and homeless in your prayers.

Please call (814) 452-4421, ext. 34, to register or get more ideas.

# Toy Campaign Benefits Needy Children

Christmas may seem like a distant memory, but we can't forget those who helped make the holiday brighter for area families.

The "Adopt-A-Family" program is a Christmas tradition that matches the needs and wishes of needy children with individuals, businesses and organizations.

Each gift is selected, according to lists tabulated by the Mission, and then wrapped and marked with the first name of the recipient. That insures a perfect match on Christmas morning.

A contingent of staffers at Hamot

Medical Center, representing virtually every job classification, is one of the program's hardest-working groups.

This year, the Hamot crew gathered presents for 89 children, reported Paula Lasky, an RN stationed in an intensive care unit. Overall, 130 families were served by the program.

What's the motivation? "They just want to help out," Lasky said of her colleagues. It also helps that she's a superb campaigner, utilizing e-mail, sign postings and simply talking up the program.

In weeks leading up to the gift

distribution, Lasky visited participating units at the hospital, pushing a shopping cart that she fills with presents.

Another Mission tradition is the toy giveaway orchestrated by 16-year-old Robbie Steinbrink.

The Mercyhurst Prep junior raised \$4,400 from individuals and corporate donors. That money bought enough toys to fill 40 shopping carts. "We've got it down to a science," he said of the three-hour sweep to gather toys.

The new Family Care Center hosted the toy giveaway on Dec. 22.

## Celebrating Christmas in Grand Style



Joyful faces were as plentiful as flickering lights on a newly decorated Christmas tree. This is the annual Koinonia Party at the Erie City Mission. A time to savor homemade food, receive gifts, sing traditional Christmas carols and strengthen bonds that these men form at the Mission during their recoveries. The men learn there are people that genuinely care about them and want them to succeed.



Ready to give away toys at the Family Care Center are (from left): Julie, David and Robbie Steinbrink, Rebecca West and Pat Scutella.

## Phone-A-Thons Raise Over \$26,000

Thanks to two radio stations, the airwaves helped collect over \$26,000 for the Erie City Mission.

Phone-A-Thons staged at WCTL-FM, on Dec. 14, and WXTA-FM, on Nov. 21,

generated donations totaling \$26,500. That tally included a generous \$10,000 match from GE Transportation in Erie.

Proceeds from the campaigns, like other gifts, are used to provide services to the poor.



Volunteers deliver the giant "Giving Tree," donated by Green Prosthetics & Orthotics to the Mission's dining room. The 10-foot tree, the centerpiece of the Festival of Trees, came with scarves, hats, and toiletries for men at the Mission. It was decorated by Rose Floral Shop.

## Lisa Zompa Nietupski Joins Erie City Mission Staff

After nearly 25 years as a news reporter/anchor, Lisa Zompa Nietupski has joined the Erie City Mission as its new director of development.

Nietupski's job includes fund-raising and public relations. She joined the Mission's management team in October and jumped right into the busy holiday season.

"It has been so wonderful working with all the generous groups and individuals so

eager to share their time and talents to help the Mission continue its work," she said.

Nietupski says she knows from her years on Erie television that this area is second to none when it comes to the community taking care of their less fortunate neighbors. "Especially around the holidays, people have opened their hearts to give hope to those who need it," she said.

"One of the most important aspects of

my job is to help the community realize that the need extends far beyond Thanksgiving and Christmas, to the long, cold winter months and throughout the year."

Nietupski's personal mission is to help the public understand that the Erie City Mission is a true community asset, one that couldn't exist without the community's help.

# Would You Like to Help The Mission? These Groups Show How You Can

Are you searching for a way to "give back" and help others? Have you considered staging a fundraiser or food/clothing drive for the Erie City Mission?

The Mission is grateful to church groups, employee groups, businesses and individuals who have helped the Mission in some very creative ways in

the last few months.

These groups include:

**Lake Erie Classics** -- raised money at car cruises.

**H.A.N.D.S** -- employees donated money.

**Brink Roofing** -- donated money for each roof repaired.

**Plaza Dental** -- donated

toothbrushes, toothpaste and dental floss.

**Sisters in Christ Missions & Community Services of Linesville** -- donated handmade quilts for the homeless.

**Green Prosthetics & Orthotics** -- donated a beautiful Festival of Trees Giving Tree.

**Eriez Magnetics** -- donated 50 turkey baskets.

**Employees Community Service Fund of GE** -- donated money.

**American Turned Products** -- employees held a food drive.

**Community HealthNet North** -- employees donated money instead of exchanging Christmas gifts.

**Erie Runners Club** -- donated proceeds from Erie Marathon.

**Erie Copy Products** -- sponsored a fundraiser.

**McInnes Rolled Rings** -- employees donated proceeds from vending machines.

**Scott Enterprises** -- donated Christmas hams and money.

**Erie's Downtown Improvement District** -- held Downtown Delights fundraisers.

**Dick's Sporting Goods** -- donated products for fundraisers.

Please call (814) 452-4421, ext. 34, if you are able to help us, or to get more ideas on how to get involved in helping the Erie City Mission.

## Mission Staffer Draws Upon His Own Recovery To Help Our Clients

Darrell shares an important message with men at the Erie City Mission: "Every day that you get up and stay clean and sober, you're a miracle."

And so is Darrell.

Just a few years ago, Darrell was plagued by some of the same addictions that these men are working so hard to shed.

Today, Darrell serves as vocational rehabilitation coordinator and internship coordinator at the Mission. From his office, Darrell helps clients put together resumes, develop job leads and also functions as a character reference.

But that's not all; his service extends throughout much of the Mission's rehabilitation ministry. Darrell knows what causes men to abuse drugs or alcohol, how their lives suffer, how they struggle to end their addictions and why they can fail. And also how they can succeed.

Darrell's been there. But after 14 years of addiction, he made that coveted 180-degree turn. And now those real-life experiences are helping others turn their lives around.

### Addicts Deny The Problem

An addict is usually the last person to know there's really a problem, Darrell said, reflecting on his own past. "The first rehabilitation I went to I didn't think I had a problem. I had lost 45 pounds from doing cocaine and I didn't think I had a problem. My mother saw it, my brothers and sisters -- everybody saw it, but I just refused to see it.

"Denial is the biggest problem with addiction; you don't think your problem is that bad. It's not as bad as the guy who's sleeping under a bridge or a guy who got arrested and sentenced five years for bank robbery.

"You say you're doing better than that guy."

Darrell, one of seven children in a single-parent household, developed a full-time addiction to crack cocaine in the late 1980s.

"I struggled to keep a job, raise a family, be responsible," he recalled.

Blessed with confidence, quick mind, engaging personality and a college degree,

Darrell had no difficulty getting hired. He was a hard worker, for sure. But the trouble was maintaining a job and his addiction.

"Sooner or later the desire to use outweighs your moral judgement or ethical standards. You start doing things that you wouldn't do sober."

Retail theft was Darrell's undoing. But it was "by the grace of God" that

Darrell was spared from prison and was assigned to Drug Court, then a new rehabilitation alternative for non-violent offenders who commit crimes to support an addiction.

Going to jail and being absent in his young son's life, as Darrell's father had been in his, spurred a sense of urgency at the age of 44 that Darrell, married and with four children, couldn't ignore. He had one more

chance.

"God said, 'You're not going to lose your family.'" And at that moment, I said there was hope for me."

Darrell "latched" onto Drug Court and joined N.A. meetings. Along the way he thought about relapsing, the outcome of past rehab attempts, but he also heard from people who beat the odds and remained sober for two and three years.

"For an addict, two or three days is as far as we normally go, but these guys were (clean) for one, two, 10 years. Another one celebrated 13 years. But I said to myself, 'That's impossible. Once an addict,

always an addict.' I had struggled 14 years so I had a lot of experience to back up that I couldn't get clean."

But strengthened in the 12-step fellowship program, Darrell persevered. He learned how addicts overcame difficult life experiences -- the death of a parent or temptation to rejoin old friends and old habits -- that can derail a recovery.



Darrell Smith keeps a photograph of his mother in his office as a symbol of the continuing influence she has over him and his continuing recovery.

### Recovery Must Be The Priority

"You have to be willing to do whatever it takes to get clean," he tells clients at the Mission. "Recovery has to be your main priority and it has to supercede everything: family, friends. Only God comes before my recovery."

People who are successful put everything else on the back burner. Work, money and other priorities can threaten recovery, as they did for Darrell.

Now clean over four years, Darrell, who previously worked in the Department of Public Welfare and behavioral health field, joined the Mission two years ago, drawn by the opportunity to serve others in need. He has worked in Family Care and as a supervisor at the men's desk. He also guides counseling sessions and Bible study.

He empathizes with the men, knowing their struggles, including fear they won't be accepted by society and fear they will relapse.

But there's optimism in Darrell's message. "If you do the right things in your life, your life can be rescued. God will not only rescue you, but he will restore you to a place of prominence to where your family is proud of you, your children can gain respect for you."

His position at the Mission is the best job Darrell says he's ever had. What's so uplifting, he explained, is the transformation that occurs when men come to the Mission seeking only a hot meal or a warm bed for a night. They're not looking for recovery.

But when they start going to classes and Bible study, their attitude turns around and they become committed to recovery.

"It doesn't happen all the time, it's not an every day occurrence, but there are men who just decide to turn their lives around."

### Darrell Is Ideal Fit At Mission

That Darrell, still a youthful-looking 49,

ended up serving in a faith-based organization wasn't really a stretch, even if the journey was anything but direct. His grandfather built a local church by hand, his mother served as a pastor, as a brother does now. One sister is an evangelist, another a minister. As this profile reveals, he's just as passionate and articulate, just as dedicated to his faith and eager to share as they are.

"I've always enjoyed jobs where I've been able to counsel and minister, much more than jobs that paid more, but it was more of a bottom-line mentality," he said.

"I see the value of working with these gentlemen who are turning their lives around, and I just want to be part of it. I get to tell them how recovery works. I get to tell them that God is at the center of my life, and if they do some of these similar things they will also be restored, not just rescued but restored."

Ripple effects that begin when a man beats his addiction are many, beginning with his immediate family and then extending deep into the community, Darrell said. And that's cause for celebration.

People who support the Mission make these success stories happen, Darrell said. "Whatever money they send in, it all goes into the pot to keep these doors open, so that when their son, their nephew, their uncle, their father is ready for help, our doors will always be open.

"What a blessing is that!"

Though his mother passed away last November, Darrell remains steadfast to his service to the Mission. Nothing made her more proud than to see Darrell at the Mission, his life back together and serving others. He knows she's still keeping tabs on him.

No matter what a man has gone through, how rough around the edges he may be, there's always the opportunity for him to turn his life around, Darrell said.

"That's the miracle of working at the Mission."