

The Beacon

May 2021

The Man On The Cover - Meet Randy

When Randy walked through the doors of the Erie City Mission seeking shelter in June 2020, it was the last place he ever expected to find himself.

Tell us about your story. What brought you to the Erie City Mission?

It was the first time in my life I was ever homeless and struggling to get my life together. I was sleeping in the back of long trucks, under bridges...really any place I could find to keep me warm, that's where I slept. I knew I couldn't stay on the streets. I ran into a couple of friends who told me to go to the MHA (Mental Health Association) and it was there that I called 814-SHELTER and got a bed at the Samaritan Care Shelter.

What was your first night in the Samaritan Care Shelter like?

To be able to sleep on a bed, take a hot shower and be able to get something to eat, it was beautiful. They [the Mission] served breakfast and lunch and then you only had to walk a block away to Emmaus to get dinner. I was getting my three meals and I was doing good.

Once those immediate needs were met, how did the Mission help you get back on your feet?

They helped me out a lot. I was struggling to get my SSI checks. The shelter staff took the time to call the social security office and the welfare office for me, and helped move things along faster. Whatever they could do to help me out they did. If you asked them questions, they would help you out, you just had to ask. You only have 90 days to stay in the shelter, but I received an extension because they knew I was working on getting an apartment. Once my SSI came through, the Mission connected me with Stairways to get a BCM (Blended Case Manager) so I could start the process of finding an apartment.

How long have you been in your apartment and how does it feel to have your own place?

I left the Mission in December 2020 and have been in my apartment for 4 months. It took me a while to find an apartment because there wasn't a lot of landlords renting at the time. But I found one and I am loving it. I have friends that come and visit. The shelter staff want to visit me at my new place too, to make sure I am comfortable and have what I need...because that's what they do.

What advice would you have for someone who is experiencing homelessness?

Keep your head up and pay attention because there is someone who is on your side. It doesn't make sense to be laying on the streets. There are places for men and women to go. You need to take the first step. When I realized that, it brought me back to reality. I will never do it again, never again.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Finally, Spring has sprung in Northwestern Pennsylvania! Along with the improving weather, signs of life can be seen blooming across our community: COVID-19 vaccinations increasingly being delivered; mitigated gatherings occurring more frequently; businesses operating and innovating; schools and universities continuing to teach; our impressive healthcare sector and human service organizations meeting significant needs; government serving our City and region; churches alive and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ--HOPE is in the air in our great City.

And the Erie City Mission is unwavering in our commitment to restoring hope--through food, shelter, long-term recovery--and transforming lives that come to us each day. Our Board, Staff and Volunteers are *"strengthened in [our] faith and [give] glory to God, being fully persuaded that God has power to do what He has promised"* in the lives of those we serve. (Rom. 4:20,21)

Throughout this newsletter, you will see evidence of hope and transformation: our shelter guest, Randy, getting back on his feet with optimism for his future; our recent New Life Program graduating class moving forward with purpose, sobriety and joy; the innovative commerce collaboration between our Urban University students and Iron Empire; and the profound generosity and partnership we receive from our community.

"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (II Cor. 13:14)

This is Our City, Our Mission!

—Steve



Where Accountants Go

The Erie City Mission's Chief Executive Officer, Steve Westbrook, was recently featured as a guest on Mark Goldman's podcast, "Where Accountants Go," episode 219. Steve shares his career journey as a certified public accountant and his move into the human service sector. To listen to his April 13th episode, search "Where Accountants Go" on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts or Spotify.



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Community Grant Covers Thanksgiving Turkeys

Over 1,300 turkeys were distributed this past November, during the Erie City Mission's annual Thanksgiving Turkey Bag Distribution. With help from the PA Link and Aging & Disability Resources of Service Area 1 (Erie, Crawford, Venango, Clarion, Warren and Forest counties), the Mission was able to cover the cost of turkeys through the ACL (Administration for Community Living) Grant received in March.



Shopping For The Mission

Long-time volunteer and donor, Marlene, blessed our Kitchen with a cart full of food needed to prepare meals for our residents and guests. Marlene joined our Kitchen Manager, Sue Jepson for a shopping trip at Sam's Club, where she graciously covered the cost of the items needed. Thank you Marlene!

ECM Upcoming Events

June 24 – New Life Program, Men's Graduation

August 10 – Erie Gives 2021

February 15, 2022 – Knockout Homelessness 14, Bayfront Convention Center

Urban University Students Learn About Entrepreneurship

Six Urban University students launched their first youth commerce merchandise store in late March as part of the program's first ever Youth Commerce Collaborative. Students enrolled in the course were provided an intensive hands-on entrepreneurial experience that followed every aspect of the clothing and screen printing business including sales, marketing, design, production, finance and leadership.

RJ Messenger, owner of Iron Empire Clothing, partnered with the Erie City Mission's youth program as the first business to participate in the course, donating company resources, time and money. Messenger opened the doors for these students to learn what it takes to be a business owner and entrepreneur.

Students worked together to create two unique designs that they screen printed onto T-shirts and hoodies. Their apparel was available for purchase online through their own e-commerce store in March and generated \$1,825 in revenue for the Urban University Program. Each student received a gift card to Iron Empire Clothing for meeting their intended sales goal.

"If I ever wanted to start a business, I know how to start it and where I need to be, what I need to do financially and what I need to do for myself," said Nathanael Elverton, an Urban University student.

Urban University is seeking to partner with other businesses like Iron Empire Clothing, to help shape students as future leaders. If you or your business are interested in becoming part of the Urban University program please reach out to RoseMarie Lackey, Director of Youth Ministries at rmlackey@eriecitymission.org.



What if there was no Erie City Mission?

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If the City Mission wasn't there, I wouldn't have a home. I'd still be struggling. I am glad we have the Mission...I am so glad. They are doing wonderful work and I thank them.



Because of supporters like you, Randy and others just like him are finding a way out of homelessness and living transformed lives. **To hear Randy's full story, visit the "Stories of Hope" page on our website.**

The Erie City Mission's Samaritan Care Shelter provides emergency shelter services that meet immediate and practical needs for men experiencing homelessness, hunger and despair. By meeting these most basic and immediate needs, not tied to any expectations, we are "restoring hope" in a nurturing environment and opening doors for transformation to begin.

Guests in our shelter are cared for in a safe, supportive environment where they can find refuge and rest. Once those needs have been addressed, a case manager works one-on-one with each guest to identify next steps, including housing, employment, and healthcare and treatment options with a goal of helping guests change unhealthy patterns of behavior.

Each night approximately 56 men find a warm bed and safety from the streets at the Erie City Mission. If you or someone you know is in need of shelter, please call the Coordinated Entry System at 814-SHELTER (814-743-5837).

Erie Insurance Giving Network Grants Funds for Youth Program

The Erie City Mission Urban University program is an approved program under the PA Educational Improvement Tax Credit program (EITC). The program recently received a \$35,000 grant from the Erie Insurance Giving Network, through the PA EITC program, to continue it's 2021-2022 programming. We are grateful for the continued support of our community partners like Erie Insurance, who faithfully invest in our inner-city youth.

If you or your business is approved to make EITC contributions, or is interested in applying, contact Erin Layden, Director of Development at erin.layden@eriecitymission.org

We Can Help You Create Your Legacy

We know your reasons for giving to the Erie City Mission are unique. We want to help you achieve your giving goals.

A planned gift to support the Erie City Mission will allow us to continue to restore hope and transform the lives of men, women and families in our community who are struggling with homelessness, hunger and addictions, for the next 100 years.

HERE ARE A FEW WAYS YOU CAN LEAVE A LEGACY GIFT:

WILLS AND
TRUSTS

IRA
GIFTS

STOCKS AND
SECURITIES

CHARITABLE
GIFT ANNUITIES

ENDOWMENT
GIFTS

For a free copy of our Legacy brochure or to start a conversation on planned giving please email erin.layden@eriecitymission.org

Celebration of New Life

The Erie City Mission recently celebrated alongside five men who successfully completed our 10-month residential recovery program. On Thursday, April 8, *Matthew H., David H., Cody C., Dominic F., and Kodi H.* were honored for their commitment to recovery with a ceremony held in the Mary Jane [Surgala] Chapel. During a time when drug and alcohol use has increased and relapse rates have consistently climbed, recovery is now more of a challenge than ever before. We congratulate our graduates for their perseverance and accomplishments and wish them the best on the next step of their recovery journey.

Join us for our next New Life Program graduation on Thursday, June 24 at 4 p.m. by visiting www.camerie.org/eriecitymission.



August 10, 2021 • 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
A great day to help the Erie City Mission.

www.eriegives.org

Because you gave...

23,271

Bagged lunches and meals were prepared and distributed to the public and our residents during our free public lunch.

2,102

Safe overnights were provided in our Samaritan Care Shelter for men.

61

Men received rehabilitation, recovery and shelter

15

Crisis requests were fulfilled through our Thrift Stores.

17

Student leaders participated in the 2020-2021 Urban University program.

Giving Statistics for January - March 2021