

# Rescue Mission News

## Ventura County Rescue Mission

CHANGING LIVES FOR GOOD IS OUR ONLY BUSINESS

### *Floundering... Forgiven... Flourishing*

The first time I drank, I was only 13 or 14. All through high school, I hung out with the party crowd and the drinking progressed. I would try whatever was available, but my drug of choice was alcohol. After high school, I was drinking every day. I stopped the hard-core drugs around 2006, but kept on drinking.

In July of '08, I finally realized I needed real help. I went through the Salvation Army program. While I was there, my girlfriend got pregnant. My mom had given me one more chance and let me stay with her, but put me out when I started drinking again. Then my girlfriend decided she had enough. I straightened up for a while and was working as a client supervisor for a rehab program in Port Hueneme in January of 2010. Depression over not being with my daughter sent me back to drinking. I tried the Salvation Army again, but walked out on Christmas day. I broke in to my mom's house. She was really hurt and told me I had to leave. My brother had said, "You've screwed up for the last time. Mom and I are done; we can't help you anymore." I realized everyone was sick and tired of my games. I spent several nights sleeping in my car, found my last paycheck, and spent the next few days trying to

drink myself to death. I thought of slitting my wrists. Thinking of my daughter saved me. I couldn't let her grow up without a father.

I remembered my mom and stepdad had pointed out the guys from the rescue mission when I went to church with them. So I called. I already know this time is different. I know I hit rock bottom and I will never drink again. When I was drinking, it never seemed life threatening. I always thought drinking was fun. The last time was miserable. I really believed I would die if I continued. My mom has always been there for me, even when she had to put her foot down. She didn't want to be the one to enable me, but she never shut the door on our relationship.

I see her every week at church now. I know she is so much happier with me here. She says, "At least now I can sleep because I know you are safe." ~ Shane

to rescue men and women on the brink of destruction. To not only help them recover from drug and alcohol addictions, but to teach them vital job skills, which will enable them to be productive citizens of Ventura County.

To the many who already partner with us, I want to thank you for your gifts and contributions toward this significant work. I look forward to many productive years rescuing the neglected and hurting in this county.



*John S. Smith*

### *Dear Friends,*

I am very excited to be returning to the Ventura County Rescue Mission as the new director. I truly believe the work of the Mission and Lighthouse, to seek and rescue people the world does not consider worthy, is a high calling of God.

It is our passion to treat the addicted, bind up the broken hearted, and care for the lonely and homeless with the love of God. My desire is to reach out to you and present the programs of the Mission and Lighthouse, so you may see how your gifts restore the homeless to productive lives. We are attempting

## At Rock Bottom, Mom's Love Was Still There

**M**y name is Ray. My parents divorced when I was 12. I started my rebellion then. I preferred to stay with my dad because there was no discipline. Mom and my stepdad laid down the law and I didn't like it. The first time I got drunk, I was 13. From that time until I came to the mission, it was just a spiral of what did I need to do, who did I need to hurt... whatever I needed to get drunk or high. There was a time in my early 20's for 13 years that I didn't have contact with my mom. It hurt to have to lie to her, but the addiction had taken over completely.

Even when I had a good job and good money, I was never happy with myself. For two years, I lived on the streets in Las Vegas. There is free alcohol everywhere; drinking is a 24-hour thing. I called my mother on occasion to help me out. But it was tough love after a while. I ended up in a mental hospital after slitting my wrists in May of '09. Mom heard about it, went on the internet, and found the rescue mission here in Oxnard.

Ray's mom Penny said, "I didn't know much of what was happening to Ray because his dad kept the boys from me. I had to leave town because my ex-husband would get drunk and threaten us with a gun. It wasn't until Ray was older and could sneak away to see me that I knew. When I heard about Ray's suicide attempt, I knew he couldn't do this any longer. We had to do everything we could to bring him back."

The day I got out of the hospital, I was on the bus. Mom picked me



Penny and Ray reunited

up at the bus stop and came right to the mission. In your addiction, you always want one more day. They told me if I really wanted to do this, I had to come back by 5pm to stay. I came in with an open heart and let God direct me. I have finally learned to let go of the past and let God take over. Every week that I have been in the mission, mom was there. For patio visits, weekend visits, she was there every week. It's good to have that closeness and feel that I have a mom again. I regret the years we weren't together, but we have each other now. I really treasure the relationship I have with her. She's forgiven me for all the horrible lies of the past. I even have her going to church with me now.

"He is a lot different now. He used to get so mad and then he would leave. This has been so good because he could call me at any time. Whenever he needs me, I am here. This past year has meant everything to me. I couldn't be

happier to see him...its like a new baby flourishing. It's absolutely fabulous to see him like that," says Penny.

### THRIFT STORES

- FURNITURE
- TOYS
- CLOTHING
- MUCH MORE!

100% of **ALL** proceeds help *feed, shelter, and clothe* the **Homeless**

#### Mission Bargain Center

125 South Harrison Ave.

Oxnard, CA 93030

Phone: (805) 201-4341

#### Super Thrift Store

815 North Oxnard Blvd.

Oxnard, CA 93030

Phone: (805) 201-3750



[venturacountyrescuemission.org](http://venturacountyrescuemission.org)

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# LIGHTHOUSE FOR WOMEN & CHILDREN

## What Life Lesson's Did Your Mom Teach You?



One of the most meaningful memories I have of my mother is sitting on the steps to the basement apologizing to me. She explained the best gift she could give me was to teach me to say "I'm sorry" and "I was wrong" when appropriate. The older I get, the more I appreciate that lesson.

Each day I look at moms struggling to be the moms they want to be to the children they have often ignored and mistreated. That sounds harsh; nevertheless many of our moms have lost or are in jeopardy of losing

custody because they haven't been decent moms. Drugs and alcohol will do that. Each day I watch them climb out of despair, shame, and guilt and gradually learn, not only does God love them and change them – but He can heal their relationships with their children. Last year, 25 children were reunited with their moms through our program. Debbi's story shows how often that is just the start.

*Cassie Sorenson*



## God ♥ Continues ♥ to ♥ Fulfill ♥ His ♥ Promises!

I lost my son Diego when he was six years old. I tried my hardest to get him back but my parental rights were terminated before I even realized what happened. I loved him with all that I had in me... it's just my best fell way short. If I had known Jesus then, I doubt that I would have spent those years using, running the streets, selling drugs, and going in and out of jail.

In 2005, Chaplain Pam brought me to the Lighthouse. I was pregnant and afraid my baby would have health issues because of my drug use. One of my first experiences of God's promises was when my baby, Josiah, was born healthy and happy. This last Christmas Josiah's



Diego, Debbie, and Josiah

father came out to visit. Josiah told me, "Mom, dad's not just a picture." He was able to spend time with his father and know he's real.

For the past four years since my graduation, I've worked at the Lighthouse. In the last year, I've also been reunited with my son Diego (he's 15 now). In God's way and time, He brought my boy home to me! There is much healing left to do, but God is faithful! We continue to take our baby steps and thank Him daily, sometimes hourly, for the second and third chances He promised us. God keeps fulfilling his promises; He has more than 7,000 in the Bible. Diego, Josiah, and I plan to claim them all!

~ Debbi

## No Longer my Backseat Driver . . . He's Got the Wheel!

**B**efore I got here, I was in jail, feeling close to death. Everyday I died a little more because I was without my daughter...it was killing me. Especially hard was realizing what I did to bring myself to the position I was in. I've heard, for you to truly repent from your sins, God will bring you down to both of your knees. Me, I was lower, sinking into a deeper depression with every moment spent without my daughter. When the judge sentenced me to 180 days, only if I were to complete a program, I praised the Lord for giving me a second chance. For

that was proof of His work in my life. While I was in jail, I heard so much about the Lighthouse and reluctantly called. God did all the hard work; I just complied. I sat in the backseat and let the Lord drive me. Now I am here at the Lighthouse and my daughter is able to spend the weekends with me overnight. I owe all the thanks to the Lord as well as to the Lighthouse. I am now able to do here what I could not do on the streets or in jail...be a mother to my daughter, clean and sober.  
~ Elizabeth



## I Want My Children to Know the NEW Lilly!

**I** came to the Lighthouse November 16, 2010. I was calling out for help. I needed it before it was too late. I was about to lose custody of my children, Samantha (4), Stephanie (2), James (8), and Joey (7). I know God put me here



for a reason. There was a time when I did have all my children. What a blessing that was. I don't take life for granted anymore.

A few years into my sons' lives is when I fell into a drug called Meth. It really changed things. The bond I had started to fade. I became pregnant two more times and had two girls. I've struggled with addiction on and off for 5 years. Being at the Lighthouse has done some good for me. I was hard-headed and have tried many different programs. But now, it's God working helping me to be a new Lilly. The Lilly everyone knew - the funny, outgoing, and silly Lilly. I'm thankful and blessed to be sober today and to have God in my life. I'm starting over. I'm going to do the best I can to reunite with my family. I now look at life differently and spend every moment I can with my girls.

I'm here in the program at the Lighthouse for change; to be a better mom and to have God in my life. God blesses me. ~ Lilly



**Beyond our daily needs are bigger items that would greatly enhance our programs. If you can help, please contact us at 805-240-1644. Thank you!**

- New twin size mattresses
- Portable plastic shelving units
- Tall dressers for the emergency shelter
- Conference tables for the classroom
- Lifetime tables and chairs for our dining rooms
- New computers
- Individual emergency evacuation kits for each facility
- Portable storage units
- File Cabinets – lateral
- Projectors for mounting in conference room and classroom
- Flat Screen TV's for the conference room and classroom
- 11- 15 Passenger Van
- Ergonomically correct Office chairs and furniture
- Metal Storage Cabinets (3' x 6')