



As we head into a new year and a new decade, thank you for checking in with us. Last year was a great one for the Mission, with a record number of clients (249) moving into their own homes! As a donor, you make this outcome possible, and we're excited to share a more in-depth look at the Mission's work with you. In this newsletter, you'll read about one of our recent clients, on a journey to better himself. You'll also meet our advocacy team, who are working hard to set clients up for success. We hope these stories will give you some insight into what the Mission means for those who stay here and how we are working to turn hurt into hope.

Karl came to Northlands Rescue Mission in December. Karl is originally from California, but he has lived in Grand Forks since 1983. He graduated from East Grand Forks Senior High in the late 80s and has been working in the community ever since. Karl is a machinist by trade. He spent years building radiators and propane tanks and has also worked in the construction and food service industries. His hobbies include fishing, pool, and watching sports. He follows college hockey closely, especially at UND. He knows about every UND player who has gone to play in the NHL or overseas. "It's just one of my things," he says.

This isn't Karl's first time at the Mission, but we're working together to make it his last. Karl has struggled with alcoholism for a number of years. His drinking has created problems in his personal life and damaged his self-esteem. Karl's relationship with his family has been strained and he recently found himself in an unstable living situation. "I didn't realize how bad it was," Karl says. "I just couldn't stop drinking."

Karl made the decision to come to the Mission, and we're glad that he did. In part, Karl came here because of the structure the Mission provides. Clients are breathalyzed each night, so Karl isn't able to drink while staying here. That accountability, along with basic resources and support from staff, gives Karl the foundation he needs to turn things around. After staying at the Mission in 2014, Karl went a year-and-a-half without drinking for the first time in more than 20 years. **We know Karl is more than his alcoholism and believe that he can do what it takes to stay sober for good.**

While staying at the Mission, Karl is working through his plan. Step one for him is to stay sober. Step two is to find a new job in Grand Forks, and step three is to find his own apartment. Karl is working with the Mission's advocacy team and Express Employment to find a job and apartment that fit with his transportation situation.

Even if he doesn't find something ideal, Karl is determined to go through with his plan.

"There are opportunities out there for me," he says. "If I have to walk to work, I have to walk."

Another goal of Karl's is to rebuild his self-confidence. "I don't really have it right now," he says. "I'm scared that if I've got money in my pocket, I'm going to go drink." Karl has gone to treatment, where he's learned about his addiction and the strategies he can use to cope. "It's just about me applying it now," he says. "I've got to prove to myself that I can do this."

Karl is focused on setting himself up to succeed. That means avoiding situations where he may be tempted to drink and keeping himself around people who want what's best for him. "The Mission staff are really good," Karl says. "They keep pushing, and everybody is given a chance."

Karl has a request for people who haven't seen the Mission or don't know much about it. "Come visit and see how it is," he says. "This place helps a lot of people. The clothes, the meals, a roof over your head... It's a good place. It's a safe place."

Karl knows that he needs to get better and that the time is now. We believe in Karl and will support him as he works through his recovery plan. **As a Mission supporter and donor, thank you for giving Karl the chance to turn his life around.**



*We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,
and endurance produces character, and character produces hope. - Romans 5:3-4*

From Homeless to Hopeful:

Meet the team working to get Mission clients housed

Northlands Rescue Mission starts as an emergency shelter - a safe, stable environment for homeless men and women. We provide three meals a day, clothing and hygiene products, a bed, laundry/showering facilities, and more. A vital function of the Mission, however, is providing clients with the support and resources they need to lift themselves out of homelessness. That is where the Mission's advocacy team comes in.

Northlands Rescue Mission currently has two in-house social workers, Bobbie and Anita. Bobbie has a bachelor's degree in social work from the University of North Dakota. She worked at the Care & Share homeless shelter in Crookston for four years before joining the Mission's advocacy team in September.

Anita has a bachelor's degree in social work from Minot State University and a master's degree from the University of Minnesota. She has extensive experience in the developmental disability and mental health fields. She has worked as a social service case manager and has owned an adult foster care program. Anita also worked at the Care & Share homeless shelter for three years and is now starting her third year at the Mission.

Bobbie and Anita meet with clients at the Mission to gain an understanding of their situation and help them develop a plan for the future. "Our first priority with everybody is to make sure they are fed, warm, and that they feel safe with us," says Anita. "That's critical." From there, the team can begin to work with each client one-on-one and determine the necessary steps to get them into housing.

"The idea, to go with housing first, is that people do better overall in their own space," says Anita. "That can be an apartment, it may be a housing arrangement with another person, but it's something that they want. When people start to work towards that, you see things improve. From my experience, when [a client] wants housing and they start to identify that as their primary need, it gives them hope."

Finding housing can take many steps, however. A client may need to obtain identification or employment to help them qualify for housing. They may have mental or physical health issues, financial obstacles, or lack transportation. These things can all serve as barriers to housing. Because each client is different, it's important to develop a personalized housing plan. "What we do is absolutely individualized for each person," says Anita. "Every person who walks through the door has their own story, and that's the story we work with."

This approach is called client-led engagement. Rather than imposing a pre-determined set of goals on a client, the team takes time to understand what a person has gone through and what they want for themselves.

"We do motivational interviewing," says Anita. "That means you are focused on what the person wants and where they are at. From there, we start building on their strengths. We never look at deficiencies...that somebody lacks something. We remove their barriers to housing in any way we can by utilizing their strengths."

Often, removing these barriers requires collaboration with other agencies and individuals. The team regularly works with local employers, landlords, medical facilities, attorneys, and more.

"The reality is that no one person can manage an individual's life," says Anita. "A team is always better. Another agency might have what [a client] needs to move ahead. You know the old adage 'It takes a village to raise a child?' Well, it takes a village to help somebody become sheltered. And when they do, it's an asset to whichever community that person goes into. They are employed. They start paying local taxes. They pay their rent. They use the medical facilities. They become a contributing member of that community."

This comprehensive approach to homelessness means an increased cost of care at the Mission compared to simply sheltering someone. However, it also results in a lasting impact on the clients and the community. That is why our donors are such an important part of the equation. They are providing the resources by which a person's life is permanently changed for the better, and the entire community benefits.



Mission social workers Bobbie (left) and Anita (right).



Clients get to ring a bell to celebrate moving out!

"Working with so many people, it has made me realize how little it takes to become homeless. It could be a car repair that you had to pay, leaving you unable to pay rent and leading to eviction. It could be addiction. It could be anything. I've heard some traumatic stories, but all of them are inspiring. You just can't believe what people can do after what they've experienced." - **Bobbie**

"[Our clients] are still individuals. No matter where they're at, or how they present to us, these are folks who have their own hopes and dreams. You have to start with that, first and foremost, and never forget it." - **Anita**

Community Kindness & Mission Updates



Handmade Quilts:

These ladies from Saint Matthew's Lutheran Church in Thompson brought us some gorgeous handmade quilts for the clients. They're durable and warm, and we love that a Bible verse is sewed into each quilt! This group meets weekly and donated more than 50 quilts in all to the community last year!



Geared Up:

Service members from the GF Air Force Base's 319th Contracting Flight visited the Mission to help break down boxes, organize the freezer, and fold letters. The twist? They were suited up in full military gear, gas masks and all! The group got some practice moving around in their gear and were a huge help to us at the same time!



Holiday Spirit:

A group of UND Medlife students helped bring Christmas to the Mission in 2019! They set up and decorated several Christmas trees, prepared holiday treats, and helped wrap presents for Bags of Blessings. All the decorations certainly helped keep the clients and staff in good spirits during the holiday season!



Community Thanksgiving:

The Mission once again hosted a free Thanksgiving Dinner at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, open to all community members. We are thankful for the many people who contributed their time and resources to make this happen! Texas Roadhouse cooked the turkeys, Central High School classes provided pie, and lots of people donated food. On Thanksgiving Day, 70 volunteers helped us serve more than 400 meals. We love this opportunity to bring people together each year!



A Very Merry Christmas:

Christmas was a joy at the Mission last month! Clients enjoyed holiday desserts and handmade Christmas cards from Schroeder Middle School students, and we were treated to a wonderful performance from the Twin Forks Sweet Adelines chorus. Each client received their own bag full of useful gifts, such as new shoes or jeans. Thank you to the churches, organizations, and individuals who contributed items for these Bags of Blessings. You put a smile on each of our clients' faces!

Follow us on Facebook to see similar stories and updates posted each week!

2019 STATS



474 total clients stayed at Northlands Rescue Mission for **14,877 nights of shelter**.



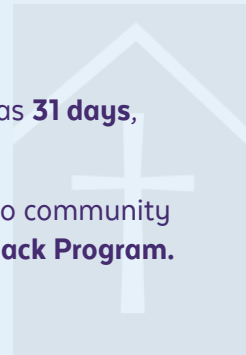
249 clients obtained **permanent housing**. The **average length of stay** for a client was **31 days**, down from 36 days in 2018 and 86 days in 2017.



Approximately **55,000 total meals** were served, **1650 food boxes** were distributed to community members, and **27,300 bags of food** were distributed to students through the **Backpack Program**.



More than **1000 volunteers** contributed **3700 hours** of volunteer service!



Mission of Hope Banquet - A Recap



The 2019 Mission of Hope Banquet and Silent Auction took place on November 4th at the Alerus Center. Executive Director Sue Shirek and Board Chair Dr. Wendy Opsahl spoke about the Mission's role in addressing homelessness and food insecurity in the community. The Backpack Program and the need for a local family shelter were major topics of the evening. Thank you to guest speaker MB Busch, who spoke on the importance of faith.



Before the meal, food items for the Backpack Program were placed on each table. Together, guests assembled bags for the program. It took less than 2 minutes for our guests to pack enough to feed 75 elementary school children for a weekend! On top of this, many people brought their own food donations for the Backpack Program (pictured lower right).



We'd like to wholeheartedly thank our sponsors, donors, and everyone who attended the banquet. We'd also like to thank the incredible number of businesses and individuals who contributed to the Silent Auction, making it the largest one we've ever seen! We are truly blessed to have such a caring and involved community!

See insert for complete list of sponsors...



GIVING HEARTS DAY

Join us on **February 13th, 2020** for Giving Hearts Day!

Giving Hearts Day is a 24-hour online giving event for hundreds of charities in North Dakota and northwest Minnesota. Last year, our amazing donors raised more than \$60,000 for the Mission on Giving Hearts Day! Donations this year will help us maintain and expand the Backpack Program, ensuring elementary students get enough to eat over the weekends. Funds raised will also help provide a stable environment for homeless clients and connect at-risk families with critical community resources.

With a
match on
Giving
Hearts Day,

**MY
\$20:**



*Feeds 16
children through
the Backpack
Program!*



*Provides a night of shelter,
3 meals, guidance from a
social worker, and access to
showers, bathrooms, clothing,
and hygiene products for a
homeless man or woman!*

To donate, visit givingheartsdays.org and search for **Northlands Rescue Mission**. Or, go to northlandsrescuemission.org/heart to be taken directly to our giving page. Donations made now will automatically be scheduled for Giving Hearts Day, and at least \$4000 in donations will be matched by generous friends of the Mission!



We are seeking additional match donors for Giving Hearts Day. If you are interested in matching donations or would like more information, please call us at 701-772-6600 ext. 200 or email sue@jointhemission.org.

The Backpack Program is supported in part by a grant from the City of Grand Forks through the Community Foundation of Grand Forks, East Grand Forks & Region.

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Papa Murphy's
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