

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2019



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Partners of the Downtown Hope Center,

My goodness, 2019 seems to have just come and gone! Here we are at the start of the Holiday season with Christmas right around the corner. Each year as I contemplate writing this letter and looking at the year that has passed, I'm awed by the goodness of God and His great loving-kindness to us and the people we serve every day.



Daily we hear statistics and stories about people living below the poverty line or experiencing homelessness, revealing how much our city is hurting below the surface. Every number has a name, every name has a story, and every story matters to God.

At Downtown Hope Center in all we do we desire to represent the love of Jesus Christ to the homeless and poor of Alaska, seeking ways to assist them out of the life circumstance they find themselves in, looking for ways to give them that hand up and restore their HOPE for a better future. They learn that they are deeply loved by God and as they trust Him and look at the issues of their heart and untangle the lies that have entrapped them they begin to Hope again....we are truly seeing our tag line played out in lives everyday **HOPE RESTORED, HEARTS RENEWED, LIVES TRANSFORMED.**

We have now graduated over 100 students from our Culinary and Bakery programs. Rejoicing with them as they find fulfilling jobs in our community, celebrating as they move into their own independent housing and are reunited with children and families.

In the midst of all the drama and trauma in the lives of our guests each day we hear words of gratitude and appreciation, recognizing that God is here in this place and extending His hand to all who enter our doors.

This Christmas Season I am grateful for a wonderful, dedicated staff that allow their lives to be a reflection of God's love and mercy to all who enter this place. I am also very grateful for all the volunteers who generously give thousands of hours each month to care for our guests, and to all of our partners who contribute of their time and resources to daily serve over 500 people, providing them food, shelter, and the skills they need to see transformation in their lives.

Acts 10:4 states, 'Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God'

May the peace of God rest on your homes and families as we celebrate this Christmas season.

Sherrie Laurie
Executive Director

WELCOME TO THE TEAM!



Amy Gill Administrative Director

With many years of ministry and administrative experience, Amy joined the DHC team in early summer. She is a joy and a blessing to have on board!



Chris More Employment Specialist

Chris comes to us from Bean's Cafe where he was the Assistant Program Manager. We love the energy and professionalism he brings to the table! Happy 9th birthday to his son, Logan, who is a faithful DHC donor!

2019 STATS

130,000
Cups of Soup
21,900
Shelter Dinners
39,000
Clothing Items Given
16,120
Warm Showers
22,000
Loads of Laundry
100
FMH Graduates
12,822
Volunteer Hours



MY FAVORITE THINGS

'Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens; Bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens;

Brown paper packages tied up with strings; These are a few of my favorite things.'

Remember this song from the Sound of Music? Julie Andrews sang a beautiful, random list of her favorite things; things that warmed her heart and brought a smile to her face. As I pondered what to share, her song floated in and brought to mind a few of my Hope Center "favorite things". Bear with me, my list doesn't rhyme and is probably impossible to sing, but these things bring me joy. I hope they warm your heart too.

I love that full time State employee, Mary Wall, daily serves in our kitchen. I asked her why she sacrificed her lunch hour? Her simple answer, "There but for the grace of God, go I." God bless Mary.

Women from local churches host tea parties on Monday nights, complete with fancy cups for our shelter ladies. Why? In order to change, people need more than just shelter and food. This effort speaks of their value, expresses love.

On Tuesday it's Brenda's Bingo... complete with prizes. Bingo isn't a necessity...and it wouldn't happen without volunteers. This too is an expression of the love of Christ.

I love that our ladies are finding their song again through Karaoke night. Singing breaks off depression and gloom and releases joy. Thank God there is a joyful noise in the house.

I love my friend, Judy Levigne - alias Wonder Woman. She has energy galore and puts her talents to good use here. Not only does she teach a weekly Bible study, she's crafty. Judy and shelter ladies create beautiful beaded earrings and bracelets, 'Hoops for Hope', which we sell at local bazaars. For \$15.00, each set sold covers the cost of one night in the shelter. The women love to be able to give back, and Judy's kind sharing allows this to happen. By the way, Hoops for Hope make wonderful Christmas gifts! You can purchase them from the office, support this ministry, and be a blessing.

I love to listen to Pastor James Martin, of Hope Church, (and one of our new board members) play his saxophone and sing beautiful old hymns during the lunch hour, releasing the presence of God in this place.

I am thrilled how God supernaturally answers prayer. Chef David is full of stories! Right after praying for protein 700 pounds of hamburger arrived followed quickly by loads of buns. What a great treat for our guests. Ask and you shall receive!

I love watching the transformation of my friend Ruanne Brock, who like me, sat inside the walls of the church for years, and wondered how she could expand God's kingdom? She discovered exciting opportunities at the Hope Center, by moving outside the walls to meet people where they're at. Now she befriends, encourages and prays with students and guests. Ruanne has found new joy by partnering with God in rebuilding lives.

I could go on and on, and I probably will next newsletter, but for now, these are a few of my favorite things:

'Tea parties, bingo games and karaoke nights; volunteers with smiles, serving meals with delight,

Hope is restored; and broken hearts renewed; these are a few of my favorite things!

Lorraine O'Neal
Board Chair

Coach's Corner

The ultimate goal for the Feed Me Hope program is to see life transformation in our students. Honestly, the stories I have the privilege to hear are difficult to imagine. Today in Life Skills, one of the Tier 2 students shared his story on 'Forgiving Yourself.' It was such a remarkable presentation that I asked him to write it up and we will share it in future classes. He told of his overwhelming fear that because of his criminal history, he wouldn't be accepted into the FMH program. The thought of not being accepted was personally devastating to him. His fear of rejection was so paralyzing that he had attempted to end his life on several occasions. That story is not uncommon for our 25 students in the FMH program. The testimony presented today was so filled with joy and life that when he shared it, it was difficult not to break out in tears. His life is changing daily because real transformation is taking place. He understands love, acceptance, and forgiveness better than most people I know. His new life is certainly not behavior modification. He is changing from the inside out. Whether our students are part of the culinary or bakery program, the most important and valuable outcome is a transformed life. Transformation begins it's journey when we pray "Lord, heal me and change me!". God hears that heart cry and fulfills HIS STORY in these students. Repeatedly, we have the privilege of hearing "I HAVE HOPE!".

God bless you all this Christmas season, and thank you for the many ways that you continue to support The Downtown Hope Center!

Coach Richard



Feed Me Hope Student Reflections:

Holly - FMH Class 13

The Feed Me Hope Bakery program taught me many things. It taught me how to speak up and use my kitchen voice; and to ask for help when I need it. It also showed me that I have the ability to teach other people. I have learned so much, and I've grown in my confidence. I now know I can be successful when I put my mind to doing something. Life Skills was an important part of the program for me. It taught me how to trust in God, to love others, and to be grateful for what He has given me.

Sandra

FMH Class 13 & 15

Being in the program helped me not only in culinary/baking skills; but also helped me to know what to do with my life. Life Skills helped me to find hope for my future. Two weeks after I graduated out of Culinary school I was hired at 49th State Brewing company and I have worked there now for over 6 months. I went back into the program to do the Bakery side of things, and just recently graduated. I am about to get hired now working a second job! Today I take pride in my work, and I look forward to what the future holds for me.



Jerrett Janitscheck



Sandra Murdock

Jerrett - FMH Class 15

I recently graduated from the Feed Me Hope Culinary school. It has been a great opportunity for me to build a new life and get up on my feet. I highly recommend this program to anyone who is thinking of joining. This environment is friendly, challenging, and you will learn the skills you need to live a better life. My life is in a much better place today, and I have a job where I am continuing to learn and build on the skills I acquired in the program. I thank God for the opportunity I was given being a part of this program.

Brystal - FMH Class 6

It is hard to believe that it's been well over a year since I graduated. I love the Feed Me Hope School so much. The love of God was shown to me in many ways through the relationships I built while here. Today I have a job that I love serving people; and I have a healthy relationship with my son. The Hope Center staff showed me so much grace, and helped me to believe in myself again. This program impacted my life more than any other program I've ever been a part of. I am just so thankful that God brought me to Feed Me Hope Bakery Program. My life is better for it!



Holly Bennett



Brystal Mann

downtown soup kitchen
HOPE
CENTER

PO Box 202684
Anchorage, AK 99520



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

SHOWER HOUSE
9 AM - 1:30 PM

SOUP KITCHEN
9 AM - 2 PM

SHELTER MEAL
5:45 PM - 7 PM

WAYS TO GIVE

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