

Window of Opportunity Opens Wide in Old South End

Last Fall, when the cost of essential repairs forced us to close Good Samaritan Outreach Center in Toledo's Old South End, we reminded ourselves that, when God closes a door, He opens a window. And boy, did He ever!

In the months since we closed Good Sam, God has enabled us to actually increase our efforts to prevent homelessness in this most diverse of all Toledo neighborhoods. In order to provide a continuum of services to people in need in South Toledo, we've coordinated our services with those of other organizations serving the Old South End.

Through a grant from the ProMedica Advocacy Fund of the Toledo Community Foundation, we've opened the South Toledo Community Center in collaboration with Western Avenue Family Center and many other local agencies and churches. Located in the former Old English Church on Broadway, South Toledo Community Center serves as a "one-stop-shop" where neighborhood residents can access a variety of services. Here's a sampling of services currently being offered or soon to be available:

- Parent support via Baby University, which is a component of the South Toledo Kid's Zone and modeled after the incredibly successful Harlem Kid's Zone. Baby U provides parents of kids through age 3 with the tools, resources, and knowledge they need to raise healthy children who enter school ready to learn—a proven way to prevent homelessness. South Toledo Kid's Zone is made possible by the ProMedica Advocacy Fund and implemented through our vital partnership with Western Avenue Family Center.
- A nutritious breakfast from Cindy's Corner Café. Cherry Street helps provide the food and Cindy and other volunteers from St. Lucas Church in South Toledo serve it up five days a week.
- Health screenings, onsite monthly by the Neighborhood Health Association
- Sunday morning worship services conducted by New Kingdom Church
- A senior nutrition program, SNAP, provided by Toledo Area Ministries
- Mental health screenings conducted by professionals from the Zepf Center
- Legal services from ABLE
- Educational assessment screenings by Penta Vocational Center, which also offers assistance finding career and retraining opportunities
- GED classes offered by our Education and Career Services

This Summer, the Sophia Quintero Center will join the collaboration working on an urban agriculture project to help our South Toledo neighbors grow their own food.

If you would like to become involved in our efforts to prevent homelessness in Toledo's Old South End, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact Cherry Street President and CEO Dan Rogers at danrogers@cherrystreetmission.org or 419-242-5141 ext. 225.



At Cindy's Corner Café, the price of a meal is a smile or a hug. Joe (seated) is served by café volunteers Rosie (left) and Cindy, founder of the café.



To help local residents achieve educational and career goals, Cherry Street is once again offering free GED preparation classes in the Old South End. (From left) Cindy, director of Cherry Street's Education and Career Center, reads Dallas for his upcoming GED exam.

Over the course of two 10-week sessions, 32 parents have graduated from Baby University. Pictured below are the participants of the initial class and members of the South Toledo Advisory Committee.



CHERRY ST. MISSION MINISTRIES

VOICE of Compassion

"...but you brought us to a place of abundance."
Psalm 66:12



You're blessing our guests beyond measure.

Voice of Compassion is a publication of:

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For more information about Cherry Street or the Voice of Compassion, contact Amy Ambrose at aambrose@cherrystreetmission.org or 419-242-5141 ext. 220.

“And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.”

Isaiah 4:6 (NKJV)

Dear Friend,

We live in an often dark, cynical—sometimes even sinister—world. Yet this verse from Isaiah reminds us that God provides tabernacle, refuge, and shelter in the midst of the most darkly oppressive conditions. How he chooses to accomplish the never-ending task of provision is through *you*—particularly through you at Cherry Street.

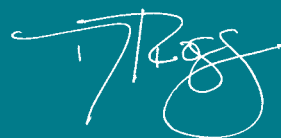
The darkest day at Cherry Street is when someone reaches the end of his rope before we can reach him. But thanks to the provision of supporters like you, this didn't happen to a guest named Randy, whose story you'll read on page 3 of this *Voice of Compassion*. When Randy stood at the brink of the dark abyss of suicide, he found refuge at Cherry Street—all because faithful people like you had worked with God to keep our doors open.

As you continue reading, you'll discover how God is using your provision through Cherry Street in the most unusual ways to bring hope and light to the darkest of corners in our community. You'll also see how God has worked through generous foundations and businesses to provide us commercial-grade kitchen equipment that makes it easier for staff and volunteers to “feed the multitudes” who come to us hungry each day. Together, we are all fellow laborers in a very dark place: that most challenging of mission fields we call *our own backyard*.

We'd love to have you come see the fruit of your labor in “your mission field” this Summer at Cherry Street. Consider a volunteer opportunity for you or your family at one of our facilities. Stop by and say hello to some of the hundreds of men, women, and children God brings to our doors each day.

On their behalf, I pray that you have a joyous Easter. Thanks to you, many of our guests will for the first time truly experience the meaning of this most miraculous of holidays—at Cherry Street.

Extending refuge and changing lives,



To learn more about Cherry Street, visit the *Voice of Rescue* at www.cherrystreetmission.org, *President's Blog*.

Email: danrogers@cherrystreetmission.org | Phone: 419-242-5141 ext. 231

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Dan Rogers
President and CEO

Front Cover:
William, a Cherry Street guest, stands in our new walk-in cooler/freezer, made possible by one of many grants you'll read about in this *Voice of Compassion*.

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To give a gift in memory of a loved one who has passed away or to honor a special occasion, please use the enclosed envelope to list the name of the person(s) being remembered or honored, and mail it with your gift. We will send a special card to the honoree or the family of the deceased to let them know about your gift.

In Memory of:

(gifts received from Nov. 18 – Feb. 10, 2011) *A memorial gift to Cherry Street Mission Ministries offers hope to the needy in the name of a dear friend or member of your family. Our deepest sympathies are with those who have lost their loved ones listed here.*

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He chose death, but God had other plans.

On a trip to Toledo to visit his father in late 2010, a former Cherry Street guest named Randy dropped by our Men’s Mission to say “thanks.” Twelve years earlier, at age 40, Randy had made that same trip from his home in Nebraska to

Toledo—but for a very different reason: he planned to commit suicide by jumping off the High-Level Bridge.

“The staff was so patient and respectful.”

“I couldn’t live with the drink [alcohol]; I couldn’t live without the drink,” explains Randy, now 52. “I was going through a divorce. My mom had just died. I lost my family, my job, my home—everything. I thought I’d be better off dead. I came back to die in Toledo, where I had family.”

Once he arrived, Randy planned to drink one last six-pack of beer and then jump off the bridge. But Randy’s plan was not God’s. After downing the six-pack, Randy became too ill to get to the bridge. He called his sister, who took him to Cherry Street. A few days later, he went to his father’s house; his dad—who’d had two alcoholic brothers die on the streets—insisted that Randy return to our Men’s Mission.

“I didn’t want to go to Cherry Street because it was religious-based,” says the Army veteran. “But it was the best thing my dad could have done.” Although Randy didn't want to engage in Cherry Street’s programs, God found a way to touch his heart.

“The staff was so patient and respectful,” he recalls. “They weren’t like other people. They didn’t know me, but they were so kind to me. They didn’t look down on me. I got some trust back.”

After several weeks’ exposure to God’s love, Randy decided to talk to Him. “I asked God, ‘What happened? I had everything. Today I have nothing.’ Then I remembered what it said in AA: *Restore me to sanity.* I said, ‘God, if you’re out there, I’ll look deep into my heart and try.’ From that point on, everything began to fall into place.” Just a few days later, Randy was accepted by an inpatient rehab program, despite a scarcity of openings in Toledo at the time.

“I’d been in treatment 10 or 11 times before, and in the psych ward three or four,” he notes. “This time, I got sober on December 15, 1998. I’ve been sober ever since.”

Eventually, Randy’s burgeoning faith in God led him to accept Christ. He reconciled with his family, including his father, who passed away just a few months ago. Today, Randy is chief operator of the University of Nebraska’s power plant, owns his own home, and regularly babysits grandchildren who adore him.

And all because generous people like you enabled us to offer Randy refuge and the life-transforming love of God when he needed them most.

~ ~

There are many “Randy’s” staying at Cherry Street right now. We’re confident that, in the years to come, they too will be grateful for the opportunity you gave them to turn their lives around.

Because of You!

- Two months ago, around the time the website Forbes.com ranked Toledo #12 on its annual list of “America’s 20 Most Miserable Cities,” faithful supporters like you began responding to Cherry Street’s Easter Meal Ticket appeal.
- Thanks to you—and despite the staggering need that contributed to Toledo’s #12 ranking—Cherry Street will be able to provide an estimated 1,200 meals to the hungry over the Easter weekend.
- To many, Easter dinner will be the first ray of hope they’ve glimpsed in a long time.
- To some, it may even be the first step on a journey that transforms their lives through faith in Jesus Christ.
- On their behalf, we thank you, praying that God will bless you abundantly for your continuing generosity.



▲ (From left) Tiffany, a volunteer with Sisters in Power, helps Marie and her sons Alex and Curt find what they need. Approximately 174 families were helped over the three-day event.



collects
60 tons of clothing

During our post-Christmas Clothing Your Community drive, generous folks like you donated a whopping 120,000 pounds of clothing to help those in need. (That’s the combined weight of 60 Volkswagen Beetles!)

In mid-February, we held a three-day, extended-hours event at Cherry Street’s LifeBridge Center to begin distributing the collected clothing. Over February 11, 12, and 13, more than 96 volunteers, fueled by great food from Vito’s Pizza and Ice Restaurant, spent a collective 545 hours helping people “shop” for clothing. We served over 800 people during those three days.

A big Cherry Street “thank you” to everyone who made this latest edition of Clothing Your Community such a success!

Organizations “grant” kitchen wishes

Recently, Cherry Street has been blessed by a number of grants and donations that made it possible for us to obtain a much-needed commercial-grade cooler/freezer, griddle/grill-top, and steamer for our Madison Food Service and Community Center.

◀ **Enormously cool.** Mercy and the Anderson Supporting Fund of the Toledo Community Foundation granted Cherry Street funds for an efficient walk-in cooler/freezer that lets us store larger quantities of perishables and maintain donated food at optimal quality longer than our old coolers/freezers could. We also have big plans to freeze veggies that will be grown in our urban gardens this summer. (Left) While under construction, the new cooler/freezer encompassed our two old energy-guzzling coolers. What a difference!

▼ **Grill work.** A grant from the Stranahan Foundation provided funds for us to buy a new griddle/grill-top oven. Now our staff and volunteers can grill larger quantities of food at a time, which means that food is served hot with greater consistency than was possible with our older ovens. This grant also enabled us to purchase a convection steamer that cooks vegetables and other food more efficiently. Steaming preserves the nutrients in the vegetables—a benefit for our hungry guests.

(Below) Anthony, who is a guest and regularly volunteers in the kitchen, is among many who are grateful for the large grill top and efficiency.



▲ **Free installation.** The Strause Company donated \$14,000 in labor and select materials for the new room-sized cooler/freezer, which was made possible by grants from Mercy and the Anderson Supporting Fund of TCF. (From left) Company president Rick Strause, Todd Coffman, Terrence Friar, Justin Mullins, and founder Bob Strause. Also involved, but not pictured: Mark Hummell

*If you’re interested in donating supplies, please contact our office at 419-242-5141 or csmm@cherrystreetmission.org.
If you’re interested in volunteering, please contact Brenda Torres at 419-242-5141 ext. 228 or btorres@cherrystreetmission.org.*