



**The Mission is like a staircase.** When a homeless person arrives through our doors, they are at a low point – the bottom stair. Our job is to get them from the bottom stair to the top of the staircase, and at the top is stable housing. When people first come to the Mission, however, they are thinking about survival. That’s why the first step is to make sure a client is safe and has essential resources: food, shelter, clothing, hygiene facilities, etc. When those basic needs are met, each client can begin to take their own steps upward. A step could be applying for a job, getting an ID, attending therapy...the steps are different for everyone. Last year, 249 people climbed the stairs to their own home. In 2020, that work is continuing every day.



It’s important to know that the Mission is not a free ride. Rather, it’s a hand up for those in need - a hand that comes with expectations, support, and dignity. Clients are provided with the resources they need to survive and a support system that guides them towards housing. In return, they help out around the Mission and do what it takes to get themselves housed. It is a system that is fair, works well, and empowers clients to make their own decisions. Scott (pictured here) is one client who is doing the work and climbing the staircase. We hope to see him housed very soon.

Scott is 53 years old. He’s originally from Texas but has lived in Grand Forks for a very long time (he attended high school here). Scott has been at the Mission for about 3 months - relationship issues and drinking led him to lose his former place of residence. Since arriving at the Mission, though, he’s been focused on moving forward.

***Over the past few months, Scott has worked with the Mission's advocacy team to identify and apply for housing. We're happy to say that he is now close to getting his own apartment.***

Scott is currently working to obtain a valid birth certificate. He needs one to get into housing, so the advocacy team showed him how to apply for a birth certificate online. He completed the application and paid the \$60 needed. When we spoke to him, his birth certificate was just days away in the mail. Once that is received and his housing application is fully submitted, it’s just a matter of waiting to be approved. Scott will move out of the Mission, and he’ll be able to say that he beat homelessness.

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On top of his work to get into housing, Scott has lined up some potential job opportunities for when he moves out. Before arriving at the Mission, he worked as the maintenance person at a local church. He enjoyed the job and hopes to be able to go back there once he leaves. *"There are some really nice people over there,"* he says.

If the maintenance job doesn't work out though, he has a couple more opportunities in mind that line up with his skill set. Scott was a metal fabricator for ten years and a carpenter for another ten, so he has extensive work experience.

He does have one concern – it's difficult to keep a job when you have no means of transportation. Most Mission clients do not own a car and rely on the bus to get around town. Unfortunately, the bus doesn't travel to every job location. For people without transportation, that may mean having to walk in winter weather to get to work.

Scott is relieved that he had a place to go when he lost his housing, but he isn't looking for handouts. He is eager to get back to work, and he's more than happy to help out around the Mission. He regularly assists with things like washing dishes, unloading the van, moving food for the Backpack Program, and helping staff bring in donations. In fact, Scott is usually the first one to volunteer for a job and he doesn't stop until the work is done.

***"It's very appreciated, that I've got a place to stay," Scott says to Mission donors. "I try to help out when I can. Whatever I can do. I don't take this place for granted."***

Scott is now looking ahead – he's taken the steps he needs to get housed and soon he'll no longer be homeless. We'd like to thank you, because your support has given Scott and others a real chance at a better future. Without you, there would be no realistic path forward for homeless men and women in our community. You've opened your heart, and the result is permanent, positive change for those we serve!



## **Thank you, Giving Hearts!**

On Feb. 13th, hundreds of people came together to provide a safe place and a path forward for homeless men and women. In total, more than \$54,000 was raised on Giving Hearts Day! These funds will make a big impact on our clients, giving them access to food, shelter, and clothing, as well as guidance from a social worker. Your generosity will also help the Mission continue to provide food assistance to community members through food boxes, the Backpack Program, and our mobile food pantry.

***Mission supporters, thank you for your ongoing compassion. Together, we are changing the face of homelessness and hunger in our community!***

Sincerely,

Sue Shirek  
Executive Director