

# RESCUE LINE

84 West Wheeling Street, Washington, PA 15301 | [citymission.org](http://citymission.org) | 724.222.8530 | MAY 2020

**CITY MISSION**  
HOPE FOR THE HOMELESS



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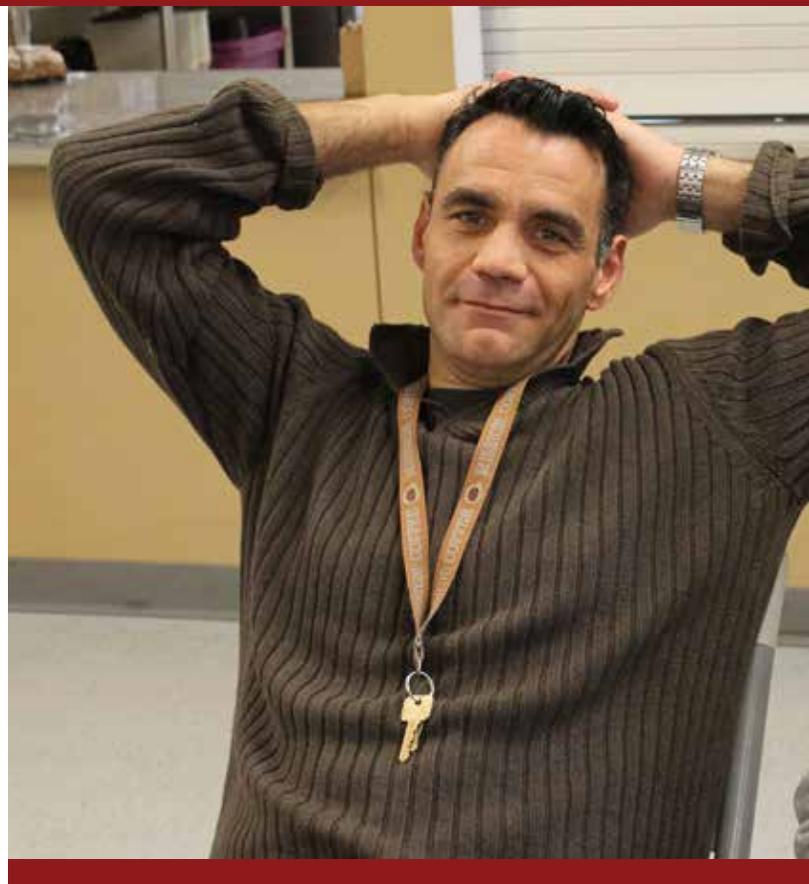
# Mike's Darkest Day

Before coming to City Mission this past March, Mike boarded himself up in a dingy motel room. "I barricaded myself in," he said. "I pushed the dresser in front of the door, and I was in the shower with a gun in my mouth."

His struggle with addiction brought him to the end of his rope. "I lost just about everybody in my life. I lost everything — my home, all my material things, my son ... my rights to see him were taken away. I just got to the point where I had no hope. I felt like my life was a burden on everyone."

Research has shown that people with substance use disorders are about six times more likely to commit suicide than the general population. Roughly one in three people who die from suicide are under the influence of drugs, typically opiates such as oxycodone or heroin, or alcohol.\*

Fortunately for Mike, his phone started ringing — and kept ringing until he picked up. It was his longtime friend who was in recovery at City Mission. "I broke down on the phone," Mike remembered. "I explained to him everything that was going on. He told me to hold on." Mike's friend called back every hour to check in, and the next day was able to get Mike a bed at City Mission.



**"It was a ray of hope," Mike said. "That call was enough for me to keep fighting ... to not give up."**

Mike grew up in the South Hills. His family owned several restaurants in the area. "I always worked for my family, from a very young age. I remember I must've been about 7, standing on a milk crate, flipping eggs."

In his early twenties, he had a couple of nasty accidents and was also severely beaten. His knee was broken and his skull fractured. His face was smashed against a curb. While recovering in the hospital, he was prescribed painkillers. He struggled with addiction ever since.

Coming to City Mission changed his life, and he has proven to be a valuable member of the City Mission family. He has become a resident assistant, helping and mentoring new residents. He also helps manage the intake office.

"I feel a real sense of hope here," he said. "I have self-worth now. I know I have something more to offer, more to give, more to learn."



## Nicole's "Hope Shot"

After rehab, Nicole had nowhere to go. She owned two houses in Oil City, PA, but she was trying to escape a toxic, 13-year relationship and rebuild her life. If she wanted a better life, she couldn't go back home. But the last place she wanted to be was a homeless shelter surrounded by strangers.

"My first day at the Mission, I did not want to be here," Nicole explained. It was July 15th of this past year. "I was absolutely fighting it. I felt really alone, and I was angry at the situation I had landed myself in. I had no hope. I was ready to run away and go back to my old life."

City Mission was hosting a recovery meeting on campus that night. Nicole went to the meeting but was on the verge of running back to her old life. While she was there, something compelled her to share at the end of the meeting. "I don't typically share at meetings," she explained. "It's not easy for me to trust people, but something

inside me told me to share. I think it was God doing for me what I couldn't do for myself. It was my last hope shot."

When Nicole got up to share, she started sobbing. All her fears and frustrations came pouring out. "I don't even remember what I said, but the last thing I said was, 'And it's my birthday.'"

At that moment, Mike, who was also attending the meeting, got up and disappeared.

"I remembered a cookie cake we had in the kitchen that said 'Happy Birthday' on it," Mike said. He volunteered in the kitchen as a way of giving back to the Mission. "I knew the feeling she was going through — the feeling that you have no worth, nobody cares, it doesn't matter whether you live or die. When I handed her the cookie cake, I said, 'Don't worry, honey. It's gonna be okay.' She looked up at me with those tear-filled eyes, but they didn't seem sad anymore."

"That one simple act of kindness really did change my life," Nicole explained. "I was ready to run away like I always did, but I ended up staying at the Mission. Mike didn't know me from anyone, but he genuinely cared. It just gave me hope that there are good people in the world who really do care about me. Maybe I can live a meaningful, purposeful life."

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# Moving Forward

“Early recovery was the loneliest place I’d ever been in my life,” she added. “It was overwhelming. The emotions were so raw. I never want to feel that way again.”

Since then, Nicole purchased a car, got a job and moved out of the Mission into her very own place. She has built support structures around herself and developed trusting relationships.

“City Mission went from being the darkest place of my existence to the lighthouse I’ve always needed,” she explained.

As for Mike, he continues to get better every day. “I don’t love the man I see in the mirror, but I like him more and more each day,” he said. “I look forward to every day now, and I look for the blessings in things. I have my moments, but I just wonder, what’s God got in store for me? What is He teaching me through this? I’ve learned to trust in my struggle.”



*\*Psychology Today, Suicide: One of Addiction’s Hidden Risks: Individuals with addiction are at higher risk for suicide, Posted Feb 20, 2014. By Carolyn C. Ross M.D., M.P.H.*

# One Small Act of Kindness

One small act of kindness can truly change someone’s life. You never know the impact you can have on another human being just by reaching out with compassion. When you donate to City Mission, every little bit matters. Your donations make everyday miracles, like Mike’s and Nicole’s, come true for those who have lost all hope. You restore hope to the hurting one small act of kindness at a time.

In 2019, residents had a 75% success rate in terms of housing, employment, income, recovery and spirituality for those who stayed in our program at least 90 days.



## Upcoming Events

### Hits for the Homeless

City Mission vs. Range Resources Softball Game  
June 11, 2020 5-8:30pm  
Consol Energy Park

### 3rd Annual Golf Outing

Southpointe Country Club  
Monday, June 15, 2020  
Call City Mission’s Manager of Donor Relations, Eric Smith, at 724.222.8530 x284 for more information.

### Mission Possible V 5K Fun Run/Walk

Peterswood Park  
August 1, 2020  
[missionpossiblerun.org](http://missionpossiblerun.org)