

# 70 Years OF HOPE

San Diego   
RESCUE  
MISSION



2025 IMPACT REPORT

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

For 70 years, the San Diego Rescue Mission has been a community-driven effort. What began as a small act of compassion has grown into a movement of transformation that continues to evolve to meet the needs of our county.

We're not just serving meals anymore. Because of you, we're rebuilding lives. Through our regional approach to addressing homelessness, we're helping people experience true life change — from the inside out.

Our longevity proves something powerful: **this mission is real**. The vision has stood the test of time because faithful people like you have stayed committed to it. You've shown that when a community unites in faith, generosity, and purpose, transformation happens.

Thank you for believing in this work, for trusting us to lead the way, and for being part of God's faithfulness through every season. **Together, we're not only shining light — we're changing lives.**

Psalm 100:5 reminds us that "the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations." Here's to **70 years of impact** — and many more to come.



DONNIE DEE



ENDING  
HOMELESSNESS  
*one life* AT A TIME

YOUR IMPACT IN 2025

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**1,319** people helped off the streets **immediately**

**293** people ended their homelessness **permanently**

97

MISSION  
ACADEMY  
GRADUATES





## OUR REGIONAL APPROACH

# *Together* WE CHANGE LIVES

Seventy years ago, we realized we had to offer more than soup. Today, we don't stop at providing a meal or a bed. Our holistic approach walks people through the long, sacred work of rebuilding their lives — restoring dignity, healing trauma, and renewing hope.

When you give, you're not just meeting immediate needs. You're powering the engine of heart transformation. You're helping someone rediscover their identity, their purpose, and their future. **Your support changes lives.**



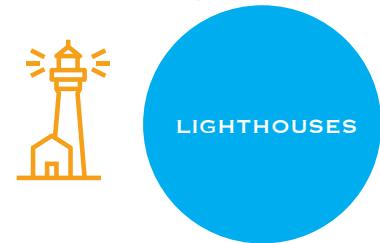
Last year **over 20,000 people**  
experienced homelessness  
in San Diego County



**Engaging** people  
experiencing  
homelessness



A community of men and  
women who have been  
through our program and  
**are ready to contribute**



Initial **30-day** landing  
spot to navigate a  
path forward



**12-month**  
faith-based  
rehabilitation

Fall and Spring ceremony  
for those who **complete**  
the program

# ARNOLD THIESSEN



*Founder – 1955*

**G**rowing up in a Christian home, Arnold Thiessen should have known peace, but from an early age, he resisted God. As a young teen, he refused Sunday School and church, determined to live life on his own terms.

**"I grew up in a fine Christian home but in spite of this I wanted nothing to do with God."**

At twenty-one, Arnold married and was blessed with two daughters. He found success in business and rose to lead a large firm in Fresno, California. Outwardly, he had everything. Yet inside, he carried emptiness and persistent unrest. "I should have been happy. I had no peace but awful unrest of my soul!"

## A LEGACY OF FAITH & TRANSFORMATION

Seeking relief, he turned to alcohol, which quickly became a desperate escape. His addiction steadily worsened, shattering his home and career. "My drinking problem became steadily worse until finally my home was broken up." Broken, Arnold spent years searching for a solution but refused to turn to God.

In the summer of 1951, Arnold arrived at a sanitarium in such hopeless condition that the doctor doubted he would survive. He had nowhere to turn, yet God's mercy was at work. A Christian doctor took him into his home, showing him that even in his brokenness, he was not abandoned.

Even as he had turned from God, a quiet hand guided him—Rev. Charles Fuller's radio ministry broadcast. Many Sundays, Arnold knelt before the radio in a haze of alcohol, feeling the Holy Spirit tug at his heart. One day, the doctor showed him John 6:37, and God's love became real to Arnold. "Then I could see that Jesus loved me... then and there I received Jesus Christ as my own personal Savior."

Soon after, God restored not just his business, but his heart. For Arnold, money no longer held the same appeal, and his heart grew compassionate for the lost. "God burdened my heart for other lost men and women such as I had been." In 1955, He moved to San Diego and founded the San Diego Rescue Mission (then, City Rescue Mission), a place where the homeless could find hope, healing, and the love of Christ.

Arnold's legacy is clear: **no one is beyond God's reach.** Seventy years later, his vision of hope, redemption, and restoration continues to shine, guiding people out of darkness and into lives transformed by Christ.

**What began with Arnold has continued with you. Thank you for being part of our mission and for making lives transformed by Christ possible.**



Los Angeles, California  
Mr. and Mrs. Fuller,  
I wanted to write you for a long time to  
say your radio Ministry has had on my life  
and my Broadcast since 1951.  
I am a fine Christian home but in  
my mind and when I was yet in my early  
days years and  
blessed me in busi-  
firm in Fresno, Ca-  
portable surround-  
and at ministry with  
I turned to drink  
before long I dis-  
came steadily worse  
end of several years  
ition but never will  
1951, I was commit-  
sanitarium on the  
used from this time  
in believing. I did not  
of that time you did  
such a Impressive op-  
and healing to the  
because the people  
made me know you  
and your work.

# THROUGH THE *Years*



## 1955-1965

**July 1955** – Arnold Thiessen opens the “City Rescue Mission” at 428 G Street. Within 6 months, over 1,500 hot meals are served to those in need.

### ► November 1958

Services are moved to a 3-story hotel at 525 5th Ave., along with the county's first women and children's shelter.



## 1965-1985

**▲ May 1973** – The Goodwin Center for Women and Children opens at 14th and J Street, adding 30 beds.

**1980** – The organization officially becomes the *San Diego Rescue Mission*, reflecting its growth and expanded countywide reach.

**April 1984** – Construction begins on a new, \$2.95M facility at 1150 J Street, designed to house a chapel, dining hall, laundry, library, men's quarters, health clinic, and recreation area. ▼

**1985** – Partners for Hunger Relief is launched to collect food from grocery stores, restaurants, caterers and hotels that would otherwise be discarded.





## 1985 – 1995

▲ **June 1993** – The Rachel Grosvenor Center for Women and Children opens, providing a dedicated facility for mothers and children escaping homelessness and abuse.



## 2000 – 2020

**2000** – Nueva Vida Haven, an emergency overnight shelter for women and children in crisis opens at 16th and Imperial location. ▼



▲ **December 2004** – The Harbor View Hospital on 120 Elm Street is purchased and renovations begin for a 310-bed facility.

**2005** – The Rescue Mission proudly celebrates 50 years of serving San Diego's most vulnerable neighbors.

**2014** – Services are expanded further with the opening of an on-site Preschool and Children's Center.

**2017** – Donnie Dee becomes the Rescue Mission's CEO. ►

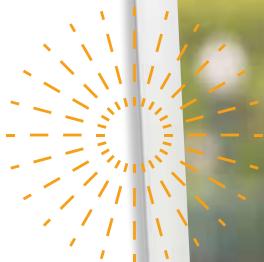


## 2020 – 2025

**2023** – The Rescue Mission's first 100-bed, 30-day emergency shelter (Lighthouse) opens in **North County**.

▲ **2024** – A second 162-bed Lighthouse opens in **South County**.

**November 2025** – The Rescue Mission celebrates 70 years of impact in San Diego County.



**"The Mission didn't just give me shelter.  
It gave me tools to change my life."**

MISSION ACADEMY

*Alumni – 2003*

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JASON'S  
STORY

**J**ason can trace the fracture point of his life back to the day his mother drove him into Mexico and left him with a man he never met: his father.

What followed wasn't childhood. It was survival. Abuse, instability, and the streets shaped him long before he had a chance to grow up. By his teens, drugs became the only way to numb what he couldn't escape. And as he entered adulthood, the cycle of homelessness, addiction, and prison only deepened.

Years later, Jason came back to San Diego hoping for a fresh start. But the damage had already been done. Addiction followed him. Instability followed him. And eventually, so did prison. It was there, behind bars, that God found him. An inmate gave him a Bible, and the next day a pastor stopped at his cell and asked, "Do you want to know anything about God?" Jason said yes. A seed of hope was planted.

When Jason left prison this time, he was spiritually changed but still physically alone. He had no home, no plan, and no idea where he'd sleep that night. Hungry and walking the streets, he went looking for a hot meal. What he didn't expect was to be invited in. A volunteer at

the San Diego Rescue Mission didn't just offer him food, but a place to belong. "I just came for a meal. I didn't plan on staying." Inside our doors, Jason finally found what he'd been missing since the day he was abandoned in Mexico as a little boy: structure, faith, and a community that believed in him. "I felt the Spirit. I felt strong and elevated in ways I'd never felt before."

Through counseling, mentorship, and consistent support, he began to confront old patterns, learn healthy routines, and rebuild trust in others. "The Mission didn't just give me shelter. It gave me tools to change my life."

Today, Jason's passion for Christ shines as he leads a nonprofit food ministry with his family, feeding those in need and sharing the hope that once saved him. When he's not with his family, he mentors young men and women struggling with addiction and homelessness, showing them what life after restoration can look like. Because of your generosity, his life and the lives of countless others have been transformed.

**"I'm living proof that God still restores people."**

MISSION ACADEMY  
Graduate - 2025

## KAREN'S STORY



**"I no longer live in survival mode. I'm dreaming again."**

For most of her life, Karen didn't know what safety felt like. Born in San Diego, she grew up in a home that looked perfect on the outside but left her feeling unseen and unprotected. By age 16, she had already been sexually assaulted and raped, leaving her sense of self-worth and hope shattered. "It led me to cope in unhealthy ways." To make matters worse, instead of comfort, her parents told her to leave. "They kicked me out, and it was hard."

Suddenly, Karen was living in survival mode. Homelessness, abuse, and school all collided at once. She began living with her boyfriend's family simply because his home was near the bus stop that took her to school. "It wasn't necessarily a relationship that I wanted, but it was just out of survival."

By her late teens, Karen became a mother, facing the immense challenge of raising children with little support or stability. "I was alive but so dead inside." She managed to stay on top of her schoolwork and graduated. But more hardship awaited.

Karen absorbed the pain in silence, convincing herself things would get better. But everything changed in an instant. "My daughters witnessed me being slammed to the ground in public. It wasn't the first time they saw violence against me."

Something shifted. For the first time, Karen saw her daughters' futures reflected in her choices. She refused to let them inherit the same pain she had survived. So, she began searching for help.

When every door seemed closed, one finally opened: the San Diego Rescue Mission. Hopeless, Karen arrived at the Rescue Mission's emergency shelter for women and children in Downtown San Diego. "Miraculously they had one bed available for my daughters and me."

At first, she didn't plan to stay long, thinking she just needed help finding a job and a place to live. "There were times I tried to control my own restoration, even thinking the right job would be my way out. After three or four job rejections, I realized God was teaching me to surrender."

Before long, Karen's life began to transform. Classes like Life's Healing Choices helped her face her past with honesty and grace. Therapy gave her a safe space to process her emotions. She began rebuilding her relationship with her daughters, especially her oldest, who has autism. "They believed that I could be this mom for them when I didn't believe it myself."

Today, they are thriving in safe, stable housing. Her youngest finally has the chance to simply be a kid. Her oldest, once behind in school, is now confidently reading at grade level thanks to support from the Children's Resource Center. Karen is most grateful to have hope for her future. She smiles, **"I no longer live in survival mode. I'm dreaming again!"**

TODAY, KAREN  
AND HER  
DAUGHTERS ARE  
THRIVING IN SAFE,  
STABLE HOUSING



# MILE'S STORY

SOUTH COUNTY  
LIGHTHOUSE

**"This program has completely changed my perspective on everything."**

After years of addiction and relapse, Miles hit rock bottom. One setback in a recovery program got him discharged on the spot. Homeless again, with no money and no family willing to take him in, he felt completely alone.

"I was totally just broken, and I had nobody there with me. I was just by myself."

A short stay in a crisis house kept him alive, but he still didn't have a future. Then someone referred him to South County Lighthouse, and everything changed.

At the South County Lighthouse, Miles regained what addiction had stripped away: stability, dignity, and direction. "When I got here, I finally felt safe. I could breathe again." He's now thriving in sobriety, enrolled in Mission Academy, and training for a career in construction. Even more meaningful — he's rebuilding his relationship with his dad.

**"I finally feel like I have a chance to rebuild." Miles' story reminds us that generosity lights the way to new beginnings.**



# A *Shining* EXAMPLE

Our South County Lighthouse is a new beacon for National City's most vulnerable. As the city's first permanent 30-day emergency housing shelter, it provides meals, showers, laundry, and trauma-informed care to help men, women, and families find stability and hope!

**858** guests welcomed off the streets

**268** guests transitioned to long-term care or housing

**110** families sheltered, including 152 children; 107 children enrolled in school

**161** seniors helped, many now with social security benefits & reconnected to family

**20-30** guests per week receiving dental & medical care onsite

**GUESTS** assessed weekly on 5 factors: medical, financial, vocational, housing & spiritual

**PRAYER** available at Sunday chapel service and daily with on-site ministry

**1,869** volunteers helping with meals, activities, clothing & more



HERE'S WHAT YOUR  
SUPPORT ACCOMPLISHED  
IN ONE YEAR

# 2025 AT A *glance*

Your light shines brightly into our community! **Because of you**, men, women and families are rebuilding their lives.



1 **131,400**

nights of shelter for men, women & children

2 **50%**

of 30-day shelter guests connected to longer-term care or housing

3 **482,184**

meals served

4 **3M+**

lbs. of food recovered to feed hungry neighbors

5 **42,048**

hours of job training

6 **11,500**

hygiene kits given to unsheltered neighbors

7 **90%**

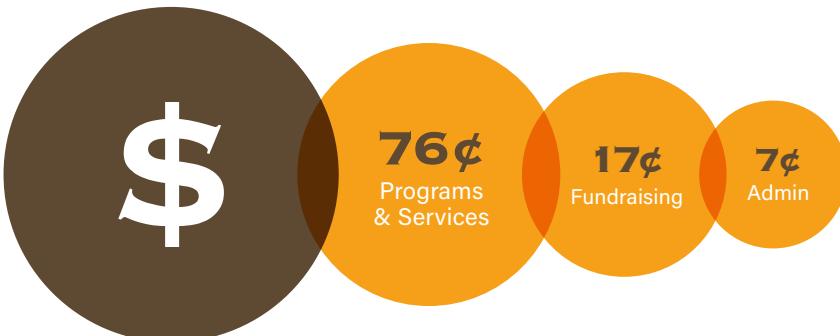
of Mission Academy alumni still housed



## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Our Values of Faith, Integrity, Compassion and Excellence guide everything we do, including our financial stewardship. We are committed to ensuring that we maximize the use of every dollar received to benefit those in need.

### WHERE EACH DOLLAR GOES



### INCOME\*

Donated Income	\$17,357,028
Business Revenue	\$2,235,861
Material Donations	\$1,186,424
Food Donations	\$7,276,213
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$28,055,526</b>

### EXPENSE\*

Programs	\$21,909,753
Fundraising	\$4,875,672
Administrative	\$1,879,918
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$28,665,343</b>

\*Fiscal year October 1, 2024 - September 30, 2025. Excludes Capital Campaign income and expenses. These numbers are unaudited. We receive an annual independent financial audit at the end of every year. Tax ID 95-1874073.



BE A BEACON OF HOPE  
TO HOMELESS NEIGHBORS

*Give today!*



**S D R E S C U E . O R G**

Since 1955, the San Diego Rescue Mission has been transforming the lives of men, women and children experiencing homelessness through a holistic approach to recovery and rehabilitation.

