

Invisible Neighbors

By Justin Vajko, Volunteer Coordinator

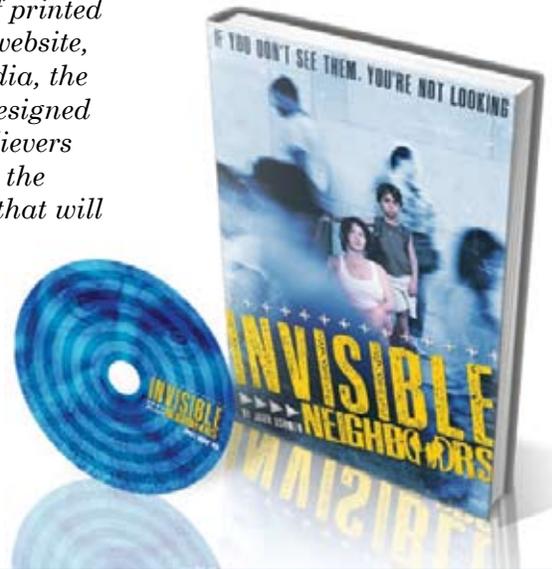
“That’s because you’re not looking,” responded Charlie with an element of scorn. “We live right here among you but you go about in your bubble as if we didn’t exist. We don’t commute to work with you. We don’t shop in your stores. We never make your dinner-party guest lists. We don’t feel welcome in your churches. But we’re still here. We’re your neighbors... and we’re growing in number.” (Excerpt from the book Invisible Neighbors)

Hope Gospel Mission is a member of the Associated of Gospel Rescue Missions (Online at agr.org), an organization that “exists to proclaim the passion of Jesus toward the hungry, homeless, abused, and addicted; and to accelerate quality and effectiveness in member missions.” AGRM is North America’s largest and oldest network of independent crisis shelters and addiction recovery centers. They have just recently released a compelling book and DVD called *Invisible Neighbors* that we would like to share with you.

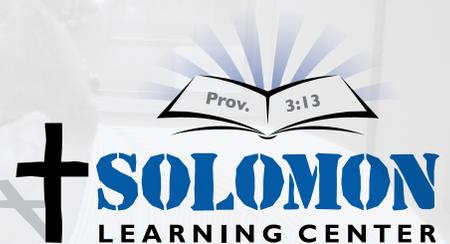
Invisible Neighbors describes itself in this way:

“The plight of the poor in North America continues to evade simple solutions. The church has shown general concern and has been somewhat involved, but an underlying feeling that social woes are the government’s problem, and a lack of knowledge about meaningfully engaging with people in need, have kept the church from fulfilling its spiritual mandate. Invisible Neighbors tells the story of the desperate and destitute in our midst and reiterates Jesus’ instructions. With a unique combination of printed word, videos, website, and social media, the campaign is designed to motivate believers to engage with the poor in a way that will impact their communities, their churches, and their own lives.”

Continued on page 3



◀ Clockwise from top left: Laura, Alex, Steve, Patti, Ben, Adam, Rob.



Congratulations to the guys and gals in the Renewed Hope Program for achieving various educational milestones at the Solomon Learning Center!

solomonlearningcenter.org





From the Stewardship Director: John Ailie

We are very thankful to God for all of his blessings and provisions over the past year and I

want to reflect a bit on what has transpired. The most important is the people that have been helped by God's grace and the concerted efforts of many, many people each being a part of the mosaic of ministry. What a joy it is to see a formerly homeless or destitute person receive personal, life-changing help and to see them developing into the person God designed them to be.

Another joy has been spending time with our residents, donors, volunteers, and people in our community. As we talk and share I get to hear some of their life journey, struggles, goals, and desires. I have been a part of giving many people tours of our Men's Shelter, Ruth House, Solomon Learning Center, and Bargain Center. It is a blessing to show people the services we provide and to hear their comments, ideas, and see them become more engaged in the work of rescuing, rebuilding, and renewing people with desperate needs.

Jim Coleman was one of our Renewed Hope graduates and a special friend. He was a living example of God's transforming grace and a great encouragement to me and many others who were privileged to know him (see article on page 3). I often say that when you work for a not-for-profit organization, part of your compensation is seeing lives being renewed.

And speaking of renewal, our Bargain Center is being renewed as, hopefully, many of you have been seeing. This is a one year project and we are about half way into it. Already we have updated the production area, repainted the retail walls, and updated the lighting that gives the store a fresh atmosphere for our shoppers, staff, and volunteers. In 2012 we plan to replace the floor tiles, install a new check out area, put in new signs and posters throughout the store, repave the parking lot, and expand our drop off area. We would love to give you a tour and take you behind the walls and show how we re-use donated goods and how the store helps our residents and our community.

Phone 715-552-5566 to schedule a tour for yourself or your group.

We are a part of a national network of rescue missions called the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions (AGRM). By working together we share information, encourage each other, and develop best practices. My wife and I went to the district conference last fall in St. Paul where we met people from sister missions from many Midwest states and Canada. We toured

Union Gospel Mission and saw the many services they provide in the Twin Cities area. It was very interesting and encouraging to see and hear the practical, compassionate work being done in cities throughout North America. I encourage you to check into the Invisible Neighbors materials by going to www.invisibleneighbors.org and clicking on "free preview" to learn more about homelessness in America and how you can be part of the solution.



▲ *New paint and lighting have been completed at the Bargain Center.*

Resident Phase Promotion

Ben, a resident in our Renewed Hope Program, was promoted into Phase 2 of the program on Friday December 30. "Before I came here, my life was like a tornado" he said after taking the certificate, "I was all over the place". He also had some encouragement for the other residents in attendance: "Being here and going through the program is hard, but it's worth it. You used to be on the broad road, not knowing where you were going next and your life in chaos. But now you've chosen the narrow road, and although it's harder, you have only one way to go and you know where you're going." Please pray for Ben and our residents as they work on getting their lives back on track after years of addictions and brokenness.



▲ *Dan (Program Director) and Mark (Founder & President) congratulate Ben on his achievement.*

Invisible Neighbors (cont'd from page 1)

Invisible Neighbors contains easy to read and eye-opening stories, discussion questions, an accompanying video for each section, as well as space for notes, prayers and praises. The book is designed for small group use, although it can also be read individually as I did.

If you or your small group would like to learn more about the realities of homelessness and America's poor, I and the staff at Hope strongly encourage you to visit www.invisibleneighbors.org for a free preview of the book and DVD. You can also stop by our office at 8 S. Farwell Street to view a copy.



◀ Scan with your smartphone or visit invisibleneighbors.org for a preview of the book and DVD.

What others are saying about Invisible Neighbors...

"I strongly encourage you to check out this important material from John Ashmen and the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions. You will get to know God's heart for the poor, as well as the generosity that He requires of your own heart and life."

Rebecca St. James, author, actress, Grammy- and Dove Awards-winning artist

"Your church, your youth group, your college group all need this series. It goes beyond the text book into the real world of what is taking place and how the body of Christ should respond in light of what scripture reveals. There is much to be learned by going through the Invisible Neighbor Series. Take advantage of this unique resource."

Tony Campolo, pastor, author, sociologist, Eastern University professor emeritus

Thanksgiving & Christmas Dinners

Over 50 volunteers helped us serve 250+ meals at both our Thanksgiving Banquet (Thanksgiving Day) and Christmas Dinner (Dec. 17) in 2011. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped prepare food, setup tables, serve tables and clean up. Our next community dinner will be on **April 7 from 5pm to 7pm in celebration of Easter.**

Thank you!

Thank you to the following for your support:

- Edward & Hannah M. Rutledge Charities
- The Casper Foundation
- Arnold & Lois Domer Foundation
- Wells Fargo
- Xcel Energy
- Focus on Energy
- Dick Cable

▶ *Our appreciation goes out to the Eau Claire Community Foundation for a grant to help pay for a new boiler to heat our Men's Shelter building.*



Culver's Christmas Day Lunch

Thank you to Jeremiah and April Bowe (owners of Culver's on Golf & Brackett) for hosting a community Christmas lunch on Christmas Day at Culver's on Golf Road in Eau Claire. Over 215 meals were served, and funds were raised to help those in need at Hope Gospel Mission and the Salvation Army!

▶ *Thank you to the 20+ volunteers who made this event possible.*



▶ *A family enjoying the free chicken dinner.*

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! 1 Chronicles 16:34, ESV

Remembering Jim

By Kevin Schippers, Pastor, Word of Life Bible Church

As I reflect on the New Year ahead, I cannot help but reminisce about 2011. While 2012 holds great promise as well as great challenges, 2011 was quite a year in the life of HGM! Oh, it had its difficulties and setbacks, as all years do—and its successes; but 2011 had a profoundly unique success that brings unspeakable joy to my heart and tears to my eyes. You see, God used HGM and all of you to bring a successful and peaceful conclusion to a life of turmoil.

That immense success came in the form of a once rag-tag man who became a child of the King, that new man was James Ray Coleman! What a journey God took him on! We had the privilege of seeing God reach down into the gutter of addiction and pluck a man out of the filth—only to clean him up and set him on higher ground. We saw him make and mold a heart that was hardened by the world, and soften it by His Word and by his grace.

I know many of you knew Jim well, but I wish you all could have experienced the blessing of knowing him as I did. By God's grace, he chose me as his mentor. And in that sovereign appointment, I had the joy of being with him and going through his best days, and his worst days, together—just the three of us; God, Jim and me. And oh, what a marvel to watch God work!

He had some bad ones! Days, I mean. I remember the day he received news from the doctors that his cancer had returned. I remember the somber face of the doctor as he told Jim it was incurable. And I remember the vacant look on Jim's face as he received the news. His mind was struggling to grasp the implications of the doctor's statements.

I remember the first surgery, and the second, and the third... each one taking more out of him than the previous. But he had so much in him. He fought valiantly to take what was coming without complaint. But there were times when it seemed grace was too far to be grasped for him. "Where is God," he wondered aloud to me. "I know he is there, but I just don't feel him close." All I could do, at times, was just listen... pray with him... tell him I loved him.

Yes, there were tough days in 2011. But as I think back, I see so clearly that the good days were not only far more numerous, but ultimately victorious! Jim saw that clearly, too, before he went home. In the final

weeks of his earthly life, Jim and I talked much about how God had been with him every step of the way, even though, at times, he did not feel His closeness. We spoke much of Job and his afflictions, and yet how God had a marvelous purpose in his suffering. We spoke much of his family... his mom and his dad... his two brothers... all of whom he loved so much. We spoke of his son, and how God the Father must have felt when he gave His only son to die on Calvary – for us! That gave him a new appreciation and understanding of his Father in heaven. We spoke of the wonderful blessings that had reunited and bound his family through this process of suffering. The transformation was just like you and me, who are brought near to God through the suffering of His son!

Yes, we spoke of many things. But the thing that seemed to astound him the most was how God had provided a man like Mark Donnelly to open a shelter for the "down-and-outers". He marveled that there were so many people at HGM that loved him and truly wanted the best for him! He pondered the terrifying thought of having that wicked cancer before he joined the mission, and he knew that God used the mission to show His mercy on him! He thanked God every day from the bottom of his heart for all of you, and so do I. You all do such a good work—and Jim is the proof. One life is worth all the effort.

Beth and I were with Jim when he took his final, tiny labored breath just before he passed into an eternal bliss in the presence of his savior. What was striking to us was how clearly God's

grace had carried him through everything, right to the end. His final days were marked by a peace that transcends all understanding. His life ended gently, and gracefully, and peacefully in Christ, standing in stark contrast to his life of turmoil outside of the grace of God. His was a life for which God used all of you who serve at the mission. You helped to change his life and to make a true trophy of His grace.

So as we toast the beginning of a new year, here's to all of you who served your Lord so faithfully—and made such a difference -- in the life of a vagabond. And here's to our beloved brother Jim, who, at this moment, ought not to be pitied, but rather envied—for he resides in the very presence of Jesus Himself! And here is to the Lord of Glory, who loves us and gave himself for us.



▲ *Jim Coleman, a graduate of the Renewed Hope Program and friend of the Mission, recently passed away after a long fight with cancer.*



◀ *Volunteers like Courtney help us end homelessness in the lives of our residents by volunteering with us in all areas of the Mission.*

The Courage to Grow

By Justin Vajko, Volunteer Coordinator

As a staff, we at Hope Gospel Mission sometimes can't help but take a step back and admire the enormous blessing that we have in our volunteers. We know that it can be an emotional experience to see a homeless man or woman, and that it takes courage to do something about it. But that's exactly what our volunteers have each done in their own way in 2011, and each, in their own way, has left behind a legacy of changed lives and hope because of it.

Below is part of an email response I received from Tim, a young man who volunteered at our Bargain Center last Fall. I had asked him what he thought of his experience and was surprised and thrilled by his heartfelt answer. I'd like to share it with you in hope that it encourages you to embrace the opportunities that God puts in your life for you to grow this year.

"...The people were probably one of the biggest parts of the experience. It turned out that the people I worked with were a lot different than I thought they would be. For one thing, I expected to be working with a lot more of the occupants of the various missions. Although, I did meet few, I was surprised to learn that the majority of workers were either volunteers like myself or people serving community service time. I was a little intimidated at first during orientation when I realized that

all the other people in my group were doing community service time. To be honest, I've never really had the opportunity to be around people who have had trouble with the law. I guess I've been a little sheltered. I soon realized, though, that these were just people like me who had simply made a few wrong choices in life. They weren't "bad" people though in the sense I had envisioned, and I enjoyed working with them.

It was also interesting to see exactly how a second-hand store like [the Bargain Center] actually operates. I was amazed by the volume of donations that came in. It forced me to think critically about the consumption-oriented culture we live in and question whether we are behaving responsibly. We as Americans just have an incredible amount of stuff! Does this stuff fulfill us? Or does it simply burden us until we can dispose of it at a store like the Bargain center?

Overall, I would say my greatest takeaway was the realization that life can be full of things and still lack meaning. The people, whether they are those we would normally associate with or not, are what really matter. I need to really examine my life and question exactly what I'm living for. Jesus warned us to not store up on this earth treasures where moth and dust can corrupt, and I've definitely seen the wisdom of this after working at the bargain center. Instead we are called to lay up spiritual treasure in the form of lives we've reached for Christ.

*Thank you for allowing me this great experience."
- Tim*

Want to make a difference in someone's life this year? View our list of volunteer openings at hopegospelmission.org. Not sure if volunteering is right for you? Talk it over with Justin by calling him at 715-552-5566 ext. 103 or by email at justin@hopegospelmission.org.

Scan me with your smartphone to view our list of volunteer openings page.



In Honor Of / In Memory Of

We thank the following individuals for their financial support of the Mission in honor or in memory of a loved one or friend. Persons being honored or memorialized are in bold text.

Leola Jandrt (2),
Allan & Lynda Hajdasz
Lloyd Moats, *Ruby Moats*
Thelma Sanford, *Gil Evans*
Alfred G. Trundle, *David Olson*
Chris, Craig, Sandi (HGM),
Brian Merriam
Galen, Bud, Dennis, Robert, & Nancy, *Beulah Hollister*
Tony Millem, *Beulah Hollister*
Henry Bosman Sr.,
Henry Bosman, Jr
Richard Figmler,
Mary Melsness
Wilfred G. Burlingame,
LaVonne Burlingame
Eleanor Nolin,
Reginald & Toni Nolin
Todd M. Tworek, *Janet Tworek*
Alvera Held,
Warren & Sandra Peterson
Lea Rae Pastorello (5),
Samuel Pastorello
Margaret Sagstetter (3),
Robert Sagstetter
Robert C. Budik (2),
Gloria Budik

Michael Todd (2), *Karol Todd*
Alden Benson (2),
Millicent Myers
Charlie Bejin, *Magdalen Bejin*
Margaret Sagstetter,
Robert Sagstetter
Harlan E. Wagner (2),
Mildred Wagner
Francis Brown, *Peter Brown*
David Brown, *Peter Brown*
Clemens Roter, *Rosemarie Roter*
Reed Toy, *Wilma Toy-Hodges*
Charles & Josephine Wiemer,
Dennis & Cheryl Wiemer
Vera Duncanson,
Merlin & Linda Sandberg
Margaret Gutche,
John & Alice Droske
Hazel Amundson,
Michael & Dori Ritland
Deb, Lynn, & Jake,
Raymond Nawrocki
My Dad, Mark & Jodi Ferstenou
My Parents, Patrice Gjerning
Mr. Donald Tierney,
Raymond M. Fey
Michael Todd, *Karol Todd*

Items We Need

MS: Men's Shelter. RH: Ruth House.

- Ibuprofen (MS)**
- Double-edged razors (MS)**
- Athletic socks (RH)**
- One-a-day vitamins (RH)**
- Day planners (RH)**
- Pillows (RH)**
- Q tips (RH)**
- Body wash (RH)**
- Pot holders (RH)**
- Dish cloths (RH)**
- Kitchen towels, older flour sack style (RH)**
- Coffee (MS & RH)**
- Shampoo, Conditioner (RH)**
- Postage Stamps (MS & RH)**

All donations are tax-deductible and can be dropped off at our Men's Shelter at 8 S. Farwell Street in Eau Claire.

Banquet of Hope Gift in Kind Sponsors

Acoustic Café, Eau Claire	Fazoli's	Noodles & Company
Anytime Fitness	Festival Foods	Olive Garden
Augusta Bakery	Fleur Maureen	Parkside Pies
Barstow Auto Service	Gordy's County Market	Red Lobster
Brent Douglas Floral	Jim's Pizza	Sam's Club
Buffalo Wild Wings	Jimmy John's	Seyforth's Studio
Chippewa Valley Floral	Lake Hallie Golf, LLC	Simply Cakes
Christian Cuts	Lasker Jewelers	Smiling Moose Café
Culver's (Folsom & Hallie)	Living Room Coffee House	Sue's Deluxe Bake Shop
Down to Earth	Mancino's Grinders & Pizza	The Florian Gardens
Erbert & Gerbert's	Mega Foods	Toppers Pizza
EC Indoor Sports Center	Micon Cinemas	United Way
Family Christian Stores	Mouldy's Archery & Tackle	Wiersgalla Company

www.hopegospelmission.org

Main Office & Men's Shelter
PO Box 1127 (Mail)
8 S. Farwell St.
Eau Claire, WI 54702
(715) 552-5566

Ruth House
2517 Moholt Drive
Eau Claire, WI 54703
(715) 834-4000

Bargain Center
2511 Moholt Drive
Eau Claire, WI 54703
(715) 839-9498



*A higher standard.
A higher purpose.*

