



# RAISING UP

## The good news at Helping Up Mission



Thanksgiving at HUM

*see page 2*

"I had to really get inside myself and figure out what I wanted to do with my life... I had pretended so long to be someone else."



### Thanks to you, Renee has turned HUM into her Home

#### WHAT'S INSIDE:

Bob Gehman's Monthly Update **2**

Photo Story **2**

Focus on Recovery **3**

Raven's 18th Annual Coat Giveaway **4**

Renee, age 42, grew up in Baltimore City and was raised by a single mother. Renee was in daycare from six weeks old until seven years old. In daycare, she experienced horrible physical and mental abuse and heard about criminal activities at too young of an age. "I was taught to keep secrets early and to bottle up whatever I felt," Renee recalls. To make matters worse, her father, an addict, passed away when she was 8.

"I was overly developed mentally because of all my early experiences; I knew way too much." In high school at age 15, Renee got pregnant with her first child, a daughter who was sick and needed hospital care. During her senior year, Renee got pregnant again with a son and to provide for her children, she hustled to make money by doing hair and working in a federal government job - still without drinking and still without communicating her feelings.

"Soon I was working inappropriate parties; I had a catering business, and my job was if you had a party that was very mature, I would keep it a secret: I was good at it. I kept my eyes and head down, but I was paid well. I served people alcohol, kept secrets, and found girls to go and work the parties with me to make money."

This job opened the door to Renee's drinking. "I never got drunk when I was younger, I was afraid of being like my parents. I never got to go to college or a party. So, 30 hits, and I got cute and skinny, and it was like I was free. I barely remember my thirties. That is how my alcoholism took off." Eventually, Renee became pregnant again for or a third time and she admitted how much she had been abusing and relying on alcohol. "I was so sick mentally and physically with myself. I kept trying to think of things to do so I would not drink." Opportunities like breastfeeding and working for the church gave her an excuse to stop - but they would never work.



NOW IT'S UP TO US

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> continued on page 3



## NOW IT'S UP TO US Bob's Monthly Update

Dear friends,

As I prepare this year-end newsletter, it allows me to reflect on 2021. I am so full of gratitude for you and the blessings you have made possible for the vulnerable neighbors in our care. Among the greatest of those blessings is how you have stood with us to bring our new Center for Women & Children to life!

On December 9th, we held our ceremonial Ribbon Cutting for the new Center. When we cut the ribbon on that day, we symbolically opened the doors of the Center to women seeking help as they begin to transform their lives.

I want to share with you some words from the ceremonial opening so that you will know what has been on my heart as we open the Helping Up Center for Women & Children.

*We have waited, what seems to be a long time, for this vision of helping women and children to become a reality. Women struggling with chemical addiction and homelessness need the same kind of help our men at HUM have received for 27 years. Finally, today the vision is on its way to becoming a fully realized reality.*

*There is an Old Testament proverb that embodies some of what we're feeling today. It says, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life."*

*This building is a longing fulfilled, and it will be, for decades to come, a tree of life for thousands of women and their children.*

*As the word gets out that help is available, women who now live in shame and despair will no longer have to retreat into the dark places.*

*They, along with their kids, can now come boldly out into the light and receive the comprehensive help they need to get well and have a bright future.*

With your support, we are on track for the women currently residing at the Chase Street Center to move into the new building in early 2022. Also, in the new year, we look forward to hosting tours of the new Center—I hope you will consider visiting us to see what you have helped make possible.

Friends, please accept my warmest wishes for a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy, and peaceful New Year.

With gratitude,

Bob

## Thanksgiving at HUM

This Thanksgiving we hosted a full day of complete hot meals for those in need. Hundreds of plates packed with turkey, ham, mashed potatoes, stuffing, cranberries, and more were served to our clients as well as many others living in Baltimore City. Volunteers joined us in scooping, plating, and cleaning up this delicious meal. There was a true sense of community as joy filled the cafeteria while diners became friends by telling jokes and sharing stories. Altogether, it was a memorable day of blessings and full stomachs.



Gaining and losing employment became a consistent cycle. "I drank, drank more, and got more depressed. I stopped being a numbing drinker and started becoming an angry drinker." The drinking caused her two eldest children to leave Baltimore and move to Las Vegas just to get away from her. Soon, her addiction became more serious as she began hiding mini bottles at work and all around her home. One day, she woke up in an ambulance confused, the paramedic said, "Your son saved your life." Her six-year-old had called 9-1-1. Renee realized that this was not okay, her son was able to recognize that she "normally drinks" and passes out, but this time it was worse. After that incident, Renee's sister told her about Helping Up Mission (HUM), saying, "You love the Lord a lot. This is a good place. I think you are really going to get help." After praying and hearing God call her to "go," Renee got dressed and ready to start her journey of recovery.

"People would think sharing a room and a bathroom with 12 strangers would

make you feel uncomfortable, but I felt most comfortable. I felt like this was healing." When finding out the program would take multiple months, Renee kept stating there was no way she would continue to stay at HUM after the initial 45-day blackout period ended. Thanks to the Spiritual Recovery Program, Renee finally admitted to herself "Why am I even saying I am leaving? I am really not leaving." She grew in having a God-filled life, viewing everyone through the lens of Jesus with kindness and compassion, and breaking ties on her addiction. She released suppressed feelings from her childhood, "I had to really get inside myself on some things and figure out what I wanted to do with my life, because I really had no clue until I came here of who I was. I had pretended so long to be someone else."

Renee's outlook on life has been forever changed. "There is nothing in this world that is meant to do permanent harm. And I never felt that way until I got here, everything is either a lesson or a

blessing. If you look at life that way, you cannot be moved by bad things, there is nothing that will take you from God." The best part is the continuing connection and support from HUM. "I graduated and once I started working, I still could go to work and come back. If I had a difficult day at work, the other women at HUM were there. I could still go to therapy. I could still talk to Donna, HUM Chaplain. I could still go to the Spiritual Life office. I could still be in-between interacting with the women. It is something that you only get here. When I leave and have a horrible day outside, I can come back and feel, I am home."

"My oldest son moved back to Baltimore. And my relationship with my sister has improved. I am being open and honest about everything." Renee recently moved in with her pastor and soon after will transition into living again with her family while keeping relationships with the other women at HUM.

To read more of Renee's story, visit [helpingupmission.org/stories/Renee](https://helpingupmission.org/stories/Renee)

## Focus on Recovery – Vic King, Chaplain



As children, many of us were great observers, but terrible interpreters. We picked up on a lot, maybe more than our parents thought, but we didn't know what to make of it. And often we concluded that trauma - like divorce, abuse, neglect, and death - was our fault. For some of us, like Renee, those false verdicts then trapped us in tunnels of shame and fear. Drugs and alcohol seem to offer a way out, but only ensnare us further.

But today, Renee knows the way out. I asked her what she would say to her childhood self, to the little Renee who was growing up amid so much evil and abuse. She told me, "I would definitely say, it's not your fault. Everything in life that happens *to* you is not your fault. You are beautiful, and God *does* love you. Just grow up and be yourself, just be genuinely you and feel whatever you want to feel and tell people how you feel, no matter what. No matter what, be honest, period."

Radical honesty is a spiritual principle that has even been shown to have a direct effect on repairing our brains as we recover from addictions. It strengthens the ties between our prefrontal cortex and our limbic brain, which helps us better control our reward pathway. Honesty is key.

But when it comes to childhood and family, we may feel a tension between honor and honesty. Scripture holds both together, honoring the mothers and fathers of our faith, while also being radically honest about their shortcomings. For Renee, God's love became a solid foundation from which she could be boldly honest about her past trauma and present struggles, while still honoring the good that was present as well. It's what enables her to look at her life and see every single thing as a lesson or a blessing. For someone who's been through what Renee's been through, that's no trite saying; it's hard-won wisdom.

If you want to hear more of what Renee has to say, check out her episode on our podcast, **A Shot of Hope**, which you can find at [ashotofhope.org](https://ashotofhope.org) or wherever you listen to podcasts.

## A Christmas Meal and Hope

Friends,

Many of the men and women at Helping Up Mission (HUM) spent last Christmas alone... struggling to survive on the bitterly cold streets of Baltimore.

For some of these folks, the joy of the holidays is a distant childhood memory. Sadder still, others have never experienced that joy at all. You have the power to change this! With your gift today, you will help treat hurting people to a festive family-style dinner at HUM, surrounded by people who love and care for them.

Every \$2.05 you give provides a home-cooked Christmas season meal for a hurting soul. So, imagine how many lives you can touch:

\$38.95 to feed and care for 19 people

\$77.90 to feed and care for 38 people

\$155.80 to feed and care for 76 people

For some of these men and women, a Christmas season meal at HUM will be the beginning of a new life filled with hope.

These are people like Steven. After losing both of his parents to Alzheimer's in the same year, Steven turned to drugs as an escape from his grief and loneliness. Steven walked through our doors the day after Christmas, knowing he needed help. He received a hot meal and was welcomed into our Spiritual Recovery Program, where he's not only been equipped to overcome his addiction but has found a new family too. "This is kind of my home... and I'm just very blessed," he says.

For the sake of others like Steven, please take a moment to give a special Christmas gift today at [www.helpingupmission.org/givemeals](http://www.helpingupmission.org/givemeals)



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## Raven's 18th Annual Coat Giveaway



On November 15, we were overjoyed to welcome back (in person) the Baltimore Ravens for their 18th annual coat giveaway. In addition to our men, the chapel was packed with members of the Dunbar Poets football team, and women's volleyball team. Laughter filled the air as Raven's kicker Justin Tucker took over the emceeing during an amusing trivia game with the chance to win gear and signed Raven's footballs. "We believe in them, just as much as they believe in us" Tucker beamed.

To prepare for the harsh winter weather ahead, hundreds of coats, gloves, and hats were generously given to the men by Tucker, Marlon Humphrey, Sam Koch, Miles Boykin, and Broderick Washington among others. The room was full of support, cheerful energy, and spontaneous selfies. A special thank you to the team at Regional Management Inc. for providing a grilled lunch for our residents. To check out a Raven's video feature of the event visit: <https://helpingupmission.org/news/>



### Our Mission

Helping Up Mission provides hope to people experiencing homelessness, poverty or addiction by meeting their physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs.

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