

## MEET KENNY AN AMAZING “MISSION KID”

**W**hen touring or attending an event at the Gospel Center Rescue Mission (GCRM), you can't help but notice an energetic and friendly young man on campus. His name is Kenny. A stylish dresser, he loves button-up shirts, wears flashy ties, enjoys listening to Christian Hip-Hop and has hair that often times sports a variety of color! His dazzling smile is infectious, yet his journey to the Mission, like so many others, hasn't been an easy one.

When Kenny was born, his mother, Kimberly, knew that she needed to change her life. It took her ten years going down a very uneven path to figure out her way. The youngest of seven siblings, Kenny was born with down syndrome into a dysfunctional family where addiction was the norm. A good and happy baby, Kenny lived with his father while his mother was sliding in and out of his life, based on the current level of her addiction. She would come back to reconnect with her sweet baby, just to be once again kicked out of the house. Kenny would always welcome her back with open and loving arms. Even though he did not understand the cycle of addiction, Kenny showed his mother great unconditional love.

When Kenny was ten years old, his mom finally made a decision that created big changes in her life. She entered Gospel Center's New Life Program. Kenny was able to join her six months later. Life at the Mission was extremely structured and more organized. As his new schedule set in, Kenny continued to advance both socially and in his studies. For Kimberly, the biggest challenge raising

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## Kids Summer Scholarships

**W**hat joy our Mission Kids bring to our environment. Featured on the cover this month is Kenny Keeler, a fun-loving, energetic, special needs young man. With Kenny in the spotlight, and just one example of our many Mission Kids, I want to take this opportunity to talk about our 2021 Kids' Summer Scholarship Program.

With the new Bill Brown Building in use, we have up to 218 campus beds dedicated to women and children. This summer we project around 50 children will call our campus home and possibly another 50 on weekends. Many of the New Life Program moms are working towards regaining full custody of their children from Child Protective Services, and these weekend visits are important for rebuilding those relationships. We also must plan and pray for the blessing that the summer of 2021 will allow kids to venture away from campus on outings in a post COVID-19 isolation environment.

A Kids Summer Scholarship costs \$500 for a child and their mom to have a summer with at least one fun outing each week. Based on our programs in past summers, these outings include, but are not limited to: swim parties, waterpark visits, movies, children's museums, picnics, 4th of July activities, Stockton Ports baseball games, visits to farms and zoos, to name a few. These outings are fun, educational and/or build a child's social interaction skills that are often missing or need to be encouraged. As you can imagine these children often come from terrible environments, so we



want to create a summer that makes them feel like kids again. We also want to allow moms to be part of their child's development and become better parents as well through off-campus positive/healthy experiences.

If the Lord leads you, please consider funding a \$500 scholarship by using the enclosed envelope and writing "Kids Summer Scholarship" in the check "memo line." If so, you will have the opportunity to impact a child's life while they are here at the Rescue Mission. I am reminded of Proverbs 22:6 which states:

*Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it.*

Wayne G. Richardson

## Donations Needed

We are still collecting clothing donations to serve our New Life Program Students, "COVID Campus" Clients, Recuperative Care Clients, Emergency Overnight Shelter Guests, and the Homeless that come to our reception area. Any clothes that exceed our needs are bailed and sold to pay for our operational costs of running this free "Clothing Plus" Ministry.

We thank you for any donations. For drop-off or pick-up, call (209) 320-2310.



## Santa Delivers a Joyous Christmas to the Mission Kids

Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus, and an Elf stopped by the Mission to surprise the Gospel Center Mission Kids just before Christmas! Journey Transport and SASS! Public Relations partnered to collect over 100 toys for our wonderful children. Our community really stepped up in the midst of a challenging year for all, and demonstrated what Christmas is truly about - giving. Thank you to Journey Transport and SASS! Public Relations for your continuous support of the Mission and thank you to everyone who donated toys and made the Mission Kid's Christmas special!



## SAVE *the* DATE

### 2021 Graduation Schedule

Go to [www.gcrms.org](http://www.gcrms.org) for times and locations.

FRIDAY <b>MARCH 19</b>	<b>Melanie Vieux</b> WMB Architects
FRIDAY <b>MAY 21</b>	<b>Carrie Sass</b> SASS! Public Relations
SUNDAY <b>JULY 18</b>	<b>Phyllis Grupe</b> Community Activist
FRIDAY <b>SEPT. 17</b>	<b>Dennis Barrett</b> 2021 Distinguished Graduate
SUNDAY <b>NOV. 14</b>	<b>Miguel Villapudua</b> San Joaquin County Supervisor

## JANUARY GRADUATION



Back row from the left: Yan Hach, Brandon Hieb, Larry Ortiz, and Eric Hartman.  
Front row from the left: Sandra Hernandez, Pastor Jon Hathorn, Jennifer Chavez, and Ayannah Jones-Cook.

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## *Be still and know that I am God. ~ Psalm 46:10*

*Continued from cover*

Kenny at the Shelter was getting him to follow the rules – just like every other kid, right? Kimberly says, “One of my biggest struggles has been learning how to keep Kenny focused on what we are doing here at the mission”. Although easily distracted, the discipline and structure has given him a new confidence and has helped him develop friendships with the staff and New Life Program students at the Mission.

Socially, the Mission has proven to be a safe haven for Kenny. It has given him a chance to be around other Mission Kids in a loving and secure environment. Kenny found that he is a pretty good basketball player and enjoys playing games on the playground. There are times though, that life is lonely, especially when no one wants to play with him. Yet, getting to know Kenny has taught his fellow Mission Kids that we are all different and some people have more challenging lives. They are learning that it is okay to be different. One thing is for sure – Kenny is an outgoing guy and loves getting to know people and developing friendships under the watchful eye of his loving mom.

Kenny and his mom had never developed a relationship with God until they came to the Mission. Kimberly was baptized soon after she arrived, and in 2019 Kenny was also baptized. That was an amazing moment for him and now he prays before each meal and before he goes to bed. His mom says he chooses

a different person at the Mission to pray for each night and that they are still learning about God but know that He is 100% real.

Kimberly is currently employed at the Mission and her goal is to eventually find their own place so Kenny

can have his own room - a place for his own stuff, like his Batman clothes and gear. Kimberly says, “Kenny has never had a house that is clean and sober. I would love to help create a normal world for him. I want to continue to do work helping those who have gone through life as I did. If I can be a recovering addict and raise a down syndrome child, anyone can change their life. They just need to get to know God and put their trust in Him. He changes lives!”

For now, settled in, Kenny is loved by everyone at the Mission. In closing Kimberly said, “The love and compassion we receive here is such a blessing. Even though Kenny doesn’t realize how much he actually has, he is happy, and he is loved.”

Because of you, our Faithful Prayer Warriors and supporters, the GCRM is blessed to have this safe and welcoming campus for the most vulnerable – our Mission Kids. Our prayer is that as they move on in life, they will look back and remember the Mission – a place that unconditionally welcomed them with loving arms, gave them stability and structure, and taught them about the love of Jesus. Kenny, his fellow Mission Kid friends, and their families, thank you!

