

NOVEMBER 2020

Finding Me – A Valued Life!

Born and raised in Southern California, Sytra Latrice Fleming was just 3 years old when her mother passed away. Her aunt and uncle took her in, kept her safe and introduced her to a loving God. She went to church and enjoyed singing in the choir. At six and a half years old, Sytra was returned to her biological father who had regained custody. On her 7th birthday, her gift from him was a six pack of beer. This is when the daily beatings began. As the abuse escalated, so did her drinking in order to ease the pain. She kept asking herself – “Where is this God I had learned about?”

At age 12, she was taken out of her father’s abusive home by her aunt and uncle. Now a rebellious alcoholic, she lied and stole from them -and her friends- to fund her alcohol addiction. Sytra was introduced to marijuana at age 15, crack cocaine at 16, and eventually heroin. Before she knew it, she was living on Skid Row in Los Angeles, where she was arrested for possession and sent to jail for six months. After her release, Sytra relapsed and the cycle continued. She eventually had three daughters – all born addicted to drugs.

After each birth, Child Protective Services (CPS) would intervene and she would enter treatment so she could get her kids back.

Sytra continued to choose abusive relationships. Strangely, if she wasn’t being abused, she didn’t feel loved. Soon Sytra had two more children –



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“Left Behind?”

Prior to working with rescue missions, I thought that all children in America made it through the 8th grade. Then a few “drop outs” left sometime during their four years at high school. So... everyone has at least an 8th grade education – right? And after all, this is America where education is compulsory. In fact, in 1852, Massachusetts was the first U.S. state to pass contemporary universal public education and required every town to create and operate a grammar school. Fines were imposed on parents who did not send their children to school. The government had the power to take children away from their parents and apprentice them to others if government officials decided that the parents were "unfit to have the children educated properly." In 1918, Mississippi became the last state to enact a compulsory attendance law.^[1]

For many homeless entering the Gospel Center Rescue Mission’s New Life Program, a GED or High School equivalency diploma would be a dream. Some can barely read, write or do basic math. In fact, only 14% of men currently enrolled in our New Life Phase 1 have a High School diploma or GED.

The Mission uses *The NOVA Program* to address reading, writing and math from the

“A-B-Cs” or “1+1=2” all the way to GED preparation. NOVA is individualized, computer based instruction, facilitated by a staff member or volunteer. Students must take personal responsibility for their learning to advance to the next level. Developing good work-study habits, goal setting, problem solving, self-discipline, time management and respect for authority are key components in this amazing program. Gospel Center has two computer centers on campus for this education. Each center has received new computers from BAC Community Bank. (Thank you BAC!)

I hope this gives you some perspective regarding another key challenge towards regeneration of the homeless that your gifts fund. Unrestricted funding, scholarships or earmarked gifts for education requirements help to transform our Students “left behind” in their childhood education into graduates that are better prepared to re-enter society.

[1] Compulsory education history in America from Wikipedia

Wayne G. Richardson

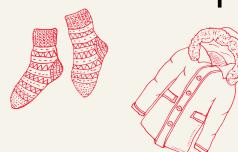
COAT AND SOCK DRIVE

SPREAD THE WARMTH THIS SEASON

November 1 – December 31

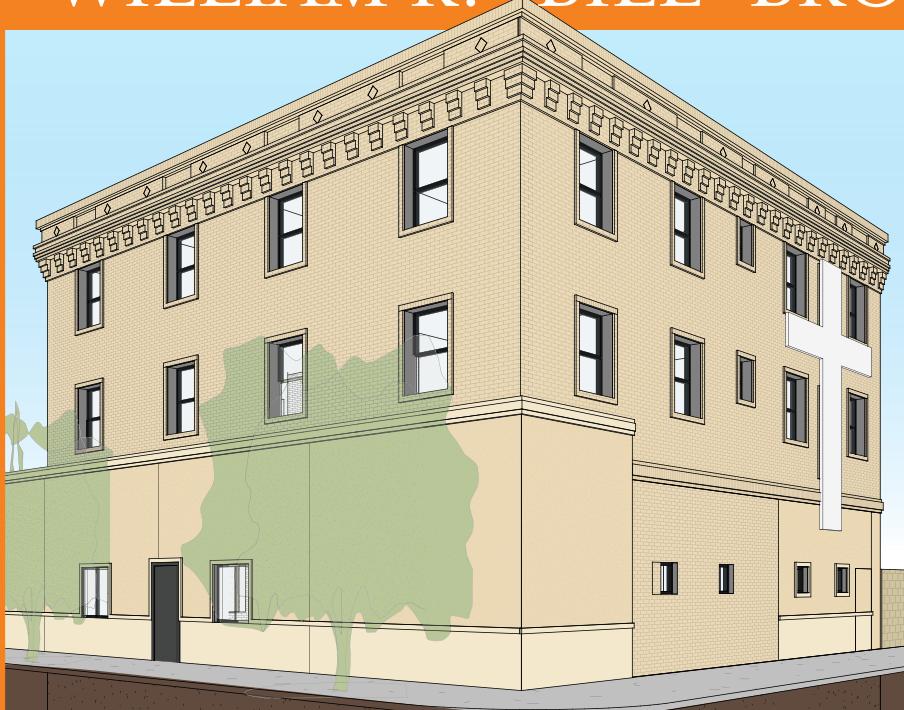
Donate gently used coats and new socks.

Visit LincolnCenterShops.com for drop-off locations.



NEW LIFE
Lincoln Center
 IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
GOSPEL CENTER
 RESCUE MISSION

WILLIAM R. "BILL" BROWN BUILDING



Public Phase

August 1 - December 31

Update on \$ Raised

New Life Scholarships (\$590K Requirement @ \$5K Each)	\$345,000
Dog Foster Program (10K for 1 Year)	\$200
28 Passenger Bus (Fully Funded!)	\$70,000
Dormitory Full Furnishings (Fully Funded!)	\$166,000
Kid's Sprinkler Park (Fully Funded!)	\$100,000
Construction Loan (Fully Funded!)	\$1,000,000

ON CAMPUS

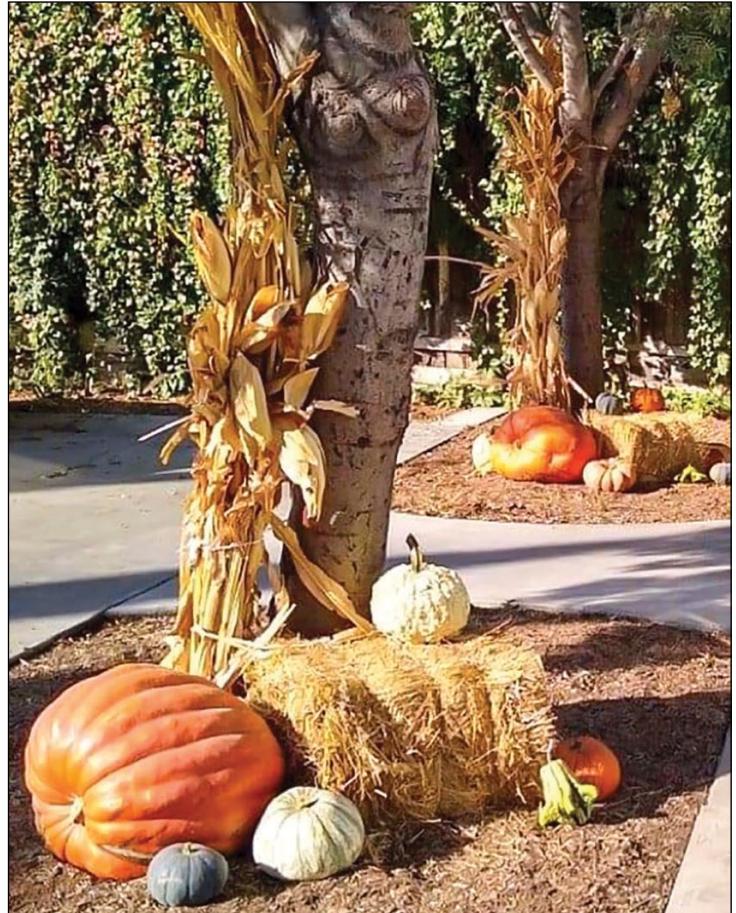


On Friday, September 11th, Stockton Mayor Michael Tubbs stopped by Gospel Center Rescue Mission for a visit and brought a 'thank you lunch' for our COVID-19 front line responders! Thank you Mayor Tubbs for the much appreciated recognition. Pictured Left to Right: Wayne Richardson, Mayor Tubbs, Britton Kimball.

GRADUATES



Congratulations to our September Graduates. Front Row: Brenda Jones, Rita Zuniga, Keynote Speaker Karen Douglas, Meghan Scott, and Tatiana Gettis-Smith. Back Row: Erik Willden, Cesar Salmeron, Thouy Soukkhavong, Shaleena Reid, Jessica Thomsen, Pamela Morris, Susan Laniohan, Leesa Villanueva, Alicia Stickles, Celina Sauseda, Sytra Fleming, and Alfred Wilson.



Thank You!

We thank the Van Groningen family for sharing their bounty, not only during this season of gratefulness, but throughout the year. Our Staff, Students and Mission Kids are enjoying the festive fall display created by the Van Groningen family, which also provides a wonderful backdrop for family photos.

GOSPEL CENTER RESCUE MISSION

restoring lives since 1940

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Thankful, Grateful and Blessed!

Continued from cover

two boys – both of whom had been taken by CPS due to her being back in jail. After eighteen years in violent, drug-filled relationships, and all five of her children taken from her, she finally told herself, “enough is enough” and entered a treatment program upon her release.

During her treatment program, Sytra never dealt with her anger. She had met a wonderful man, Calvin, but soon became abusive towards him. He asked her to leave, and the cycle of drug and mental abuse began once again, and she eventually went back to jail. Finally, at the end of her rope Sytra cried out, “Please help me God. I don’t know what to do, or where to go!” She then reached out to her friend Lindsey, a Case Manager at the Gospel Center Rescue Mission, for help.

That was February of 2019, and she has been at the Mission ever since.

“When I got to the Mission, I was asking myself, ‘Where and who is this God they are talking about? If He were a loving God, why would He allow this to happen in my life?’ The Mission has helped me answer so many of these questions. When I first came to the Mission, I slept with my shoes on so I was ready to run in case I decided to leave! But something was keeping me here. That ‘Something’ was this amazing God that I have gotten back in touch with!”

In her first Anger Management class, she heard, “God forgives you; you need to forgive yourself.” She cried sitting there in that class. That day she forgave herself, and her new life began.

“Today, I can say I have an amazing relationship with God. Because of the faith-based programs at the Mission, I have learned the verses of the Bible. The instructors share what they know and teach me where to find it in the Bible. I have never had this guidance before. Since I received my Bible, I haven’t put it down.”

“At the Mission, I have learned to be a productive member of society. I am employed at the Mission as a House-Woman to supervise the women and children. I get to have an influence on women who were just like me.”

Over the years, Sytra would wrestle with her addiction, however she graduated from University of the Pacific as a substance abuse counselor and is planning to continue her education to become a mental health specialist. She now has a relationship with each of her children and speaks with them almost every day. She is certain that none of this would have been possible without God leading her to the Mission.

In closing, Sytra shared:

“To all the donors of the Gospel Center Rescue Mission: If it wasn’t for you doing what you are doing on the outside, I wouldn’t be able to be working on the *inside of me*,” as Sytra put her hand over her heart. “Because of your time, money, patience, and tolerance for our mistakes the Mission is able to change many lives.”

When asked what her greatest benefit of being at the Mission has been, Sytra said “Finding me - a valued life!”