

LIVING *by the* LIGHT

Published for Partners of Light of Life Rescue Mission

WINTER 2016



Clockwise from top left: Chef Cory gets turkeys ready to serve on Thanksgiving Day. Light of Life provided over 1,000 meals on Thanksgiving Day alone; Russ, a faithful volunteer stirs gravy, on Thanksgiving; Santa delivers a gift to Tom at our Christmas party. Thanks to generous donors, we had Christmas gifts to give to each person in our programs; A glimpse of the Thanksgiving Baskets we gave away the Monday before Thanksgiving. Your donations allowed us to give 464 Thanksgiving baskets to families this year; Caleb enjoys a Primanti Brothers sandwich that was donated to celebrate the Steelers win over Cincinnati in the playoffs; David, Chester, Emmett and Rob enjoy their very first Steelers game with tickets donated by a generous supporter of the Mission. It was an experience of a lifetime!

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LIGHT of LIFE
rescue mission
Food. Shelter. Hope.

XAVIER'S STORY

Light of Life's High Commitment Shelter is a work program for men who need a place to stay and case management while they look for a job or work and save money for their own place. There are up to 8 men in this program at one time. Xavier is one of the men who is in HCS now.



Xavier, High Commitment Shelter

Xavier grew up in the Chicago foster system. His childhood was tough, but he clearly remembers going to church when he was 6-years-old and accepting Christ. The pastor of the church took an interest in Xavier and made a meaningful, Godly impression on him. "He put a church robe on me and I was whooping and hollering for the Lord," said Xavier.

He had to leave that home after a year, but he never forgot that experience. Xavier was adopted when he was 9-years-old and he and his adoptive family had a rocky relationship. "Growing up began to be more challenging for me because of what I already went through," said Xavier.

After years of being in and out of juvenile homes and eventually becoming homeless, Xavier got his first job in 2013 working in the kitchen at a hospital. He got married at age 21, but despite loving one another deeply, the marriage did not work out. Xavier moved around for a while, but in 2015 he settled in the outskirts of Chicago working as a chef and living in his own apartment.

Although he was finally on his own after fighting so many obstacles of his childhood, Xavier hit a bottom. "I was in a pit," said Xavier. "A pit to where impulsiveness cost me my job." He lost his apartment and reached out to a pastor for help. Xavier said, "I prayed that God would take me to a place where He could be my first love again. Where my character will be built."

In December, Xavier moved to Pittsburgh and was living with a friend. He found a job working as a chef, but quickly realized that the friendship was not working out, so he came into Light of Life's High Commitment Shelter. Currently he works two jobs and is saving money for his own place.

In the two months he has been in Pittsburgh, Xavier has seen God answering the prayer he prayed before he came.

"The biggest thing I've been learning here is making sound decisions."

Light of Life gave Xavier the first suit he has ever owned in his life and he has formed strong relationships at the Mission. "I am able to be around strong men who impact me and I impact them," said Xavier. "And the staff care about me. I've never been in a program where I feel like I'm going to make it. But now I'm at a time of breakthrough. This is my year."

We are so grateful for all the ways you support Light of Life so we can provide housing, case management and the love of Christ for Xavier. He is grateful, too. "Not everyone who comes through the doors will change right away, but there comes a time when you impact a life such as myself who has experienced so many failures," said Xavier. "Light of Life has resurrected my life."



Tunch Ilkin and Craig Wolfley are hosting their 14th annual Walk for the Homeless on Saturday, June 11!

You can walk alongside them to make a difference for Light of Life. This fun, family-friendly event begins with a walk along the beautiful North Shore Trail and ends with delicious food from local vendors. It will be held rain or shine and proceeds benefit the critical work at Light of Life Rescue Mission.

Ways you can get involved with Tunch & Wolf's Walk for the Homeless:

- **Walk!** Sign up to walk as an individual helping the homeless or head up a team to come together to make a difference for Light of Life. There is no fundraising minimum per person, but we encourage you to let everyone you know you are part of Tunch & Wolf's Walk for the Homeless and ask them to support you. There is online fundraising available, so it is easy! This is a really fun day for friends, families, church groups and businesses to spend together for a great cause. Will you walk this year? To learn more go to www.lightoflife.org/walk2016.
- **Sponsor.** Walk sponsorships are an excellent opportunity for businesses to make a difference at Light of Life, as well as a way to let the public know your business supports the Mission. There are a wide range of sponsorship levels available. Please contact Doug at dougsmith@lightoflife.org or 412-803-4161 to find out at what level your business could sponsor Tunch & Wolf's Walk for the Homeless.
- **Volunteer.** You are a key reason this event works! We couldn't put on this walk without dedicated volunteers to help with set-up, registration, clean-up and more. People of all ages are needed to make this event a success. If you want to find out more about volunteering at Tunch & Wolf's Walk for the Homeless, contact Emily at erabatin@lightoflife.org or 412-258-6128.

If you have questions or would like more information about Tunch & Wolf's Walk for the Homeless, **please visit** www.lightoflife.org/walk2016 or contact Heidi at hallison@lightoflife.org or 412-258-6183. Walk information will be updated regularly on our Facebook and Twitter pages.



UPDATE ON FRANKIE

Some of you may remember a story we told about how God worked in Frankie's life while he was in the program 4 years ago. Frankie came to Light of Life feeling hopeless and tired. As he started the recovery and healing process, he had a powerful encounter with God and formed a solid foundation in his relationship with Jesus Christ. "I was eager to learn and make changes," said Frankie. "I had been in treatment before, but never a program learning about God, finding God, finding yourself and digging deep down in yourself."

While at Light of Life, Frankie went to school for his CDL and he also met the woman he married at the church he was attending. When Frankie graduated, he had a good job driving for the oil fields, a strong marriage, and a deep faith in God.

Light of Life staff really value the relationships that are formed with the men and women while they are in the program, and we are intentional about maintaining contact with graduates. So, we wanted to give you an update on Frankie's life and how God has been working.

About one year after Frankie graduated the program he was diagnosed with Stage IV colon cancer. "It was the worst day of my life," said Frankie.

"I ask God to guide me, give me patience and understanding. I know things are out of my control now. After going through my addiction, I knew God had his hand on me. And I know—I know—He has his hand on me now. That's what gets me through."

Since then Frankie has been in and out of the hospital and went through chemotherapy for 9 months. He found out the chemotherapy did not work and he has started a trial drug therapy with the hopes that this will be what destroys the cancer once and for all. "This is one of the toughest things I've ever been through," said Frankie. "I've never really been sick before. The hardest thing is not knowing what will come next. My biggest fear is of not living and how my family and friends will be affected."

Although he has his good days and his hard days, the thing that is getting Frankie through this difficult time is his faith in God. "I remember what the program at Light of Life taught me," said Frankie. "I ask God to guide me, give me patience and understanding. I know things are out of my control now. After going through my addiction, I knew God had his hand on me. And I know—I know—He has his hand on me now. That's what gets me through."

Frankie referred to his experience with God, staff, other men in the program, volunteers at Light of Life, his family and his church as big parts of his deep faith and support system.



Light of Life Chaplain Pastor Harvey with his friend Frankie

"Even the path I traveled, God prepared me for this journey," said Frankie. "I know for a fact about God's power. That's where I draw my strength from."

Please pray for Frankie, his family and friends. It has been so encouraging to see that in the midst of this trial, Frankie has turned to God.

We really appreciate your support for Light of Life. It is because you donate, pray, volunteer and get others involved that we are able to provide a program for men, women and children to hear and experience the power of Jesus that lasts well beyond their stay with us.

Volunteer at Light of Life

There are so many ways to get involved in volunteering at Light of Life:

- Serve meals in Meal Ministry
- Help with child care or plan a family night for the Women and Children's Program
- Become a tutor or a mentor in the Men's Residential Program
- Lead a service for our shelter guests in the chapel
- Answer the phone and help with administrative tasks in the office
- And so much more!



To start the process of volunteering, go to www.lightoflife.org and click on the "Get Involved" tab. From there, click on "Volunteer" and fill out the application. You will receive an email with information about the volunteer orientation dates. Once you complete volunteer orientation you can get started volunteering.

Thank you for choosing to spend your time at Light of Life!

Friendly Wager between Cincinnati and Pittsburgh Mayors Made Light of Life a Winner

When the Steelers entered the NFL Wild Card Play-off game, the mayors of Pittsburgh and Cincinnati made a friendly bet on the Pittsburgh Steelers vs. Cincinnati Bengals game, which took place on Saturday, January 9th.

The bet was that the mayor of the city with the losing football team would send the mayor of the winning football city a food basket with local foods and would wear the winning team's jersey when serving at a local shelter. Even though the Steelers won that game, Mayor William Peduto and County Executive Rich Fitzgerald served dinner at Light of Life Rescue Mission on Wednesday, January 13, 2016, both wearing black and gold. Mayor John Cranley from Cincinnati also wore black and gold when he served at the City Gospel Mission in his city. The mayor's office of Cincinnati also sent Light of Life a sampling of foods from their city.



County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, Craig Schweiger and Mayor William Peduto

The meal Mayor Peduto and County Executive Fitzgerald served at Light of Life on Wednesday included donations of sandwiches from Primanti Brothers; frankfurters and pierogies from Franktuary; ketchup, mustard and macaroni & cheese from Kraft Heinz Company; ice cream from Dream Cream Ice Cream; and Smiley Cookies from Eat 'n Park.

WHAT DOES EASTER MEAN TO YOU?



"Easter to me means a time to reflect on what Jesus did for us. His resurrection is a time of celebration and thankfulness. It's an important time to focus on God and recognize how much he loves us."

—Kevin, Men's Residential Program



"I think of the love and compassion God had for us – not just for his son but for us. He sent his son to cleanse me of my sins and the sins of others. This is the most wonderful thing I know and when Jesus speaks of a new coming. He kept his word to me and the world when he comes back to us and rises again to cleanse us of our sins."

—Anthony, Men's Residential Program



"Easter means that Jesus was sacrificed for our sins. And the sins of the world. And I like to be with friends and family to be together. I also like being in church. Now I'm a member and it's a great church."

—Donald, Men's Residential Program



"Easter is the holiest Christian holiday and a celebration of our Savior Jesus Christ. It also means that it is a holiday that you gather with family and eat some good food."

—Rob, Men's Residential Program

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Dear Friends,

January 16, 2016, was a monumental day in the history of Light of Life. The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) unanimously voted that day to make an agreement with Light of Life for exclusive negotiations to sell us property for the construction of our satellite shelter and meal ministry facility. This property is located on Madison Avenue near the Veteran's Bridge. The URA decision was a major breakthrough in the arduous process we have endured in the task of carrying out the relocation of Light of Life from North Avenue to a better Northside location.

This specific process started two years ago, after the successful purchase of the Ridge Avenue School. Before submitting our plans to city zoning for Ridge Avenue, we had discussions with the Northside neighborhoods and the Northside Leadership Conference where we struck an agreement to pursue a satellite site to be used in conjunction with our Ridge Avenue school building, which was accepted and supported by the community at large.

The big picture for Light of Life is to move all of our staff, programs and emergency shelter efforts from two North Avenue sites to two separate locations on the Northside. Light of Life made the decision to offer a balance of services at two locations because it will be most beneficial for the community as well as allow us to better serve our clients, shelter guests and those that benefit from the outreach directed to those in the Northside community with the greatest need.

The specific plan moving forward is to work directly with the URA for the next 90 days to secure the land located on Madison Avenue beneath the vast bridge network in the eastern section of the Northside. While working with the URA, our attorney and architects will be helping us navigate the process through the city's zoning administration in preparation to present our two-stage relocation plan for zoning approval.

The zoning request we make will pertain to our two new sites: Ridge Avenue in a western section of the Northside and Madison Avenue below Route 28 on the eastern front. Other parallel efforts include completion of building architectural plans and gathering all the costs to construct and renovate the future buildings.

While all this work is happening over the next 3-6 months, Light of Life will also be organizing itself and a team to carry out the capital campaign necessary to pay for this relocation. If everything goes smoothly, there is still a possibility construction of the Madison Avenue satellite facility can commence this year.

Please keep us in your prayers as we are closing in on something Light of Life has pursued for more than 20 years. By the grace of God, these sites have emerged for us and they are perfectly suited to best serve the community and those with the greatest needs.

In Christ,

Craig Schweiger, Executive Director

LIGHT OF LIFE'S MEAL SERVICE GREW IN 2015



The numbers are in and we are so grateful to announce we provided over 190,000 meals to the Pittsburgh community in 2015!

Kitchen Supervisor Rob Pettit said, "We either served or sent food out the door totaling 192,398 meals. God has increased the amount of meals served here and we have been able to bless 10 other agencies throughout the year with the abundance of what we get. We have been able to increase the nutritional value of the food we serve at little or no additional cost. God has assembled a great team in the kitchen and we are amazed as we see the Lord not just bring the food in, but watching Him work in us and through us."

Thank you for your support in 2015! We could not have done it without you!

RUN FOR TEAM LIGHT OF LIFE



If you are running (or thinking about running) any of the races in the Dick's Sporting Goods Pittsburgh Marathon during the weekend of April 30th, you can sign up to be part of our team! We will pay your registration fee and in turn you commit to raising money for Light of Life Rescue Mission. Proceeds raised by our team go toward helping the poor and homeless who come to Light of Life for food, shelter and hope.



Here is the story of why one of our runners is part of the team:

My name is Jessi Marsh and I am the Director of Development for Light of Life.

I have been at Light of Life for the past six years, and have served for the past four as the Development Director. As

some of you know, I have spent the better part of the past three years fighting what is now Stage IV colon cancer. I have had two major surgeries, three minor surgeries, and I am on my 20th and hopefully FINAL round of chemo. By God's mercy and grace, I have been able to continue my work duties without much disruption and pledge to continue to do so. While juggling life as a working mom of a six-year-old, fighting cancer has been incredibly challenging. However, I am so grateful for how God has used this situation to strengthen my faith, teach me to put my trust fully in Him, and allowed me to encourage others. I truly count it all joy, and increasingly trust Him fully.

For the past three years, I have run the 5K of the Pittsburgh Marathon on behalf of Light of Life, and raised a total of over \$28,000 – funds that go directly to Light of Life to provide services for the poor, addicted, abused and needy.

This year, I'm going bigger. I have recruited a team to run the relay of the marathon on behalf of Light of Life. My goal is to be the **NUMBER ONE FUNDRAISER** for the entire marathon's charity fundraising program. I will be running the second leg of the full marathon – intimidating for this runner who has only ever run 5K length races.

If Jessi's story has inspired you to run for Light of Life, go to www.lightoflife.org/marathon or contact Doug at dougsmith@lightoflife.org or 412-803-4161.

If you are not a runner, you can still be part of the team by making a donation at www.crowdrise.com/lightoflifepittsburgh2016 or by sending a check made out to Light of Life Rescue Mission, P.O. Box 6823, Pittsburgh, PA 15212. Please write "Pittsburgh Marathon Team" in the memo.

This is the fourth year in a row that Light of Life is a charity for the marathon and the third year as an official charity. That is all thanks to you – those of you who run and raise money for the Mission, as well as those of you who make financial donations to our team. **Thank you!**

UPCOMING EVENTS

■ March 1st & 21st/April 7th & 18th – Volunteer Orientations.

All begin at 6 p.m. Please register for an orientation by completing the volunteer application online. It can be found at www.lightoflife.org under the "Get Involved" tab.

■ March 25th – Easter Dinner.

Easter meal to anyone in need at the Mission, volunteers will deliver hot meals to local high-rises.

■ April 30th & May 1st – Dick's Sporting Goods Pittsburgh Marathon.

Sign up to run for Team Light of Life! See the "Run for Team Light of Life" article for more details.

■ June 11th – Tunch & Wolf's Walk for the Homeless.

Join former Pittsburgh Steelers and current radio broadcasters Tunch Ilkin and Craig Wolfley. See the "Tunch & Wolf's Walk for the Homeless" article for more details.



Mission Statement

As a ministry of Jesus Christ, Light of Life will provide a home for the homeless and food for the hungry, and will build disciples for the Kingdom of God among the poor, addicted, abused and needy.

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