

# LIVING by the LIGHT

Published for Partners of Light of Life Rescue Mission

FALL 2020



**When Can We  
Return to Normal?**

**Capital Campaign  
Progress**

**Homeless and  
Impoverished  
Children Face  
More Challenges**

## Letter from Jerrel



Dear Light of Life Family,

*When can we return to normal?* Have you found yourself asking this question? It is natural to long for the familiar patterns of life. However, all the evidence points to the fact that the Coronavirus effects will continue to affect our lives for several months, if not

years. This is an unsettling reality for us to grasp. In addition, just as we were trying to find our equilibrium, protests and riots broke out in our city and around the world. People in pain took to the streets, as well as opportunists, and before long, our cities were burning. Once again, the question returns: *when can we return to normal?* As with the Pandemic, there is no quick solution to civil unrest and generational pain; there is no magic bullet.

What the world needs now is change agents, reconcilers, and courageous people who refuse to sit on the sidelines and remain silent when those who are vulnerable and in pain need help. The world needs people willing to engage in thoughtful dialogue and run to bring healing from all wounds. We are especially blessed and grateful here at Light of Life because we see these courageous and committed people in our community daily within our staff, volunteers, and donors.

Justice and equity have been part of God's message to the world for thousands of years. I am reminded of this fact when I read the prophet, Isaiah. Written approximately 700 years before Christ, Isaiah paints a clear picture of the kind of world God wants to create through us in verses 58:6-7 — one of equality, freedom, and sharing. One that is loving that speaks for justice on behalf of those who are weak. This gives us hope because the next verse in Isaiah goes on to say that if we live by those standards, then our light will break out and healing will spring forth.

When the Pandemic reached Allegheny county, Light of Life had a decision to make; close our doors and hunker down or remain open. Thanks to your faithful support, we persisted and increased our efforts to reach more people who are hurting, hungry, and traumatized. We saw a 159% increase in demand for meals, as well as an increase in requests for hygiene kits and other supports like emotional and medical care referrals. Thank you again for standing with us as we continue to be known as the place where hope and healing meet through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Together In His Grip,

Jerrel T. Gilliam, Executive Director

## Capital Campaign Corner

The past few months have been some of the most exciting yet! The new building on Voegtly Street is expected to be finished by this winter and our staff and board have been busy preparing. We prayed over the facility and took time to write scripture and encouragement on the wooden framing and studs. Our internal design team has worked with outside designers to choose furniture, paint colors, signage, and more. We can't wait to welcome you through our doors!

When men, women, and children arrive at our new Mission, they will enter the shelter through a walkway equipped with secure lockers to store their belongings. Met with this safe environment, guests can release not only their belongings, but their cares and concerns too. Inside, they will be able to have a warm meal and resources, and even visit our chapel or prayer room for some peace.

With the current health crises, we have made some adjustments to the design of the building. The new decontamination room will be available to

treat linens and other personal belongings with high heat and we are installing dividers between the beds so we can keep our spaces as clean and safe as possible. Safety in our building is important, and our trained staff have access to every part of the building through state-of-the-art cameras, panic button lock down equipment, and more.

We still need to raise funds for the campaign and hope you'll consider giving! **If you would like to get involved, please contact Philip Spina at [pspina@lightoflife.org](mailto:pspina@lightoflife.org) or 412-803-4152.** You can also visit [www.lightoflife.org/opendoors](http://www.lightoflife.org/opendoors) to learn more!

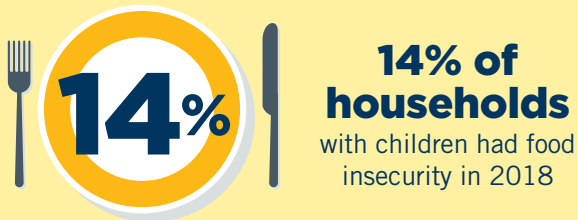


# In the Know

With potential closures and hybrid schooling options coming up for the fall due to Covid-19, homeless and impoverished children will face additional challenges.

Pittsburgh Public school will be doing remote learning for at least the first 9 weeks of school. This affects the families in our programs because they will need to do homeschool during this time. Our staff spent time preparing the children for this unique season by working on time management skills, doing homework, and practicing virtual learning. In addition to the prep we did in our program, our partners at Gwen's Girls will be offering tutoring to our families this Fall.

## How School Impacts Homeless Children



**1.5 million** homeless students  
identified by US public schools.

**2.5%** of students in public schools  
do not have stable housing



**29.7 million**

Students received free or reduced lunch in 2018



▶ For more information and full references visit  
**[www.lightoflife.org](http://www.lightoflife.org)**.

## How You Can Help:

**Hope Shirts** - Purchase your Hope T-shirt October 5th-9th to help spread light and love as we move into the upcoming holiday season. Proceeds benefit Light of Life to help provide hope and healing to the men, women, and children in our community who are hurting. Choose between two designs — bridges of hope and the hope skyline. Sizes are unisex. Visit [lightoflife.org/hope](http://lightoflife.org/hope) to grab yours now.

**Volunteer at our Holiday Outreaches** - Thanksgiving and Christmas Celebrations at Light of Life are a time of great need as well as great joy. Volunteer opportunities are now listed for our holiday events and outreaches at [www.lightoflife.org/volunteer](http://www.lightoflife.org/volunteer).

**Looking for ways to help at home?** We have volunteer opportunities that you can do right from your house, including creating Men's Winter Survival Kits and Emergency Meals for Moms in our program. Visit [www.lightoflife.org/volunteer](http://www.lightoflife.org/volunteer) to get more info and sign up!

# Childrens Summer Programming

Summer is one of our favorite seasons at Light of Life because it really gives the staff and families in our children's program a chance to interact, grow together, and get to know the love of Jesus. Traditionally, the kids and families come to Light of Life in-person, daily throughout the summer and while the moms have one-on-one and group sessions with the staff, the kids have their own age appropriate programming that includes reading, crafts, singing and dancing. **This year, due to COVID-19, our summer programming for the kids looked a little different, but the goal is more important than ever — to allow the kids to be prepared for the upcoming school year, however it may look.**



At the end of the 2019-2020 school year, all of the children in our program were being homeschooled and we noticed that it was a huge adjustment for both the moms and kids. So this summer, our staff wanted to put a special emphasis on preparing our families for the fall.



Every day, the kids met with our staff on Zoom. They were split into two groups: Preschool/Kindergarten Group and Elementary Group. During their Zoom session, the Preschool/Kindergarten Group read a book together, learned a song, and did a reading or math lesson that they focused on for the whole week.

The Elementary Group worked through BrainQuest workbooks covering the subjects of math, language arts, science, and social studies. We were extremely fortunate because this group was led by a volunteer with a teaching background and she has walked the kids through their workbooks. These workbooks are full of curriculum-based activities and challenges so that the kids continue to learn and have fun all summer.

Each week, the students also were given a homework assignment to complete. For every assignment they turned in, they received a prize, like an outdoor game

or small toy. At the end of the summer, the kids who turned in all their assignments got a gift card! We believe that getting the kids and moms used to having homework will help with time management skills for the upcoming school year.

While the original plan was to meet in-person this summer, both the kids and moms have really helped make the virtual programming a success. The parents worked so hard. Parent involvement is a huge asset to our program! Many of the smaller children needed extra help with their lessons, and the moms were right there on Zoom with them — helping them hold their pencils, cut with scissors, learn their letters, and more! Our Childcare Coordinator, Leah, said, "these moms are so dedicated and we are so proud of all the work the kids are doing!"

We were able to offer a couple of day trips for the parents and kids, including going to Shenango Lake! The kids got to swim and play on the beach, while the moms spent some much needed time relaxing in the sun. Staff ensured that everyone could properly social distance and had access to plenty of hand sanitizer and masks. It was a great way for the families to safely enjoy each other's company and have some fun during this difficult year!



# Hear from Our Clients

What brings you hope in this season of life?

“Light of Life and seeing other women get through stuff — and girls that have more clean time than me who already have places to live. Knowing that people were in my position where I am at now.”

– **Carissa H.**



“My son gives me hope. He is my drive every day. He is my hope because he is a daily reminder as to why I am still here. I am here for a reason. I am here to raise him and help him become the best version of himself and break the cycle. I believe with every molecule of my being this is one of my greater purposes. Also, the staff and women at Light of Life — current and alumni — they give me hope. The connections and bonds that you build and knowing you have people to help you stay accountable. It is such a multi-faceted question. There is not just one thing that brings you hope. Light of Life has taught me what my relationship with God is. And when I feel my faith is waning, I know I can count on the women at Light of Life to bring me back. God is alive and God is constant.”

– **Tiffani F.**

“The joy and happiness that God gives me. I’m thankful that He answers all my prayers.”

– **Ron A.**

“A new beginning in life being sober, the sun and warmth, making new sober friends, experiencing a new city, and getting into phase 1 of the program [is bringing me hope this season.]”

– **Kevin S.**



“From my lowest point and ever since I’ve trusted God, everything has been getting better. My relationship with God has been getting better and that gives me hope. Because no matter what, He is there, and I know things are going to get better.”

– **Amanda D.**

“My Lord and Savior brings me hope in this season of turmoil with coronavirus and all the dissatisfaction in our country and city, so I need my higher power to bring me the hope I need.”

– **Steven R.**

“God’s grace and forgiveness to move forward in my recovery.”

– **Todd Y.**

“Having a relationship — with others and with self — the staff and women at Light of Life — having people that genuinely care about me and want to see me do good. And this too shall pass. No matter what, this season is going to pass. And I know I do not have to use, that God has me, and that I will get through it. I know I have all these women in my life, and that they have me.”

– **Nicole D.**



# Events Update

## Virtual Yinzer 5K Recap



Events Coordinator, Amy, shows off the yinzer swag that we had for registrants this year!

On August 28th and 29th, 83 runners across Pittsburgh donned their most festive Steel City attire and ran to support Light of Life.

**T**his year, the Yinzer 5K went virtual and runners were able to run their choice of 5K or 1-mile in their favorite running spot and manually enter their time. It was a great day to come together as a Pittsburgh community to help our homeless and hurting neighbors.

Thank you to our sponsor Swimming Pool Discounters for making this event possible!



This year, Uncle Chuck encouraged Pittsburgh to run at home n'at.

## Light of Life Christmas Ornament

Our Christmas ornaments are now available for purchase! To see this year's design and to place an order, visit [www.lightoflife.org/ornament](http://www.lightoflife.org/ornament).

## Exciting Update



Liz Gryger, Director of Administration and Operations

We are thrilled to announce that Liz Gryger has joined us as Director of Administration and Operations. Liz brings experience from over 30 years in the management consulting industry. Her experience spans everything from strategy development to operational improvement to leadership skill and capability development. We look forward to seeing the ways her leadership will help our organization move into the future.

**Special Thanks** We'd like to give a special thanks to DesignGroup, who has partnered with us to guide and advise on the interior design of our new building. They have been an outstanding partner and have helped us save thousands of dollars on this campaign. Thank you so much, DesignGroup!

## Next Up:

**Days of Hope – October 6th–8th** – Join us for this impactful multi-day event of community relationship, service projects, free food, and access to various public resources. For more info, email Jenny at [jdeatrich@lightoflife.org](mailto:jdeatrich@lightoflife.org).

**Finish the Mission Fundraising Event – October 17th** – You won't want to miss this behind-the-scenes one-hour tour, where you can get a first-hand look at our new Voeghtly Street Mission location. You'll have the opportunity to see what our furniture, technology, and appliance needs are and give towards those items. Visit [lightoflife.org/finishthetmission](http://lightoflife.org/finishthetmission) to learn more.

**Thanksgiving Box Project – Monday, November 23rd** – On this day, we pack and distribute Thanksgiving meals to over 1,500 local families in need. Donations are needed! Volunteer space is very limited. For more info, email Jenny at [jdeatrich@lightoflife.org](mailto:jdeatrich@lightoflife.org).

**Pittsburgh Marathon Charity Runner Registration is open!** Light of Life Rescue Mission is an Official Charity for the Dick's Sporting Goods Pittsburgh Marathon in May 2021 and we'd like you to join our team and run to support Light of Life! Learn more at [www.lightoflife.org/marathon](http://www.lightoflife.org/marathon) or contact Amy at [ametz@lightoflife.org](mailto:ametz@lightoflife.org).



### MISSION STATEMENT

Light of Life transforms lives through the love of Christ by providing food, shelter, and hope to men, women, and children experiencing homelessness, poverty, or addiction to restore them as healthy members of our community.

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