

Stories of HOPE

FALL 2023

SERVING
HOMELESS
IOWANS
SINCE 1915



**"God's been
knocking on my
door for years."**

*Steve has spent most of his
adult life in prison. But when
he opened his heart to God, he
found a freedom that changed
him from the inside out . . .
and discovered a harvest of
blessings.*

INSIDE:

- **A Note from Leon**
- **Steve's New Life**
- **Thanksgiving Preview**

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In this harvest season, CEO Leon Negen and all of us at Hope Ministries count you among our abundant blessings as, together, we reach out to our hurting neighbors.



Our Ministry Centers

Bethel Mission

Door of Faith

Hope Center for
Women and Children

Hope Café

Hope Ministries Thrift

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Des Moines, IA 50304-0862

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hopeiowa.org
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Dear Friend,

In John 10:10, Jesus tells us that He gives us abundant life. When I think of an *abundant life*, I think of overflowing joy and steadfast hope. I think of a harvest of blessings.

But an abundant life has ups *and* downs. I find it so important to remember that when I consider the hurting neighbors we serve each day at Hope Ministries. I love seeing the successes and milestones they experience, big and small—everything from getting a driver's license and paying off debts to long-term sobriety or completing our programs. (Steve, page 3, has experienced each of those milestones and more!)

But we know that mixed in with the blessings are challenges and difficult moments. The men and women we serve are no strangers to this reality. For those struggling with addiction, relapse is not unexpected. Things like broken relationships or past trauma take time to heal.

But through it all, God's unconditional love remains—as does our compassionate commitment to helping individuals and families move forward in life. The warm meals, safe shelter and life-changing programs we offer—*thanks to your support*—are part of an abundant life available to every person who walks through our doors. And when the challenges come, it's a blessing for our residents to know they're surrounded by a community of caring people . . . including you.

Today, I give thanks for God's provision and for friends like you who make all these things possible! Thank you.

Your partner in ministry,

Leon Negen
CEO



At Hope Ministries, fall isn't only back-to-school time for the kids in our care . . . but many of the adults we serve, too! Some work on achieving their high school equivalency diploma (HiSet) and others enroll in college classes or vocational training programs. Jay, a resident at our Door of Faith, is currently working toward his HiSet. "Having my HiSet not only opens doors of opportunity," he says, "but also helps me be a positive role model for my younger brother."

Jericka, a resident at our Hope Center for Women and Children, registered for classes at DMACC this fall and plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in human services. She hopes to one day help others who have faced the same struggles she has. "God didn't let me go through anything for no purpose," she says, adding that she plans to use her own experiences to be a light to others.

Jericka is starting college classes this fall!



In addition to pursuing educational opportunities, many of the individuals we serve are going out on job interviews. When they need nice clothing for interviews, they're able to "shop" at our two thrift stores . . . which means we're very grateful for your donations!

Donation hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Get store addresses and more at hopeiowa.org.

A Solid Foundation



There's an old painting most likely familiar to anyone who's spent time in church. It was painted by artist Warner Sallman and depicts Jesus standing at a door and knocking.

"The thing about that painting," says Steve, a recent graduate of our life recovery program, "is there's no doorknob on the outside. Jesus knocks, but you have to answer it from the inside."

And for Steve, that image resonates. "He's been knocking on my heart for years. He's always been there. I just haven't opened the door until now."

Steve's road to newfound faith has been a long and difficult one. He started drinking and using drugs when he was a teenager and went on to struggle with drug addiction for forty-five years. He's spent the bulk of his adult life in prison.

In fact, it was in prison where he first learned about Hope Ministries. "Any other time when I've gotten out of prison, I went right back to the drugs," he acknowledges. But this time, he had a stronger—and painful—motivation for seeking recovery and transformation. "My brother overdosed and died in 2020. I think that's what got me to want to change."

Steve admits that when he first showed up at our men's shelter he "wanted to turn around and walk out." It just wasn't where he wanted to be. But he knew he couldn't return to the same old cycle, the same old life as before.

"I think I've always known who God was, but I didn't know Him personally. Now I know He sees my heart." —STEVE

And now, looking back, he can see the harvest of blessings that have grown through his months of determination and hard work.

In addition to receiving three meals a day and a safe place to sleep, Steve participated in classes, recovery groups, counseling and job skills training. Milestones have included getting his driver's license and working on paying off outstanding debts, as well as the longest stretch of sobriety he's ever had outside of prison!

"I'm really thankful because this has given me a chance to get established," he says. "I have a church family. I have a recovery family. I've benefited from every day I've spent here."

Earlier this year, Steve completed our program, and he credits every step of his recovery journey to God. "This has really helped me get a solid foundation and get to know God. That's who I give my recovery to—God."

"I spent thirty-three years in prison," he adds, "and I've wasted a lot of my life. But it's not over yet. I'm grateful."

**Steve's life is filled with an abundance of hope . . . *thanks to your support.*
Thank you for being a blessing in his life and so many others!**

Help us Give Hope *this Thanksgiving*

Thanksgiving is two months away and we're already planning our special holiday outreach! We'll serve and deliver around 3,000 meals on Thanksgiving. You can help!

VOLUNTEER—We have volunteer opportunities on Thanksgiving, as well as the day before. Help assemble meals onsite or serve as a meal delivery driver team (a great opportunity for families with younger children). Thanksgiving volunteer registration begins Monday, Oct. 2. (M25 volunteers, you get to sign up early! Watch your inbox for advance registration.)

DONATE FOOD—It takes a lot of food to feed our hungry neighbors! We'll be accepting food donations on the day before Thanksgiving (Wednesday, Nov. 22) from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at our Bethel Mission. Check out our list of food needs at hopeiowa.org.

We also have a variety of Christmas opportunities. Visit hopeiowa.org for details and look for more in your next *Stories of Hope* issue!



A Harvest of Faith

One of our great joys at Hope Ministries is seeing people grow in their faith. We offer a variety of opportunities for spiritual development, and it's inspiring to watch individuals take steps forward in their faith journey. For instance . . .

- A volunteer class leader at our Hope Center for Women and Children recently shared this: "One of the ladies in my Grief Share class has struggled with ruminating on negative thoughts. . . Now she's begun to see God work in her life. She's been ruminating about Scripture instead of those negative thoughts."
- Men in our life recovery program participated in Spiritual Renewal Week this summer. They studied the Gospel of Mark in both large and small groups. They also enjoyed a Christian comedian, baseball game, and grill-out at a local lake.
- Men at our Door of Faith recovery center who are up for a challenge can demonstrate their memorization skills by reciting all 66 books of the Bible. When they do, they receive a new study Bible. It's a fun way for men to grow in their knowledge of the Bible.

More Than a Meal

Before coming to Hope Ministries, David spent three years homeless. He knows what it's like to go hungry. But these days, he also knows what it's like to go to bed with a full stomach.

It's not only the food David appreciates. It's what comes with it. "Eating together is a blessing because it's where we all connect with each other and create a bond," he says. He's talking about the experience of sitting around a table in a safe, friendly environment, with others like himself who are seeking life change.

For David and so many others, a meal at Hope Ministries is more than a meal. It's a reminder that someone cares!

Just \$2.02 provides a meal and care for a hungry neighbor. Please give using the enclosed reply card or by visiting hopeiowa.org. Thank you so much.

United Way Reminder

During your company's United Way fall campaign, you can direct your contributions to Hope Ministries by writing "Hope Ministries" as your designated charity. While we're not a United Way member, United Way will honor your designation. Your contribution will provide meals, shelter and life recovery. Thank you!

