

Stories of HOPE

CHRISTMAS 2023

SERVING
HOMELESS
IOWANS
SINCE 1915



Surrounded by Love

After years of homelessness and hardship, Kelsey found refuge at Hope Ministries—and she discovered God's life-changing love. This Christmas, she's ready to tell her story . . .

INSIDE:

- A Note from Leon
- Kelsey's Heartwarming Story
- 2023 Scrapbook

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CEO Leon Negen and all of us at Hope Ministries are grateful for the gift of your compassion and partnership this Christmas season!



Our Ministry Centers

Bethel Mission

Door of Faith

Hope Center for Women and Children

Hope Café

Hope Ministries Thrift

P.O. Box 862
Des Moines, IA 50304-0862

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Dear Friend,

Some years it's difficult to look back on the months-gone-by and pick a favorite moment. But this year, it's easy for me to name one of my greatest highlights: the birth of my granddaughter, Goldie, this past summer.

I've been blessed to wear many hats in my life, including that of Hope Ministries CEO. But the roles of husband, father and grandfather are hands-down my favorite. As Goldie's grandpa, I have so many hopes for her life. Perhaps more than anything, I hope she will always feel surrounded by love. The love of her Creator, first and foremost, and also the love of her family and other special people who will walk into her life in the years to come.

I have that same hope for the men, women and children who walk through the doors of Hope Ministries day in and day out. They are individuals and families hungry for more than food, desperate for more than a roof over their head. They are people who need to know how loved they really are—by God and by compassionate neighbors.

Neighbors like you. All throughout 2023, our incredible ministry partners have given generous financial gifts to help us offer warm meals, safe refuge and life-changing recovery programs. Many of you have volunteered, prayed and donated in-kind items. You have given hope in so many ways.

Because of your support, Kelsey (whose story you'll read on pages 4-5) knows she's no longer alone. She knows she's loved, and that love gives her the strength to be the mom she's longed to be. Because of your support, at 55 years old, Jonathan is determined to achieve long-term sobriety once and for all . . . Tiffany has the confidence to pursue a new job opportunity . . . Jay earned his high school equivalence diploma . . . Mason has the freedom to dream about a future career flipping houses.

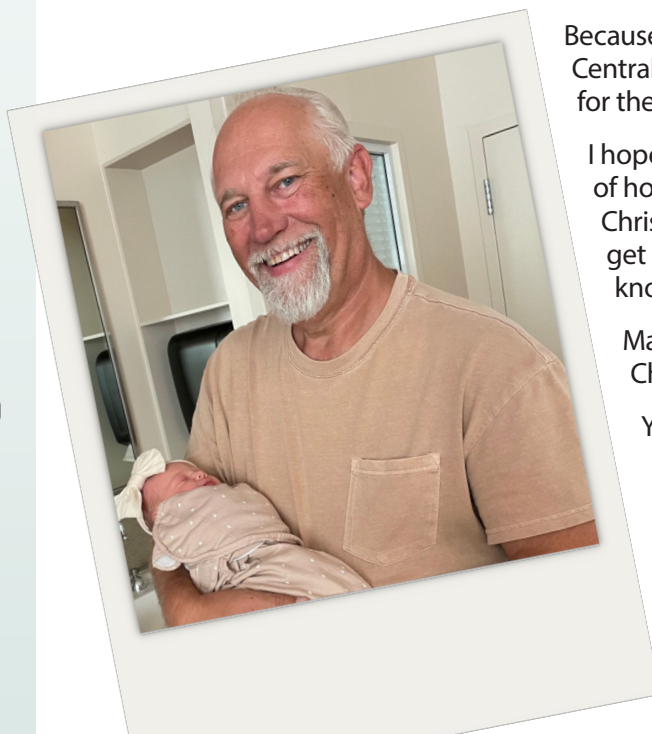
Because of you, hundreds of hurting people here in Central Iowa finally feel surrounded by love . . . many for the first time. I can't thank you enough for that!

I hope you feel uplifted and inspired by the stories of hope you'll find on these pages. And this Christmas, I hope it's a special gift to you as you get a glimpse of the impact you've made. Please know *you* are a gift to all of us at Hope Ministries.

May you and your loved ones have a blessed Christmas season!

Your partner in ministry,

Leon Negen, CEO



Building Update



It's incredible to think that at this time next year, our new 100-bed Hope Ministries Center for Women and Children will be open! Throughout 2023, we've been tracking the progress of this exciting project, which includes major renovation of the existing building at 3800 E. Douglas in Des Moines as well as construction of a new residential wing—a wing that will have three times the capacity of our current Hope Center.

Speaking of which, even as our new center takes shape, there's *a lot* of work happening at our current Hope Center in preparation for the upcoming task of feeding, sheltering and caring for many more women and children than we ever have before. For instance:

- Growing our capacity so significantly means we will need quite a few new staff positions. Our director of women and children's ministries, Elizabeth Spragg, has been busy strategizing for the growth of our Hope Center team.
- Our new center will include more than 50,000 square feet—all of which needs to be furnished! From beds for our dorm rooms down to the trash cans in the bathrooms, planning for our furnishings and supply needs is a big task.
- The new center will include a learning center and child care, and food services will look entirely different as we prepare to serve meals to three times as many people. Planning for all these areas and more is under way.

We covet your prayers—both for the construction and all the preparations happening behind the scenes as we look forward to opening our new center in late 2024.

ONE COOL Thing




Our next Hope 101 volunteer orientation is on Saturday, January 20.

At Hope Ministries, we know none of the work that happens inside our walls is possible without God's guidance—and the faithful prayers of His people. That's why earlier this year, some of our volunteers began meeting specifically to pray. Led by Trevor Schmitt, our volunteer coordinator, they meet each month via Zoom.

If the prayer team sounds like an area of ministry you'd like to be involved in, the first step is to join our M25 Network. The name is inspired by Matthew 25:35-40. M25s are our high-impact volunteers who serve on a regular basis throughout our ministry centers—serving meals, teaching classes, helping at our thrift stores, etc.

If you're already an M25 volunteer and would like to join the prayer team, simply email Trevor at tschmitt@hopeiowa.org. If you're not an M25 yet, then please consider signing up for our next *Hope 101* volunteer orientation on Saturday, January 20. **Visit hopeiowa.org/m25 to reserve your spot.**

Another way to join us in prayer is by downloading our 31-Day Prayer Calendar. It's available at hopeiowa.org/pray. You can also submit your own prayer requests on that page. Our staff meets daily to pray, and it would be our honor to lift up your requests.



The gift of faith and a family restored



Kelsey was only a teenager when her family got the tragic news that would change their lives forever: Her father had terminal lung cancer. It had already spread to his brain, and he was given a prognosis of six months.

He lived for another six months and nine days. After that, Kelsey's life simply fell apart.

She'd been through hard times previously. Her parents' divorce when she was 13 hit her hard, and peers introduced her to marijuana. But things got much worse after her dad's death. "That's when I started living on the streets, doing all kinds of bad stuff."

From drugs to working at bars while underage to living in her car, she describes those years as "dark times."

"I really just wanted to be loved or accepted or known. It was really lonely, really crazy," she remembers. Though she had periods of stability, she inevitably found herself letting the wrong influences into her life.

Eventually, she wound up in an abusive relationship and, trapped by her addiction, she lost custody of her two children. "I just cried out to God. I didn't know what to do anymore. I didn't want to live like that anymore."

Kelsey was so unwell at that point that she doesn't remember how she heard about Hope Ministries. "It's kind of a blur," she recalls of her first few days at our Hope Center for Women and Children. "But I just remember being grateful to be somewhere safe and

"I just want to be the woman that God designed me to be—strong and tenacious and full of life." —KELSEY

away from the abuse and drug use. I felt so empty inside, but also safe on this property . . . really safe."

That sense of safety made it possible for Kelsey to begin a journey of healing. She's discovered the freedom that comes from sobriety, the personal growth that comes through accountability, and the sense of community and support that comes from being surrounded by caring staff and fellow life recovery residents.

And she's found strength in knowing she's loved by God. "I live in faith now. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for God. He's determined my steps."

Six months after she came to Hope Ministries, Kelsey's children—two-year-old Thaddeus and one-year-old Helen—were returned to her custody. They now live with her full-time at Hope Center, where they'll celebrate this Christmas together.

"I'm just so happy to have them back. Thaddeus is wild. He's stronger than he knows. Helen is just the cutest little girl you'll ever see. I have a good relationship with them now," Kelsey says. "I love cooking for them and taking them on walks."

Trauma: Then & Now

At the end of 2022, we completed a five-year survey of more than 1,000 men in our life recovery program . . . and earlier this year we compiled and studied those survey results.

The goal of our survey was to illuminate the link between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and homelessness in adulthood. Examples of ACEs include domestic violence, substance abuse, neglect, or home instability (such as a parent's drug use or incarceration).

We found that on average, men served by Hope Ministries faced more than four ACEs when they were young—and these experiences impacted their lives in many ways.

We invite you to read our report to understand some of the challenges the men and women we serve face . . . and be uplifted in hearing about the essential support your generosity is making possible!



Read *Trauma: Then & Now* at hopeiowa.org/trauma or by scanning the QR code.



"I'm grateful that the staff here takes the time to work with both me and my kids," she adds. "I like the transformation I see in myself. The love is real here."

Kelsey is active in church and is participating in a Bible study with several other life recovery residents. She's thankful for the encouragement of her aunt and her grandma, and knows she'll have a support system when she starts her next chapter of life.

Speaking of which, Kelsey recently completed a six-week program called Change Course, which is designed to help individuals build career skills, and she's mulling over

what employment path is right for her. She knows that whatever comes next, she wants to help people.

And to all those who have helped her, she has a message of gratitude: "Thank you for your generosity and for helping me through some of the hardest times. Thank you for bringing me and my kids back to a healthy lifestyle and to a relationship with God."

This Christmas, Kelsey and her children are surrounded by love. . . thanks to your support.





2023 *Sc*

Looking back on an incredible year



It's been exciting to see residents pursue their education this past year. We celebrated with life recovery resident Jay in August when he earned his high school equivalency diploma!



Volunteers are a-ma-zing! We couldn't do what we do without the help of hundreds of volunteers. Kerry and Sandy Petersen, owners and founders of NorthernLights Pizza Company®, are part of our M25 Network and serve regularly.

Earlier this year, Kelsey, Jericka and Alyse all completed one year of life recovery programming! Kelsey and Jericka are continuing on in our long-term program, and Alyse and her two girls have now moved south to live with family. We're so proud of all three of them!



Our meal numbers climbed all year! Many coming to us due to job loss, health crises and rising housing costs, plus the unsteady economy. We're thankful for the donations from us to keep meeting the need for warm, hearty meals.

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ar of giving hope & changing lives!

Just like we'll do this Thanksgiving and Christmas, on Easter weekend we served and delivered meals all across the Des Moines area. Plus, we served a special Easter meal onsite. Thank you to all the volunteers who help make our holiday meal outreaches possible!



Men in life recovery participated in Spiritual Renewal Week this summer, which included group discussions about the Gospel of Mark, outings such as a baseball game and a lakeside picnic, and time for men to connect and build healthy friendships. We saw God at work and faith awakened!

In September, our *Meet the Mission, Meet the Need* event was a blast. Participants put together hygiene kits and took tours of our men's shelter, complete with a scavenger hunt. They also enjoyed lunch at Hope Café. Thank you to everyone who came out for the day and brought much-needed donations of meat!



In July, Cole Lindholm became our new president! In the past 23 years, Cole has led several key areas including men's programs, food services, thrift, outreach and human services. He's pictured here with Cook Warren Sallie.

How you can help *this holiday season*

On Thanksgiving and Christmas, we'll serve and deliver thousands of meals to hungry Central Iowans! To make this possible, we're asking for donations of food. Here's what we need:

- Ready-to-serve dinner rolls
- Milk, cheese, eggs, butter
- Cookies (pack two per baggie)
- #10 cans of green beans or mixed veggies
- Ground beef, pork loin, bacon, ham
- Condiments and salad dressing

We'll have two holiday food donation days: **Wednesday, November 22** (the day before Thanksgiving) 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and **Saturday, December 23**, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., both at 1310 6th Ave. in Des Moines. We'd love to see you!

Another way to give hope this Christmas is by participating in *Mission: Christmas*, our effort to provide Christmas bags filled with special gifts to our residents. Check out our gift lists and sign up to participate at hopeiowa.org.

108+ years . . . and counting

By Kathy Coady, Chief Development Officer

In this newsletter, we've mentioned our future center for women and children several times. Can you tell we're all excited? The center will be located on our Hope Ministries Steve Lankford Campus, named in honor of Steven R. Lankford, former president and CEO of Boyer Valley Company, who passed away in 2016.

This summer, I had the joy of meeting with three generations of women from Steve's family! I met Donna, his mom; Linda, his widow; and Amanda, his daughter. It was such a blessing to me—and I hope it was to Steve's family members, too—to stand in the place where Steve's legacy will live on for decades to come.



And it's pretty incredible to think of the tens of thousands of people whose legacies also live on in Hope Ministries' 108 years of service—people who have given financially, donated food and clothing, volunteered and faithfully prayed. Their heart for those who are hurting is woven into the fabric of this ministry.

Looking ahead to 2024, we are preparing to serve more people in need than ever before, including three times as many women and children! We have a big mission, and with it comes a big funding need. **Today, I invite you to consider giving a generous year-end gift to help us finish 2023 strong and enter 2024 with great momentum!**

When you do, your kindness will give hope and change lives now and for generations to come. Thank you!



You can make a gift using the enclosed reply card or by visiting hopeiowa.org.
You can also donate over the phone by calling (515) 265-7272.



Need a year-end statement?

To be the best possible stewards of your gifts, we send year-end statements only to those who request them by calling (515) 265-7272 or emailing info@hopeiowa.org. If you've previously requested a statement, you will automatically receive one in January.