

THE Quarterly

Spring 2023

Do You Need Me To Call An Ambulance?



Having no idea where to turn, Bonnie spent a cold night on the streets.

It was a year ago, in February, that Bonnie Muchna said she saw an angel.

Bonnie was at the tail end of a relationship, which, as she said, “was not working out,” and one cold night she had no recourse but to pack a few belongings, then spend a night on the streets.

Homeless for the first time in her life, suffering from Multiple Sclerosis, she shared, “That night was brutal. I had no idea what I was going to do. Or where I was going to turn.”

Then, she said, “an angel appeared,” Pausing, she added, “I was on Broad Street, and a woman opened her door and invited me in for dinner. She said,

‘Sit down. Please. Relax.’ And I didn’t know what to say but ‘Thank you!’ Then she and her husband started speaking in a different language. I didn’t know what they were saying. But I knew they

“This has been a time of my life that I never expected, that I never saw coming. The support I’ve received has helped me get through this.”

were arguing. I could tell he was thinking, ‘Why did you bring this stranger home?’”

With a voice that was quiet and reserved, Bonnie continued. “She was able

In this issue, you will read about some of the new ways our essential workers are helping those who have nowhere else to turn.

1 After spending a cold night on the streets, Bonnie found help and hope when she knocked on The Shelter’s door.

2 An innovative new program will allow anyone struggling with addiction to receive medication to help with recovery.

3 A talented counselor shares how she has a very positive way of helping people who are in early stages of recovery.

6 An entrepreneur, who is also in recovery, is going to run for 24 hours to raise money to help The Mission.

to calm him down and they shared dinner with me. Her heart came out to me. Then, when we were done, she asked, ‘Do you need me to call an ambulance?’ And I said, ‘Yes. Please.’”

She was taken to Robert Wood Johnson in Hamilton where, as Bonnie said, “They kept me for a few days, making sure I was alright. Then they released me, ordering a cab that brought me here to The Mission’s Shelter.”

In The Shelter, Bonnie met Alyese Patterson, a Case Manager who has been helping Bonnie to obtain all the requirements necessary to secure housing for a Seniors Program for

continued on page 2

Do You Need Me To Call An Ambulance?

continued on page 1

individuals who are 55 and older.

"Bonnie's finances were in good order," Alyese said. "Still, we needed to obtain all of her documentation, including her state identification (driver's license), social security card, proof from the courthouse of her alimony, and opening a bank account." To help Bonnie, Alyese has been working closely with the CEAS Center, operated

"Bonnie is now waiting her turn to secure her own apartment, which, hopefully, won't be long. I am both grateful to be here and looking forward to leaving. With the help I've received, I am now ready to be on my own," she said."

by the City of Trenton's Department of Health & Human Services, a key component in the Trenton/Mercer system to end homelessness.

"Now that we have all of her documentation in order," Alyese added, "Bonnie is in line, waiting her turn to secure her own apartment, which, hopefully, will not be much longer."

As Bonnie, with a reserved sense of hope, waits patiently, she said, "I am both grateful to be here and looking forward to leaving. I have made some friends here, shared conversations about how we are all doing, been there for each other. And I like to think I've helped them as much as they have helped me."

She added, "This has been a time of my life that I never expected, that I never saw coming. The support I've received has helped me get through this. And now, I am ready to be on my own."

Your Recovery Can Start Here

If you are struggling with addiction, we can provide you with free medication, which will: *relieve withdrawal symptoms, reduce your cravings, and give you the opportunity to recover.*

We are here for you.

Just walk up the ramp at 89 Ewing Street, and knock on our Shelter's door.

(Hours: Monday through Friday from 6 am until 7 pm; Saturdays from 6:00 am until 1 pm.)

You will be greeted by a Peer Recovery Specialist (someone who has experienced recovery) who will introduce you to a professional from Iron Recovery and Wellness Center, one of our partners, who can provide you with the appropriate medication.

In addition, you can have access to telehealth appointments with the medical staff at the Henry J. Austin Health Center, who is also partnering with us to help you with your recovery.

Our dedicated team will work with you through every step of your recovery.

At The Mission, you can also receive warm meals, a safe place to sleep, access to healthcare, behavioral health counseling, vocational development and the opportunity to obtain permanent supportive housing.

Our dedicated team will work with you through every step of your recovery. All you need to do is show up. We invite you to take this first step of your recovery. We are here for you.

This innovative new program is funded by the New Jersey State Department of Human Services Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Just knock on The Shelter's door. Or call 609.695.1436, ext.142 and Alyese will be more than glad to help you.



When Stanley came to The Shelter, Alyese Patterson, a Case Manager, introduced him to the professional team at Iron Recovery & Wellness Center, where he was assessed and prescribed suboxone to reduce his dependence

on opioids. Stanley, who had served in the military, had been sleeping in the passenger seat of a broken-down car before he knocked on The Shelter's door. He said, "Alyese was a godsend. She truly cared. And that floored me. She stayed with me the whole time. And assured me that everything would be fine. And it has been. Now, my desire to escape through drugs has gone away. I have a safe place to sleep, I get warm meals, and I have seen a doctor. She's helped me apply for jobs, which I really want. And she is helping me get my State identification, so I can eventually get housing." He paused, then added, "I finally like what I see in the mirror."

My Destiny Is Here

Cleopatra Patterson came to her calling as a counselor in The Mission's Behavioral Health Center through a circuitous route.

She was "the baby girl," the eighth of nine children raised by her mom, who was a single parent. "I grew up in the projects in North Trenton, and my mom did an amazing job," Cleopatra said. "Our family was loving. I was spoiled. And my mom emphasized the importance of education, making sure that most of us went to college," she added.

While going to college, Cleopatra also worked in the summers at Harrah's in Atlantic City. "It was an exciting time," she said. "Money was easy. It was all tips and smiles. I learned that I was very good at connecting with customers." The times were fast, and she decided to go to school to become a blackjack dealer, rather than finish college.

Fast forward a decade later, and "drugs and alcohol had become the norm, part of my lifestyle, until it got out of hand." That was when a friend, who was also a blackjack dealer, offered to take Cleopatra to an addiction treatment center. "I didn't realize it, but the day I went into treatment was my mom's birthday." She paused, then added, "My mom said it was the best birthday present ever."

After getting clean and sober, Cleopatra went back to school and earned a bachelor's degree in marketing from Rutgers University. While there, she also received a scholarship to go to South Africa. That was where her life's direction changed. When Cleopatra walked inside the cell where Nelson Mandela was incarcerated for 27 years on Robben Island, tears covered her face and fell to the floor. Then in Cape Town, she said, "I gave the equivalent of \$2 to a woman in need, and she hugged me so tight



Cleopatra Patterson, a talented counselor in The Mission's Behavioral Health Center, said, "My passion is connecting with people. I believe deep within everyone I meet, there is something in myself that I can relate with."

that I can still feel it. She told me it was enough to pay for her rent for a month. I was opened up to a new outlook on life. It was about loving people. Like I'd been taught growing up in my family. And I

"I say to everyone who I am counseling that you are the reason I came to work today. And I believe it. I believe that how we meet someone sets the stage for what will follow."

realized that I needed to do something different with my life, something more meaningful."

That was when Cleopatra started working in the therapeutic community, gaining certifications and a master's degree in counseling.

As a counselor in The Mission's

Behavioral Health Center, she now finds that her ability to meet, greet and connect with people, like she was doing in the casinos when she was younger, is a strength that makes those she is counseling feel comfortable and willing to open up.

"For some reason," she shared, "I was gifted to help those who are in the early stages of recovery. I'm very positive, encouraging, open and hopeful. I purposefully create an atmosphere where someone who is vulnerable, and may be at the weakest point in their life, feels accepted for who they are – and safe. And, because of that, more times than not, while they may come across as distant, resistant, even afraid – in a very short time, they open up, like a wound, and I start hearing the beginnings of everything, as if they've known me for years."

Cleopatra added, "I say to every-

My Destiny Is Here *continued from page 3*

one who I am counseling that you are the reason I came to work today. And I believe it. I believe that how we meet someone sets the stage for what will follow. My passion is connecting with people. I believe deep within everyone I meet, there is something in myself that I can relate with. I share freely with them about my addiction and recovery. I tell them that I believe in them – and that they have the power to change things. And, while we can talk right away about things that are heavy, I am also able to bring the conversation back again to something positive. I always try to find a shared sense of humor. And at the end of our meetings, I will say, 'The only way you're getting out of here is to smile. You can't leave until you smile.' And some-

how that smile always comes around." She paused, then said, "That smile is how we start our conversations. And how we end them."

When asked about one of her favorite success stories, Cleopatra said, "Just the other day I heard from a women

"At the end of our meetings, I will say, 'The only way you're getting out of here is to smile. You can't leave until you smile.' And somehow that smile always comes around. That smile is how we start our conversations. And how we end them."

who I was counseling early in my career. She was in a halfway house, had been to prison, and she decided that this was her time to turn everything around. She gave it her all, and grasped everything – from budgeting her money to being honest with herself. After going through counseling, she got a sponsor, attended meetings, got a job, got her own place to live, got her children back, and now, all these years later, she is retiring from her position at Rutgers University."

Smiling, as she put her hand over her heart, Cleopatra added, "That, to me, is such a blessing. To have been at the beginning of her journey, and to have been just a small part of her success... that lightens my day and brings me such joy. That's why my destiny is being here."

Why The Mission?

Chris and Ines Wagner are very generous contributors to The Mission – with a unique delivery method.

Once a month, Chris, who works in Trenton at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, walks from where he works to The Mission, where he hand delivers a very kind donation from his wife and him.

"You are so close to where I work," Chris explained to Mary Gay Abbott-Young, President of The Mission. "And the short walk through the city reminds me of the important work you and your colleagues do to help our neighbors who are homeless and living on the street, with nowhere else to turn."

On his last monthly visit, Mary Gay took Chris on a tour of The Mission's campus, showing him the inner workings of the Thrift Store, Food Pantry, Shelter, Behavioral Health Center, and Supportive Housing.

"Each step along the way is about making sure that someone has enough



Touring The Shelter, Chris Wagner told Mary Gay Abbott-Young that each month he walks from where he works to The Mission to deliver a check from his wife and him – because "The short walk through the city reminds me of the important work you and your colleagues do to help our neighbors."

to eat, a safe place to stay, health care, counseling and treatment, vocational development and the opportunity to

obtain housing," Mary Gay shared with Chris, who responded with innate curiosity and immense compassion.

An Unmistakable Message That It Is Time To Change

Sometimes you receive a message that is so loud that it cannot be ignored. That's the only way Donald Glover can describe what happened to him.

As he shared, "The truck I was driving flipped over and over. I knew those terrifying moments were going to change my life – one way or the other."

That was two years ago, right after one of his best friends was murdered. After meeting with his friend's father to share his remorse and his desire to seek revenge, Don said, "We shared tears and a pint of Hennessy."

Then, on his way home, in his rear-view mirror, he saw the flashing lights of a police car. "I felt like everything was going wrong in my life, as I stomped on the gas, trying to flee the scene. Then I lost control, and the truck began flipping over, landing upside down." Pausing, he said, "I don't know how I walked away without a scratch. For me, that was a sign from God. I needed to start a new life."

Since coming to The Mission, Don has been selected to participate in two premiere programs at The Mission: *The New Direction Program* and the *Penn Restorative Entrepreneurship Program* – both of which were co-founded by Barrett Young, Chief Executive Officer of The Mission.

The New Direction Program is a transformative course to prepare formerly incarcerated individuals to see their real potential, and to create a plan for their future – with an emphasis on training, educational and career opportunities. Inspired by the talented faculty, including formerly incarcerated individuals who have gone on to succeed, Don has been learning to believe in himself, while building upon his unique strengths, including optimism

and resilience.

The Penn Restorative Entrepreneurship Program is a first-of-its-kind joint venture between the University of Pennsylvania and The Mission in which previously incarcerated individuals work side-by-side with professors, students and corporate executives. In this program, Don is learning how to develop a business plan for rebuilding his janitorial company, which he will present to a panel that includes

"Don is learning how to develop a business plan, which he will present to a panel that includes possible investors."

these two programs, along with the counseling he's received, and the deep reflection he has undergone, Don said, "Today, I stand strong as a new man. I've let go of the negative parts of my



Don received an unmistakable message that, "I needed to start a new life."

"Today, I stand strong as a new man. I look forward to reuniting with my beautiful wife and amazing children. I am going to invest my time and effort in rebuilding my janitorial company.

possible investors.

As a result of his participation in

past – of those people, places and things. I no longer struggle with remorse and addiction. I know this is my time. I look forward to reuniting with my beautiful wife and amazing children. I am going to invest my time and effort in rebuilding my janitorial company. I will continue my sobriety, and work to repair all of the damage to my relationships with family and friends. And with this new direction in my life, I am ready to be a role model for my children."

24-Hour Fundraising Run Along the Appalachian Trail

Allen Collins, an entrepreneur who takes fitness to the nth degree, became so inspired by the transformational changes he has seen in people in recovery at The Mission that he decided to create a most unusual fundraiser.

So, on June 24th, Allen is going to run for what he estimates to be 24 hours along the 72 miles of Appalachian Trail in New Jersey.

Starting at the New York border near Greenwood Lake, Allen will finish this grueling and demanding endeavor at the Delaware Water Gap National Park.

He is doing this to challenge himself. And to show those in recovery at The Mission that “If you make your mind up, and commit to a goal, with determination and discipline, you will succeed beyond your wildest expectation.”

Allen is also hoping that people will find it in their hearts to donate to The Mission as he undertakes this challenge that he has never done before – to run for 24 hours along the Appalachian Trail. Allen, who is on the faculty of The New Direction Program, an intensive course that helps individuals see their potential and create a new future for themselves, recently told the class, “I’ve been where you are, which is why I’m here for you. When I was 18 years old, I went to rehab for the first time, and the last time I was in rehab was eleven years later. During that time, I was arrested several times each year. My life had spun completely out of control. I kept getting high to avoid feeling the stuff I had bottled up. As a result, I was nothing but angry, often on the verge of rage.”

Fast forward, and through counseling, meetings and journaling, Allen said, “I can remember the day I finally woke up without the same thoughts, which were: Am I going to get high today?

If you would like to support Allen’s fundraiser for The Mission, you can donate by going to: RescueMissionOfTrenton.org/ATRun



For Allen Collins “Discipline equals freedom.”

Or am I going to kill myself?” He paused, then added, “When I realized I wasn’t waking up and asking myself those questions, I cried like a baby.”

After completing treatment, his first legitimate job was working for minimum wage in an entry position at a gym. “It was a humble start, but at least I was going in the right direction,” he said. “I loved being in the gym and wanted to be around people who were focused on staying healthy.” He was soon promoted to being a training manager.

Then he left that position and now co-owns three nutrition supplement stores.

What he was finding, Allen said, was that, for him, discipline equals freedom.

“I became very disciplined in my habits,” he said. “And, for me, the focus of that discipline has been keeping myself healthy and on a positive journey.” So, now, every morning, he has a routine of jumping in a cold plunge, then lifting

weights or going for a run in the mountains behind his home.

For Allen, succeeding is all about “building positive habits through discipline. When I was addicted, I could see

“I’ve been where you are, which is why I’m here for you.”

opportunities everywhere. You know what I mean,” he said, and the members of the class all nodded in agreement. “It takes an enormous amount of discipline to steal the money you need to feed a heroin habit. Now I’m using that same drive and discipline and to see opportunities that are positive.”

He added, “I’m here to tell you that if you can hustle enough to support a drug habit, you just have to turn that discipline and drive around to create positive results for yourself.”

“And I’m here to tell you,” he said, “that if I can do it, you can, too. Discipline equals freedom.”

While You Can't Change The Past, You Can Change What Your Future Looks Like *continued from back cover*

violence," she said. "So, when I got old enough, I ended up following my mom's patterns into abusive relationships and addiction. That ended me up in the prison system for life." With little options, Lynne had to give her daughter up for adoption. "It was the only way to keep her out of the system and safe," she said.

Lynne shared how "people don't know what it is like to be in prison until those prison doors slam behind you. That sound is deafening. I had no clue how to adapt to life in prison. I acted out, pushed back and spent a lot of time in the hole (solitary confinement)."

Lynne added, "While I was in solitary confinement, I started doing a lot of reading. A book a day. That is one of the qualities my mom instilled in me. From time to time, I'd look up and say, 'See, I'm reading, mom.' She always wanted one of her kids to go to college. And I did. While in prison." When a friend asked Lynne if she was tired of being sent to solitary confinement and wanted to go to school instead, Lynne grasped the opportunity. The Partakes Program offered a mentor to support her on this journey. After completing correspondence course credits, Lynne was admitted into the Boston University Prison Education Program.

When one of the Boston University professors came to the prison to teach an English course, Lynne felt ready. But when she saw the red ink all over her

"See, in prison you are a number. Nothing more. You need to believe in yourself as a person. Once you start to believe in yourself, a whole new world opens up."

first assignment, Lynne said, "I was ready to quit." The professor, though, would not give up on her. She told Lynne, "You can do this. I believe in you." Not used to having people believing in her, Lynne pushed harder. With the support of her mentor showing up each month, Lynne said, "I began to believe in myself. Before that, disappointment was the only thing I knew," she said. "So that's what I expected. However, my mentor believed in me and is still in my life today. It is amazing what having someone believe in you can do, particularly when you give it to someone who never had that belief. See, in prison you are a number. Nothing more. You need to believe in yourself as a person. Not as a number. Once you start to believe in yourself, a whole new world opens up," she emphasized.

Up to that point in her life, she said, "I had never received many positive words, just lots of name calling. But, over time, I learned that I could be someone I never thought I could. I became an overachiever and eventually implemented a first-

time offenders orientation. It took a while and an enormous amount of discipline." Lynne went on to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology. At Lynne's graduation, her brother came to hear her give the valedictorian speech. It was the last time they saw each other before he passed away.

Lynne stressed, "You have to look for people who believe in you. Create those connections. And keep them. Because none of us can do this on our own."

Nine years ago, Lynne was the first woman to be paroled after several years of women lifers being denied. "Now, I am bringing education to people in prisons and jails," shared Lynne, who has also gone on to earn a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice from Boston University.

"Education," Lynne emphasized to the class, "will give you options – the option to choose a different path in life, the option to be who you never thought you could be. There are two things that changed my life," she added. "Getting an education and developing relationships." She paused, then added, "I can tell you that with absolute certainty. And I wish that for all of you."

Lynne closed by saying to the class, "I encourage you to believe in yourself, and to find others who believe in you as well. And keep learning. Embrace your new journey."

Interested in Donating Your Gently-Used Clothing to The Mission's Thrift Store?

Our Thrift Store is a vibrant part of our community, where your donation provides a very affordable way for our patrons to find great values.

We gratefully accept donations of adult and children's clothing. We also make it convenient to donate clothing at our drop-off boxes. You can see a map to our

Clothing Box Locations on our website: RescueMissionOfTrenton.org

Another way you can support The Mission is by hosting a clothing drive through your company, business, school, faith-based organization, or civic group.

For more information, call **David at 609.695-1436 ext.360.**





Feeding those who are hungry, housing those who are homeless, counseling those seeking recovery, and providing life-changing opportunities.

While You Can't Change The Past, You Can Change What Your Future Looks Like

The eight members chosen to participate in the most recent class of *The New Direction Program* – all of whom are in recovery and have been incarcerated – were leaning in as they heard Barrett Young, Chief Executive Officer of The Mission and co-founder of the program, say, “While you can’t change the past, in this program, you’ll learn how you can change what your future looks like.” He added, “This transformative, ten-week experience was designed to help you believe in something you may have never believed in before – which is your own potential. Our premise for this program is that when you are ready to recover, you can start to create a new perception of yourself by: learning what drives you, connecting with others who have overcome similar challenges, taking advantage of educational and vocational opportunities, developing your own clear career path, and creating a support network of mentors who will assist you afterwards.”



Lynne Sullivan, who earned a college degree while incarcerated and now oversees academic support in correctional facilities, shared how education changed her life.

“It is amazing what having someone believe in you can do, particularly when you never had that belief.”

Then Barrett told the class they would be learning from an extremely talented faculty of experts – including business and nonprofit leaders, academicians, key Rescue Mission staff, experts in the field of recovery, and individuals who are also in recovery and have gone on to be extremely successful.

Among that talented faculty was Lynne Sullivan, who is a Regional Manager

for the Petey Greene Program, where she oversees academic support in correctional facilities. Lynn captivated the class as she told them about her personal journey of being incarcerated for life, then being granted parole, and re-entering into society.

She shared about her childhood being filled with chaos. From morning to night, she tried to figure out which side was up in a house that was turned upside down by violence and addiction. Having been abused, physically, emotionally and sexually, she left at the age of 16.

“I didn’t know how to live without

continued on page 7