

# THE BRIDGE

BUILDING BRIDGES OF HOPE

## I Was on a One-Way Ticket to Hell

**M**y name is Steven. When my wife and son were killed by a drunk driver, I almost lost my mind. At the time, I felt I had everything: a successful business, a boat, and a beautiful home on a golf course. Suddenly, none of that mattered. I was so distraught, I liquidated everything I owned,

jumped on my Harley, and biked to Las Vegas. While in sin city, I blew several million dollars on the things Vegas has to offer. I gambled, gave hundred dollar bills away to the homeless, and drank and drank and drank. At first I paid for my room, but before long the casino comped me a suite and all the perks that went with it. I was a high roller. But the real reason I was in Las Vegas was to kill myself drinking. I also kept blaming God for the deaths of my childhood sweetheart and my son. And that was eating me alive.

### *From a Las Vegas suite to a bed at the Mission*

Then one day I realized God was not to blame at all. My problem was that I didn't know who God really was. I thought I was a Christian, but I wasn't living like one. Then it happened. I'll never forget the day I fell down on my knees in that luxurious casino suite and asked God to open my eyes to what was happening to me.

For reasons I still don't fully understand, God directed my steps to Savannah and to Old Savannah City Mission. When I walked into the Mission, I felt like I'd been run over by a truck. It only took 24 hours for me to realize this was a place where God lived. Before long, I knew there was hope for me after all. Now, every day, I pray a prayer of gratitude for all you provide for me. I'm grateful for hot water, Christian counseling, a bed to sleep on, and good food. No, it's not a luxurious Las Vegas suite. *It's much better . . .* because this is a place where love lives. Thank you for making this Mission available to me. I will always remember your kindness.

*Thank you for giving me this Mission . . . something the casino life could never offer.*

**“ . . . the real reason I was in Las Vegas was to kill myself drinking.”**

*Photo has been changed to protect the privacy of our guest.*



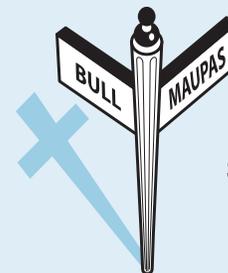
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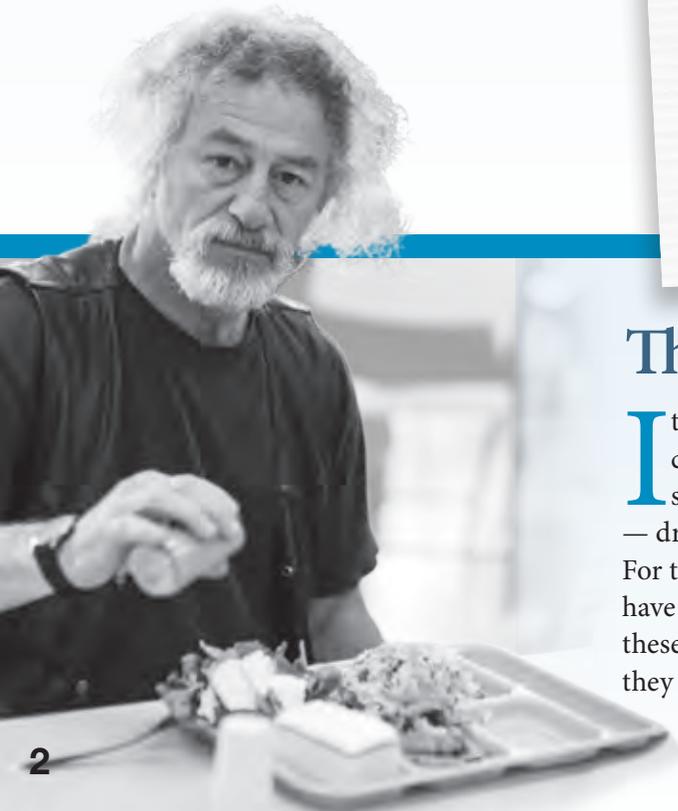
## One Love Ministry Supports Old Savannah City Mission

ON MARCH 12, 2016, One Love Ministry sponsored a basketball game called "Ballin' for a Cause." The proceeds of the event were earmarked for Old Savannah City Mission.



As Old Savannah City Mission strives to accomplish its goals of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, rehabilitating the addict, and restoring the ex-offender, partnerships in the community become vital for us to achieve these goals.

One Love Ministry has been in operation for two years, and during this time, they have sought to bring the body of Christ together to have "fun with a cause" while being an extension of ministries that they partner with. The "Ballin' for a Cause" basketball game provided over \$500 for Old Savannah City Mission to continue its mission.



## An Encouraging Word from Brother Bill

Dear Friend of Old Savannah City Mission,

**I** come to you once again with a grateful heart for your ongoing generosity to those who come through the doors of Old Savannah City Mission. You help provide good food, clean clothing, safe shelter, and Christian counseling to those who've lost their way. But the greatest gift you give is the *gift of hope*. So many come to us with *dead eyes*. Those eyes shout out heartache, loneliness, and fear. But when these folks spend time with us and become students of God's Word, *hope* eventually takes hold, and smiles come to once-distraught faces. Some tell us they can't remember the last time they smiled.

### We're seeing more and more soldiers who suffer from PTSD

Lately, we're seeing an increasing number of veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder — PTSD. These are people with invisible wounds . . . and during those many years of emotional trauma, too many have felt lost and unwanted. But because you help us keep the doors open for our soldiers, we're able to help offer them lasting hope — a hope found only in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

One more thing: You are always so responsive with your donations during the holidays, something for which we are always grateful. I'm equally grateful you remember the Mission with your strong support during the summer as well, when it's just as difficult for the homeless. That's why I want to thank you for being a *year-round friend* of the Mission. God bless you for being someone who cares.

Blessings,

William Stiles, Executive Director



*"... thank you for being a year-round friend of the Mission."*

**THANK YOU**

## Those who have been lost are finally

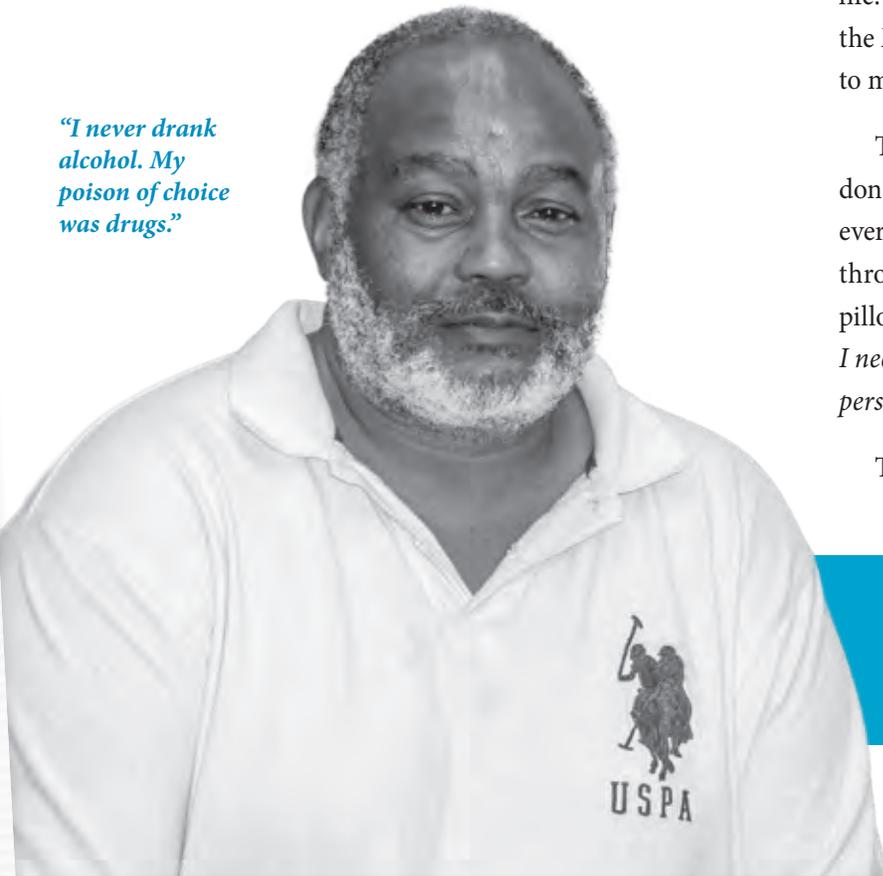
**I**t's summertime, and the living's not easy for the men and women who are coming through our doors. They are hungry, weary, and homeless, with many struggling with addictions that have short-circuited their hopes and dreams — dreams of career, education, retirement, and healthy relationships with family. For too many, these longed-for dreams have become living nightmares. Many have tried programs designed to help them get their lives back on track. Some of these programs have been effective; many have not. And now, often as a last resort, they find their way to the Mission.

# From 30 years of homelessness . . . to a new way of life at the Mission

**M**y name is Gregory. There was a time when you wouldn't want to be around me — especially when I'd go three to four months without taking a shower. I didn't smell good on the outside, and *inside I was even worse*. I had no direction and just kept making one wrong decision after another.

I was homeless for over 30 years and just did whatever I wanted to do — *which wasn't much at all*. I felt no responsibility to anyone. I'd sleep on porches and spend

*"I never drank alcohol. My poison of choice was drugs."*



my days and nights in the woods. I was homeless so long, I got used to it.

The worst decision I ever made was to start smoking pot when I was 20, which later in life led to an addiction to cocaine. I never drank alcohol. *My poison of choice was drugs*. I've also done time behind bars. The best thing about being incarcerated was that's where I learned about Old Savannah City Mission. And here I am today — at this place of hope. I never thought I would say this, but I don't miss the homeless life. But I will say the love, friendship, and peace I find here at the Mission are the only things that keep me from going back to my old lifestyle.

The longer I'm here, the more aware I am that your donations are saving my life. Because I work in the kitchen, every day I see firsthand the other folks you are also helping through your generosity. Then when I put my head on the pillow at night, I just say, *"Thank you. God, I'm finally where I need to be . . . now give me the strength to help the next person I meet who is in need."*

Thank you for giving me this new outlook on life.

**"It's not an exaggeration to say you and your donations are saving my life."**

## finding their way home . . . *thanks to YOUR generosity*

### Good news . . .

The good news is this: If our friends are able to discover even the thinnest thread of hope, it's possible for them to have a future after all. That's because the Gospel changes lives and gives people the opportunity to become the men and women God designed them to be. To continue to reach out to so many who are looking for miracles in their lives, we urge you

to give a generous summertime gift at this time. Whether your gift is large or small, it immediately goes to work to help those who are lost and who are looking for a way home. To send your donation now, please use the remit slip enclosed, or make your donation online at [www.oscm.org](http://www.oscm.org). God bless you for your generosity.

Just the other day, I was talking to three of my five grandchildren about what they thought their grandfather did at Old Savannah City Mission. Alijah, 8, Ava, 10, and Aliya, 11, said in unison, "You work!" As Executive Director, I appreciate my grandchildren's insight about the importance of a good work ethic. After all, it was their great-grandfather who instilled in me the value of hard work as well as smart work — the kind of values that can be transformative in the lives of people in need.

Every day, I meet men who have given up on life. Men who have burned every bridge they have ever crossed. Men whose families do not take their phone calls, whose families locked the doors when they saw them coming. Men whose friends and families have completely turned their backs on them. And then, these very same men made the decision that they were "sick and tired of being sick and tired," that they were truly "mature in their misery," and that they were ready to commit their lives to Christ and seek a fresh start in life at Old Savannah City Mission. And some of those very same men, men who were chronic, life-long alcoholics, men who were drug addicts for 15 to 20 years, men who have spent years and years in jails and in prisons — some of these same men now attend church regularly, have been reunited with their children and families, and are gainfully employed with salaries ranging from \$25,000 to \$45,000 a year, thanks to their participation in Old Savannah City Mission's Urban Training Institute.

Here at Old Savannah City Mission, we give hope to the hopeless . . . the Word of God to nourish their souls, a hot shower to refresh their bodies, a nutritious meal to fill their stomachs, and fresh sheets and pillows on which to lay their weary heads. I thank God for placing me here to be a blessing to those souls who have lost their way. At Old Savannah City Mission, "We change lives through proclaiming the Gospel, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, rehabilitating the addict, and restoring the ex-offender." To God Be the Glory for everything that we do to help individuals and families in need. And a big THANK YOU to all of the supporters and donors who allow God to work through them in supporting Old Savannah City Mission.



## My Summertime Donation

**YES, Brother Bill,**  
you can rely on my  
continued support of  
this ministry of rescue.

Some college students cannot wait for Spring Break to come so that they can don their new bikinis, bathing suits, and swimming trunks and head south to the border to the warmest, most popular beach they can find. That is the norm for way too many college students across the nation. Their days are filled with sleeping late, and then heading to the beach to model their digs, get suntans, and for some, partake of alcoholic beverages and drugs.

Such is not the norm for a group of students from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. For the past three years, students from this prominent school have traveled to Savannah to volunteer their services at Old Savannah City Mission. Last year, they worked at our Bargain Center on Mills B Lane, assisting with every facet of the business.

On their Spring Break this year, they helped to clean up and sort through donations in our annex to prepare for a Bag Sale. They cleaned every plate, cup, saucer, pot, and pan in sight. They sorted through pillow cases, sheets, blankets, mattress covers, and bed spreads, folding them neatly. They also sorted decorative pillows, discarding torn and/or soiled ones. They paired and rubber-banded boxes and boxes of shoes, and prepared them to be sent to our Bargain Centers. For three days, they worked relentlessly. At the end of their volunteer period, they presented our warehouse manager with several totes she had been needing to better organize incoming donations. Then they presented a check to Old Savannah City Mission and took up an additional offering from among themselves for the Mission.



We are so very appreciative of the presence and help that this group of conscientious, hard-working young people provide to Old Savannah City Mission year after year. They are a consummate model of how the ideal "Spring Break" could be spent.

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Here's my donation of:

- \$20.50** to provide **10** meals and other assistance
- \$30.75** to provide **15** meals and other assistance
- \$61.50** to provide **30** meals and other assistance
- \$\_\_\_\_\_** to provide as many meals and as much care as possible
- Please bill my credit card:
  - VISA  MC  AMEX  DINERS

**Old Savannah City Mission**  
P.O. Box 16839  
Savannah, GA 31416-3539

ACCOUNT NO. \_\_\_\_\_ EXP. DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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▶ Please mail this completed form with your summertime donation, or donate online at [www.oscm.org](http://www.oscm.org). Your gift is tax-deductible as allowed by law. You will receive a receipt.