Medford Gospel Mission

Reaching the Lost and Gathering the Reached Since 1959

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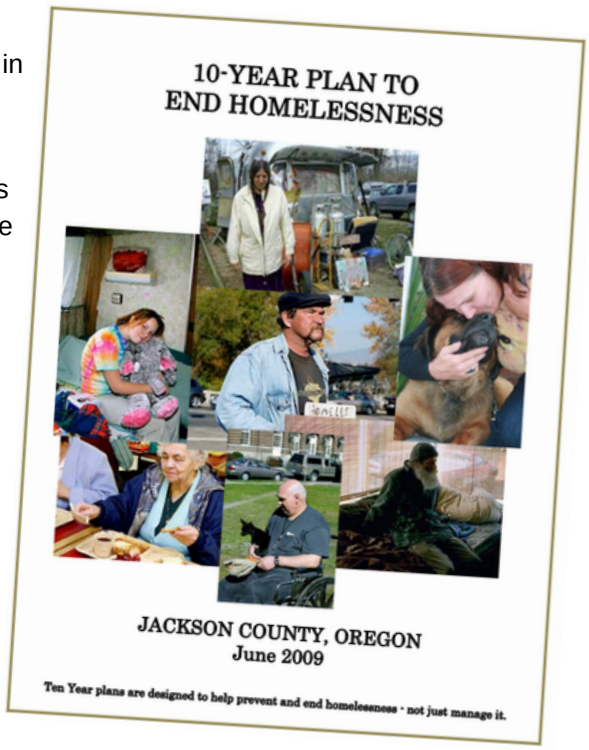
Friends,

What would you think if I told you that there would not be anymore homeless people in Jackson County in 10 years? You might think I am delusional.

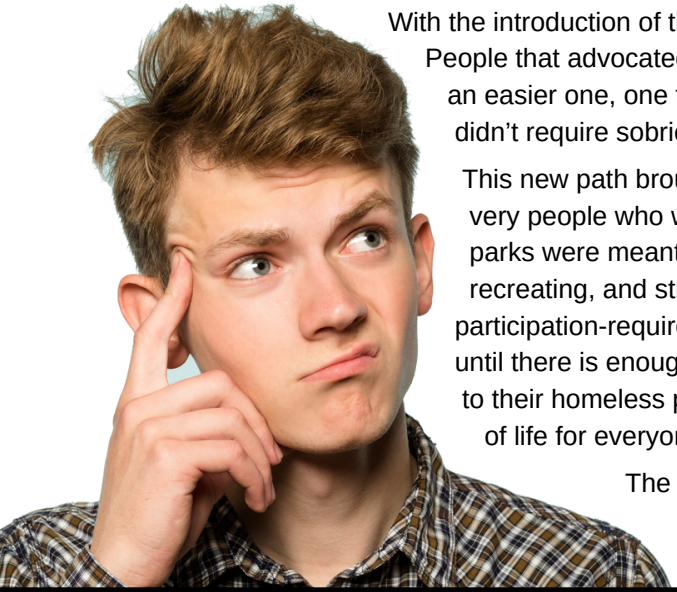
I was told this back in 2009, fourteen years ago as I sat in a newly established homeless task force meeting. It was there that someone presented Jackson County's 10-Year Plan to end Homelessness. The vast majority of the people that attended the meeting had no experience at operating a homeless shelter or helping people out of homelessness, but they were sure that homelessness in Jackson County, Oregon would end in ten years (by 2019). All that it would take is the government to fund the building of more housing, fund coordinated services, and fund case management. And they could do it without requiring anyone who is homeless to do anything, but simply wait on housing.



Considering we are the longest standing homeless service provider, and at the time, one of the only shelters in Jackson County you would think they would value what we knew about homelessness. But as I looked it over, I soon realized why they didn't consult us in the writing of the plan. They value people differently than we do. We want to see people restored as quickly as possible, and they want people to be housed as soon as possible. These opposing values provide two different paths out of homelessness.

Before the 10-year plan, there were a few non-profits that were meeting the material needs of homeless people but the only path out of homelessness was left to a couple of non-profits that value **work**. The Salvation Army that has an excellent program for people that are ready to **work** *at a job*, and the Medford Gospel Mission for people that are ready to **work** *on themselves*, addressing the issues that have lead to their homelessness in the first place.

In Jackson County these were your options, and if you weren't interested in **work,** you camped out of sight from the general public where you could live like you pleased, without anyone telling you what to do as long as you didn't cause too much trouble.



With the introduction of the 10-year plan and the infusion of government dollars, another path was built. People that advocated for the new path weren't out to destroy the old path but they saw their path as an easier one, one that was more user friendly, one that didn't require participation (**work**), and didn't require sobriety. After all this path lead directly to housing.

This new path brought more rights to the homeless and with that, less rights to the taxpayer, the very people who would pay for the 10-year plan itself. In the past, most everyone accepted that parks were meant for playing, libraries were meant for reading, green-ways were meant for recreating, and streets and parking lots were meant for parking. But without enough free, no participation-required housing options, all those places became dwelling spaces for people to live until there is enough housing for everyone. And until then, the destructive behaviors that have led to their homeless problem in the first place, continues to destroy their lives as well as the quality of life for everyone in our beautiful community.

The path out of homelessness that we brought to the valley back in 1959 is still here today. Everyday men and women are choosing to walk down the path that leads to a restored life.

This reminds me of the great allegory John Bunyan's Pilgrims Progress, where Christian and his traveling partner Hopeful are heading on a path called the Way, headed toward the Celestial City. After a while, the path becomes hard, and their feet are sore, and they start to get discouraged. But they continue down the Way and eventually weariness and discontentment set in and they long for a better way. And just across the fence they see By-Path Meadow. It looks easier so they hop the fence and head on through the meadow. By the time it was night, they begin to regret their decision and realize that they are headed for danger. So, they try to turn back, but it was too dark, and it started to rain, and the meadow began to flood, and they nearly drowned.

With all the skill that they had, they tried to return to the Way but were unable. But they finally found a little shelter out of the rain and fell asleep exhausted, only to be awakened by Giant Despair and imprisoned in Doubting Castle for trespassing on his property. They suffer greatly in Doubting Castle for almost four years when they finally decide to pray. And they pray through the night into the next morning, the morning of the Lord's Day, and it is there that they remember Christ and His glorious gospel. And it is only then that Christian realizes that he had in his pocket all along, the Key that would open any lock in Doubting Castle and allow them to escape to the path called the Way.

Bunyan's allegory is clear. The Christian walk isn't easy, and when His people quit looking to Christ and seek another way we usually find it. Traveling down the wrong path is treacherous and it's easy to get stuck in precarious positions, but the key to restoration is the gospel of Christ which always provides a path home.

Over the past 64 years many men and women have traveled down this path, leaving destructive behaviors behind, and leading to a restored life. But the work of the Mission is not done. There are many more people in our community that feel stuck and some tempted to go through By-Way Meadow. Keep them in your prayers and us as well as we seek to show them the restorative path home.

Thank you for your continued support!

Jim Burk

GIFTS FROM THE HEART

In honor of Joe & Karen Carini
by Gary & Nancy Payton
In honor of Betty Dempsey
by Joanie Ganong
In honor of Maude Scott
by Joanie Ganong

In memory of Jerry Armstrong
by Mary Armstrong
In memory of Hugh Barker
by Wayne & Sharon Christian
In memory of Earl Best
by Nickolas & Lindsy Boosalis
In memory of Norm Bishop
by Breta Smith
In memory of Brien Blankenship
by Janice Blankenship
In memory of Walter DeWald
by Cheryl Schmidt
In memory of Bud, Tom, & Mark Erskine
by Joan Erskine
In memory of Steve & Buck Fixsen
by Pat Fixsen
In memory of Bill Hollingsworth
by Anne Clarke
In memory of Jon Hudson
by Sarah Rice

In memory of Billie Joe & Joan Hunter
by Dusty & Debbie Hoffman
In memory of David Jenkins
by Carol Jenkins
In memory of Randy Kerr
by Joanie Ganong
In memory of Jackie Lucky
by Jonathan Lucky
In memory of Ray May
by Jeff & Jennifer McFarland
In memory of Nancy Mills-Bachmann
by Ron & Charmaine Brackett
In memory of Laura Molzer
by Donna York
In memory of Bob Moore
by Barbara Moore
In memory of Harold & Borgia Pickrel
by Barbara Moore
In memory of Patricia Piter
by Steve Piter
In memory of Jere Plumer
by Gary & Nancy Payton
In memory of Mary Jo Prettyman
by Bradford & Dawn Bailey
In memory of Jami Anne Burk
by Roberta Hawkins
In memory of Larry Root
by Glenda Root

In memory of Nancy Scafani
by David Scafani
In memory of Jerry Scheid
by Jackie Scheid
In memory of Anne Scott
by Lynn Baker
In memory of Duane Shinn
by Dianne Carter
and by Garland & Roberta Shinn
In memory of Brandon Taylor
by Barbara Moore
In memory of Jeff Twiss
by Michael Twiss
In memory of Ron von der Hellen
by Betty von der Hellen,
by Alice Kubo,
by Dee Ross,
and by David & Susan Mann
In memory of Eugene Warrick
by Janet Warrick
In memory of Horst & Margaret Wauer
by David & Helene Uhreen
In memory of Dustin Weidman
by Donna MacKenzie
In memory of Griff Wilder
by Pattie Wilder
In memory of Randy Williams
by Vicki Williams

Thank you for equipping us to restore lives in our community!