

That's Good for Oklahoma!®

CITY RESCUE MISSION RESCUES SOULS AS WELL AS BODIES

(GIT) Your heart beats a little faster as you walk past the dilapidated yellow walls of the City Rescue Mission. But what the Mission lacks in appearance, it makes up for in substance. A man in a black sweatshirt with Mickey Mouse emblazoned across the front, is quick to greet you with a firm handshake and a friendly hello as you enter the building.

The gentleman shares the same name and enduring smile of the famous cartoon character on his chest. Reverend Mickey Kalman is the Director of the City Rescue Mission located at S.W. 5th and Robinson just south of downtown Oklahoma City. Mickey, his wife Beverly and their three children took the job with the mission 20 years ago. The salary was only \$250 per month and the director and his family lived in the mission.

As the weather turns colder, many of the city's homeless abandon the nearby bridges they normally occupy and head for the Rescue Mission. The facility consists of three shelters; a men's, women's and family. The men's shelter is the largest building and also contains the dinning hall and chapel. The family shelter only has room

for 12 to 15 families and unfortunately must turn away twice that number each month. The mission provides beds for over 130 men, women and children every night. The only requirements to stay at the mission are that you must shower and attend chapel.

"People can stay at the mission as long as they

need to," Beverly stressed "The shelter gives them the opportunity they need to straighten out their problems, work and put away money so they can go out and make it on their own."

The mission supplies basic needs such as food, a warm place to sleep and a clean shower. In addition, a Regeneration Program is offered in which individuals participate in a 90 day rebuilding schedule. The program helps people deal with drug problems, alcohol addictions, child and spouse abuse or any other difficulty they may be struggling with. Counseling is given, spiritual worth is administered and everyone gets a chance to build self esteem and confidence by working in the mission.

Tim, a gentleman who has been helping with and helped by the mission for three weeks, says, "This place gives a guy that's down-and-out the opportunity and guidance he needs."

City Rescue Mission provides their big Thanksgiving dinner on Sunday Nov. 24 this year, and will be serving food on Thursday the 28th, just like they do 365 days of the year. Three hot meals are

served in the mission's dinning hall, feeding 300 to 400 hungry people every day. The number attending the Thanksgiving meal can reach upwards of 700. A turkey dinner with all the trimmings is served to anyone who comes in the door and the mission offers those in need a chance to make free phone calls to friends and loved ones.

For the Thanksgiving dinner over 40 volunteers, from students to grandparents and anyone with a kind soul, dedicate their time.

Beverly says, "Most people don't care what their job is, peeling potatoes, serving or cleaning up, they just want to be a part."

Throughout the year nearly 2,000 individuals volunteer their time for the mission. "If it wasn't for the volunteers we couldn't make it," Mickey remarks while holding a paintbrush he is using to refurbish a wall.

The mission's budget runs around \$900,000 a year. Every penny comes from donations. No federal funds are administered to the center. Most of the funds used to operate the mission are donated in November and December. Beverly said, "This is the benevolent time of the year and the money we take in gets us through the lean summer months."

Mickey quickly pointed out, "We need money all year round. We get plenty on Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, but the rest of the year nothing."

One method the mission uses to generate funds is by sponsoring a "Tour de Soup" bicycle race. Every July over 350 riders from all over the country come to the mission to participate in the big event.

Currently the Rescue Mission is engaging in a fund raising campaign to renovated the dormitories and showers and build new housing facilities for children and families.

Larry, who also takes part in the mission's kindness, says with a smile, "The regeneration program is the top of the line for me. I get to know Jesus and a safe place off the street. These people really make a difference for me."

Larry is right. Mickey, Beverly and everyone helping the City Rescue Mission is making a difference. If you get the chance, visit the City Rescue Mission and contribute a little time or money. It's good for Tim and Larry. It's good for your soul. And that's good for Oklahoma!

Happy Thanksgiving and God Bless,
from the entire staff of GIT, Inc.

