

THE MISSION Bell

"DEAR CHILDREN, LET US NOT LOVE WITH WORDS OR SPEECH BUT WITH ACTIONS AND IN TRUTH." - 1 JOHN 3:18

Leah Johnston

RESIDENT TESTIMONY

Before coming to the Mission, my life was chaotic. I was trapped in an abusive relationship and heavily addicted to drugs. I was in and out of jail, and I wasn't showing up for my son the way he deserved. While I was incarcerated, my mom passed away from cancer. Not being there for her is something I still carry with me.

My childhood was good in many ways, but it wasn't without trauma. In fourth grade, I was sexually abused—something that shaped me in ways I didn't fully understand at the time. When I was 23 years old, I lost my fiancé—the person I grew up with and loved my entire life—along with our baby. I woke up at 5 a.m. and found him on the floor of our bedroom. I found out later that he suffered from a brain aneurysm. Three days after his passing, I gave birth to a stillborn baby girl. That kind of grief is impossible to put into words. It became the turning point that led me into addiction.

I struggled with depression and everything that comes with addiction—shame, isolation, and hopelessness. Before the Mission, I felt lost and broken, unsure if my life could ever look different. I was stuck in toxic relationships. I felt spiritually empty and angry at God. I had burned through my money and my support system. Emotionally, I was a wreck. I didn't trust anyone. I didn't trust myself. I was tired of just surviving.

I had been sexually assaulted, beaten, and humiliated. I was in jail facing theft charges with nowhere to go, no one on my side, and no fight left in me. Everything I had been running from finally caught up with me.

One night, in the jail shower, I got on my knees and prayed harder than I ever had before. It wasn't polished or pretty—it was desperation. I asked God for help because I knew I couldn't save myself.

The very next morning, my attorney brought me an application to the Rescue Mission of Middle Georgia.

At the time, I didn't know much about the program. Looking back now, I can clearly see that it was the first door God opened for me. I had to go through two other jails before I finally made it here. When I stood in court and was given the option of probation, I chose the Mission instead. I felt God leading me here, and I knew this was where I was supposed to be.

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After being incarcerated for a year and a half, I felt incredibly grateful for the opportunity. The moment I walked through the gates, I felt like I was home.

The most meaningful part of my experience has been the bonds I've formed with the residents and staff. Through work therapy, I've had the opportunity to serve in Admin and as a Resident Manager. I've been able to serve others in meaningful ways, and those opportunities have helped me grow and heal.

Before coming here, I believed in God—but I didn't trust Him. I was angry, broken, and trying to control everything on my own. Since entering the program, I've learned that God never abandoned me. Even in my darkest moments, He was pursuing me. Now, I'm learning how to walk with Him instead of running from Him.

I've gone from chaos and addiction to structure and purpose. I've learned to make healthier choices and to be present spiritually and emotionally. I'm stronger and closer to God than I've ever been. I'm learning how to handle my feelings without running or hiding. I've gained confidence and found a sense of belonging I never had before.

I'm proud that I've stayed committed to my recovery. I'm proud that I've grown closer to God and built meaningful relationships with the women and staff here. I'm proud that my past no longer controls me. I'm building a life I can be proud of.

After I graduate from the Women's Life Recovery Program in April, I plan to transition into AfterCare. I hope to rebuild my relationship with my son, find a job, and eventually get my own place.

The Mission has prepared me in more ways than I can count. It has given me structure, responsibility, and tools to handle life without running back to old habits. Through accountability, counseling, and my relationship with God, I've learned practical and spiritual skills for lasting change. Most importantly, I've learned that I am capable of growth, healing, and contributing to the world around me.

I've learned that change is possible. That my choices matter. That God has a plan for my life. Life isn't perfect—but now I face it with faith and strength instead of fear and despair.

The Mission truly saved my life. It gave me a chance when I had nothing and surrounded me with people who cared when I felt completely alone. This isn't just a place that gave me a roof over my head. It's where I found hope, healing, and myself again.

REAL STORIES. REAL CHANGE.

Every Tuesday on our Facebook and Instagram pages, we share a powerful story of life change from right here at the Rescue Mission of Middle Georgia. Through [Testimony Tuesday](#), you'll meet the men and women whose lives are being transformed—residents finding freedom from addiction,

staff members who once walked through our doors themselves, and individuals discovering renewed hope and purpose.

These stories are honest, inspiring, and a reminder that healing is possible. They reflect the heart of our mission and the

impact made possible through faithful support.

We invite you to follow along each week, be encouraged, and share these testimonies with others. You never know who might need the hope found in someone else's story.



National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Protecting the Vulnerable • Proclaiming Hope



April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, a solemn reminder that many children in our state are living with unimaginable hardship.

Georgia is currently ranked **37th in the nation for child well-being**. In just one year:

The Reality in Georgia

7,545

Children experienced
Neglect

1,315

Children experienced
Physical Abuse

1,175

Children experienced
Psychological Abuse

500

Children experienced
Sexual Abuse

The Long-Term Impact

Behind every number is a child made in the image of God — a child who deserves safety, stability, and love.

At the Rescue Mission of Middle Georgia, we see how childhood trauma often follows individuals into adulthood. Many of the men and women in our Life Recovery Program carry wounds that began in their earliest years. Abuse and neglect can leave lasting scars, but they do not have the final word.

Through Christ-centered counseling, safe housing, discipleship, and compassionate care, we walk alongside families as they begin the journey toward healing. For the children in our care, we provide a secure, nurturing environment where they are reminded daily that they are **protected, valued, and deeply loved by God**.

How You Can Help

Pray for vulnerable children across Georgia.

Support programs that strengthen families and promote healing.

Advocate for safe, stable homes where children can thrive.

A Message of Hope

The Gospel is good news for the brokenhearted. Together, we can reflect Christ's heart by protecting the vulnerable and helping families experience restoration and hope.



Did you Know?

We serve a community meal on Good Friday.

At the Rescue Mission of Middle Georgia, Good Friday is more than a date on the calendar—it is a sacred reminder of Christ’s sacrificial love and the living hope we have because of the cross. In response to that love, we open our doors and extend Christ’s invitation to all—offering a warm meal, heartfelt hospitality, and the hope that flows from His sacrifice. As we reflect on Jesus’ willingness to lay down His life for us, we are reminded of our calling to serve

others with compassion and grace. Through this Good Friday meal, we don’t just offer food—we share the love of Christ in tangible ways, meeting both physical and spiritual needs. On this holy day, we are honored to serve our neighbors in need, reflecting the compassion of Jesus as we live out our purpose to bring hope, healing, and restoration across Middle Georgia.



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Rescue Mission of Middle Georgia

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