

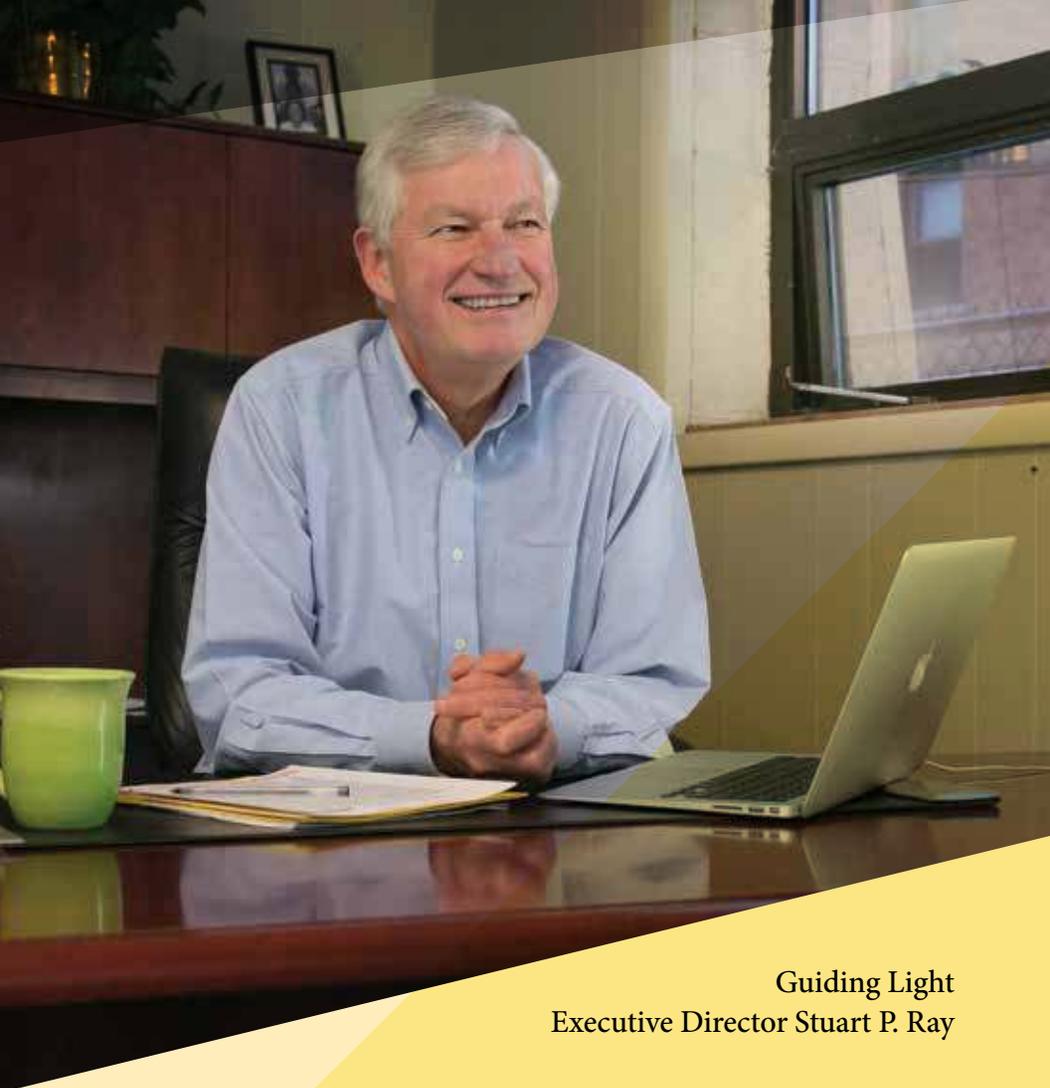
GUIDING LIGHT

Take a moment.
Take action.
lifeonthestreet.org

OF GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN



*a working
perspective*



Guiding Light
Executive Director Stuart P. Ray

You may have noticed that job openings are on the rise in Grand Rapids. As this trend continues, it becomes easier for those out of work to find new employment. That is, unless an individual is without an address. When homelessness and joblessness coincide, it can be the beginning of a downward cycle into poverty and life on the streets that can last for years, or even decades, as men slide into sickness due to the exposure that addiction beckons.

At Guiding Light, we provide the opportunity to find full-time employment and an address. We connect program participants with jobs that best meet their skills, abilities, and goals. We recognize that people

need more than just jobs to become whole. We also connect these men to each other so that they can assist one another not only in job searches, but in their spiritual searches as they form stronger relationships with one another and with God. We understand that in order to become healthy, each person has needs that must be addressed holistically and in community with others.

Guiding Light is not just a place, but a process and a transformational experience. Our programs meet each individual participant exactly as he is and address his obvious physical needs of clothing, shelter, food, and employment. Then the real work begins. Once he is in a program, he has responsibilities here that contribute to the daily upkeep of the mission. He is up by 6 A.M., he does his assigned chores and goes to Bible study. He forms relationships with his fellow participants and has opportunities to mentor his peers. When he is not doing these things, he is either searching for work or going to work. All of these activities enable him to make changes in his own life. He is renewed through these processes, and his story changes. Instead of being isolated and desperate, he becomes a part of a healthy community and is able to make plans for his future.

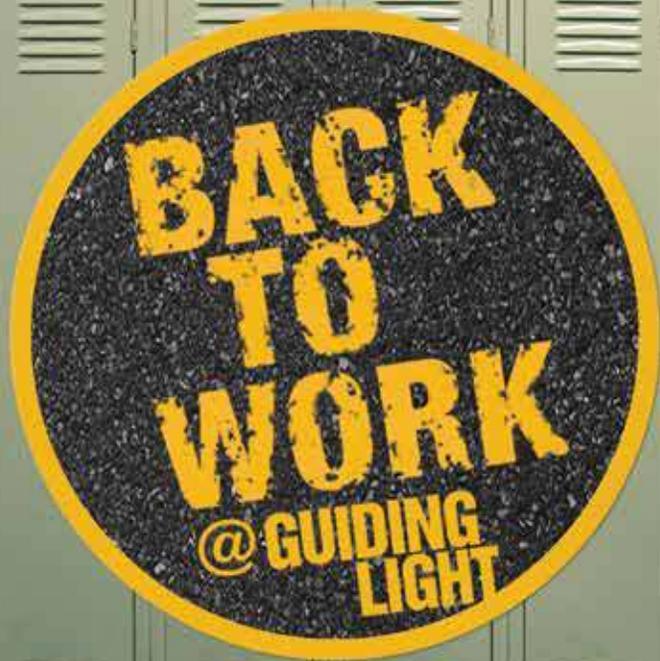
While many men have similar experiences that led them to Guiding Light, we recognize that each individual has their own story to share that holds the promise of unique ways in which God will use them to positively impact the lives of others. Our programs give these men stability, consistency, and opportunity. Each of our programs have specific rules and procedures and are designed to meet the particular needs of each individual. No participant is allowed to become stagnant. At the point where each man's story and ours intersect, there is hard work, hope, and God's promise to prosper each of us.

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

—2 Corinthians 5:17

Stuart P. Ray
Executive Director
Guiding Light





Arron, 37
Working and
saving money

Guiding Light's Back to Work program is a smart and strong solution for promoting financial independence through work. Each year, millions of dollars are funneled back into the economy because of our emphasis on finding and holding steady employment. You saw in our last issue the numbers from 2015; how 147 men found jobs while staying at Guiding Light. Here are a few profiles from those who are taking back their autonomy in 2016!

The Back-to-Work program is perfect for someone like Arron. Until a couple months ago he was working, living at home with his wife and three kids. But a steady addiction issue finally crept up and caused some problems.

"It's kind of overwhelming in a way, because I've never even had a speeding ticket," says Arron. "Some of the guys here have tethers or been in prison before. It's different than what I'm used to."

Faced with an impending divorce, mounting child support and having to move out of his home, Arron is now doing everything he can to get his life back to normal.

After going through some emergency rehab services, Arron was

referred to Guiding Light. "Everyone is expected to stay sober here and they're not afraid to give people breathalyzers or make them take a drug test." This helps keep Arron accountable and focused on getting healthy again. "When I walk in the door, I know that everyone here is sober... and that helps."

Arron is still stunned that he's even here. After all, technically, he's still considered a homeowner and a husband. Employment has never been a problem for him, let alone homelessness. But he's a living example of how someone can be knocked off the track by addiction and divorce. And like the good man he wants to be, he's addressing these issues as best he can.

"My kids know I'm taking care of some stuff," he says.

Arron is a very smart and capable person. Two weeks into his new job, he was promoted to a manager position. "I'm a people person, so the more people I deal with, the better."

Looking down the road, Arron is confident that he'll get back on his feet, save some money and own a house again. And because of Guiding Light's savings program, 75% of his paycheck is being saved for him. "I'm hoping to have about five thousand dollars saved up by the time I leave here."



SUCCESS
STORIES

Anthony

"I got here yesterday and I have two interviews today!"



I'm here because I'm looking for stability and instruction in my life. I'm also looking for consistent employment so that I can become a more productive citizen. I took a bad turn, but by the grace of God, I'm back at it again.

I lost part of my middle finger during an on-the-job accident and began to have issues with pain medication. It took me awhile to wean myself off of the meds, and by that time, I missed rent and was couch surfing. Once people know that you're in need, they can become demanding. Luckily, I learned about Guiding Light through word of mouth. Here, you have a place to stay that is rent-free for 90 days, provided that you follow their simple rules, like doing your assigned chores, staying sober, and going to job interviews. I'm capable of doing that.

My plan is to stay here for the entire three months of the program. My goal is to save \$2,000 during that time so that I will have enough to pay for my first month's rent at an apartment and get back on my feet. If I can do that, there aren't too many places that will turn me away. As long as I keep my job, I should be able to maintain housing. That's what normal people do. There's help available with housing as well, as long as you're working and showing that you're making some type of progress. That's part of the program; they have the resources to do that. They have great job coaches and they know where to send you. You're not just banging your feet for no reason, knocking on closed doors. The doors have already been opened for us because of this program.

I went to church Sunday and the preacher told me that God is giving me another chance. Five years down the road I want to see myself in my own house with my own kids running around me.

Michael

"If you really want to fix your life, this is the place to go."



I've been in the Back to Work Program for just under a month. I'm here because I broke my arm falling down an icy stairwell and had eight screws and a plate put in. I couldn't draw social security unless I was disabled a year. Consequently I got evicted after being only \$500 behind on rent.

I spent two weeks on the streets in Holland. I bathed in Lake Macatawa in 55 degree water and worked 30 hours a week. I had to sleep during the day with my only possessions in a bag I wrapped around my neck and used as a pillow. When people on the street know you have money, they flock to you and you have to find ways to hide so they don't try anything.

Now my arm is pretty much healed and I'm back to work. It took me all of fifteen minutes to get a job in the Back to Work program. A doctor called up and needed some work done around his place. He's 92 years old and takes care of his wife. His yard hasn't been touched in five years. I happened to be out in the lobby putting my things away and they asked me if I'd be willing to do it. I said sure, I can help the guy. I gave him a phone call and he offered to come pick me up. It's not a full-time job but it was work right away. It happened that fast. I helped him clean up his giant yard, put in flower beds and cleaned out his garage. I didn't think I'd be good at doing something like that, but hey, I'm happy working for him. He needs the help and I like helping him.

I'm starting a full-time job working nights beginning this week, but I'll help the doctor during the days if he needs me.

THE JOB POST

Frank

“A lot of the employees became my friends.”

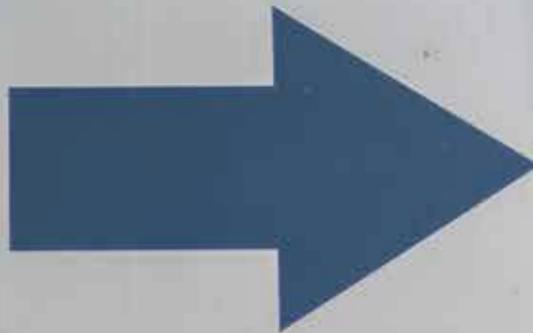


Before coming to The Job Post, I was without a job for two weeks. I worked through a different temp agency, who told me that I would be hired into the company I was working at in three months. After six months, I still hadn't been hired in, and I knew it was time to part ways with them.

I found The Job Post through Indeed.com. They get you a job really fast and they're nice people. I found a job the day after I came in here. They do a skill assessment so they're able to find a job that's appropriate for your personal skills and needs.

There are a lot of nice people here. A lot of the employees became my friends. They always keep it real with me and that's something I like. I feel like they try to look out for everybody. It feels genuine too. Two of the employees drove me to and from work to Zealand every day when I was working with a company there. The driver Isaac and I connected over sports. Everyone at the Job Post seems good at building relationships with those they help.

My goal is to work as a Hi-Lo driver so that I can set aside part of my income to invest in a restaurant with my sister. She is going to be the chef and front-face person. She's saving a lot, and I'm saving a little bit at a time as well.



For one year, The Job Post has been a staple of the Guiding Light ethos; that Social Entrepreneurship and sustainable enterprises (like the Job Post and Iron House) can help non-profits like Guiding Light stay strong while creating solutions for getting men back on their feet. Here are some cool stories to prove it!

Jake grew up in a good home in nearby Cedar Springs with his brother and two loving parents. In high school he was an avid golfer, snowboarder and guitar player. In college he studied and graduated with a Political Science degree. His life was good.

But when Jake was around 28 years old, something started happening. “I realized I was talking to myself non-stop. The voices in my head were pushing me in different directions and I didn’t know who or what to listen to.”

*“I thought
I threw my
life away with
what I did.
I thought
everything
was ruined.”*

—Jake;
*Back to Work
and Job Post*

Jake was diagnosed with schizophrenia. With the prescribed medication and a dedicated counselor, his condition was manageable. And everything was going okay for him. He had his own apartment and car and was working steadily for three years.





—continued from page 12

But then came some trouble that was not his choice to be in.

“I suffered a bad episode. I thought I heard actors and actresses talking to me and I walked into a house that I didn’t know.” The owner of the house panicked and rightly called the police. Startled and confused, Jake stayed still until the police arrived so he could explain to them what happened.

“I tried telling them my story... but it didn’t matter.” He was arrested and charged with home invasion. The experience caused him to lash out at police officers in jail. “I was charged with two more felonies— I pushed two police officers.”

With three felony convictions, Jake spent seven months in jail and lost everything. His apartment, car... and even a lot of his friends.

After the stint in jail, Jake moved in with his parents out in the country. Soon, he grew bored and realized he really wanted to work again. During his job hunt in Grand Rapids, he noticed the new “Back to Work at Guiding Light” sign facing South Division Avenue. Two days after emailing Job Post VP Christina Felan, he was filling out paperwork with a job lined up at a local lumber company.

“Christina (at the Job Post) was so nice and helpful.”

As Christina learned more of Jake’s story, she suggested he chat with Matthew Holmes, the Back to Work program director. It would be a chance to start over and gain back his independence. By living at Guiding Light for a couple months, Jake could be close to work, meet new people and save money. It was the ideal program for Jake to press the reset button.

“For people like Jake, both options can work at the same time,” Christina offers. “He came in for Job Post services and realized that Guiding Light can help him too.”

For now, Jake is hopeful. He’s making money, getting along with his co-workers and he’s liking his job.

And he doesn’t mind talking about his mental health. “I’m doing really good right now and I want to give hope to people who’ve been through what I’ve been through. When you’re at the very bottom of your life, there are always ways to get out of it. That’s what I realized here, and it really helped me out. Without Guiding Light, I don’t know where I’d be.”

THE JOB POST



Natasha

“Even my friends say I seem happier now.”

I’m here because I lost my last job due to health issues. I was two months into a job that I liked and then became extremely ill with a viral infection. They penalized me for having health issues and fired me two days before I could have been hired in.

I have four kids I need to pay for, so when I heard about Job Post, I came here to learn more. Everyone is friendly and helpful—Christina, who I’ve been working with, explained and showed me everything so well that I didn’t even have to ask too many questions afterward.

My old job was manufacturing auto parts. I really like cars, and being around motorcycles and trucks. My new job is packaging, stocking and inspections. It’s on the bus line, and is real easy to get to. I make less here than my old job, but I do get to work first shift now, which is nice.

Just recently the company told Job Post they’re really impressed with my work. Even my friends say I seem happier now; that I’ve smiled more in the time I’ve been here than at my previous job.

Anybody who really wants to make a difference in their lives should come to The Job Post. Even if they want to take a different step in life, toward something better, they should check it out. The staff here offers a lot of support, even when it’s not work-related. They tell me to be proud of myself, and to keep on working hard—it’s something I plan to do, both so I can provide more for my children and eventually work toward a job in automotive.

“Is there anyone here who can give me a tour?”

Guiding Light board member Nancy Claus reflects on what led her to volunteer.

This was the fateful question in 2010 that led Nancy Claus to an enriching volunteer opportunity. “I was caring for my elderly parents who lived across the street from us. It was overwhelmingly difficult... and one day I decided I needed to volunteer somewhere. So I literally got in my car and drove down to Guiding Light on South Division, and pushed that little button outside their security door and walked in.”

The man at the front desk, Jeffrey, was a young African-American man, who was in the program at the time. He happily walked her around the building and answered her questions and explained how things worked. She was hooked.

“I called Stuart and asked if I could preach at Guiding Light once a month and he said yes!”

Nancy spent 25 years working as an interior decorator, before she felt called to ministry and become a pastor. But two days after graduating from Western Theological Seminary, her parents' health crashed. “My dad is now in his fourteenth year of Alzheimer's and my mom passed away two years ago. Every day I was with them. I took care of my parents for three years. Some days I would come home crying and think, “Lord, I just finished seminary. Is this really what you have in store for me?”

Preaching at Guiding Light once a month was a respite for her. She found it uplifting and encouraging. Men in the program would thank her for the message and share their story with her. She was overjoyed to regularly spend time with those who were hopeful about their lives. After



a few years Executive Director Stuart Ray invited her to join the Guiding Light Board of Directors.

As her parents' health declined, Nancy and her husband ultimately moved them into Assisted Living and Memory Care at the Holland Home. It was that very day that Porter Hills Village called her and told her, “We now have enough funds to hire a second chaplain—would you like to apply?” Forty-one people applied, but Nancy got the job.

Porter Hills has over 1,350 older adults, the average age of which is 91 years old. “I don't think I'd be the chaplain I am today if I hadn't had those three years of caring for my ailing parents.”

To this day, Nancy continues being on the Guiding Light board, and serving in any way she can. She recalls being involved in the board's decision to purchase the three Iron House apartment buildings for sober living. Each one was remodeled for the men transitioning from the recovery program to the real world. “Each time we opened a new house, I was asked to write and share a House Blessing. These Blessings are mounted and framed in the lobby of each Iron House. They serve as a reminder to the men that walk through the front door each day that this home is one of the pathways for his continued sobriety and recovery.”

As Nancy was a lifeline to her ailing parents, she saw Guiding Light as a lifeline to struggling men. “We're all broken. Every one of us has something we're working on. And just like the men here, we're all moving towards becoming the people that God desires us to be.”

Richard Brill sits in his dining room overlooking the small lake behind his house in Grandville. He points out the window to his small electric motor boat. “All that rain we had... there was water completely filled to the top of that boat!”

His wife, Mary Brill, also chimes in. “We used to have a pedal boat but the grandkids wore it out!”

This begs the question. How many kids does it take to wear out a pedal boat?

“We are blessed with fourteen grandchildren,” Mary proudly states. “We have a wonderful family, and have four children who are all married to spouses that we love very much. So that makes us having eight children, because we love them exactly like our own.”

Giving & Planning



and living and loving and spending time with grandkids and so much more!

Both Richard and Mary grew up in local churches and met each other in the 60's. Richard worked for his family business part-time, and Mary worked in education. They were married in '63, which puts them at 53 years of being committed to each other.

“I am the wife of Richard, and that is my main goal,” Mary says, her voice cracking. “But above all, what runs my life is my love for the Lord. I want to serve Him in everything that I do. I hope that identifies who I am.”

While his kids were still young, Richard's father passed away, leaving the young family man scrambling to keep the family business afloat. “It was a very difficult time.”

Richard's hard work paid off for himself and his family. Over the years, he managed to hire the right people and grow the business. Richard recalls a time when the company employed over 500 people. “My philosophy was always to hire people smarter than me in many different areas.”

Now retired, the Brills enjoy spending time with family. “All our kids live within 20 minutes of us. So we see a lot of them, and we support them in any way we can.”

A few years back, their son mentioned that he and his wife started volunteering at Guiding Light, serving dinner once a week. That simple



Richard & Mary Brill

duty opened up a world of optimism and relationships. They found great joy in helping the men find jobs, housing, and furniture.

Soon, Richard and Mary joined the fun and helped host dinners and parties and became genuine friends with several Guiding Light residents. “We got to see results from the ground up. I truly believe this is the kind of place where Jesus would spend his time.”

Mary adds, “Guiding Light brings hope where there is no hope. Each man's needs are different, varied and deep. And Guiding Light does an amazing job of meeting those needs.”

A few years ago the Brills started talking about their estate planning. They knew that Guiding Light had won a special place in their hearts, and wanted to strategically allocate something to them.

“I've been on the board for the Barnabas Foundation,” Richard says. “We now give our gifts through Barnabas and they take care of the paperwork and the investing.”

Since investments and estate planning can change and fluctuate, the Brills are revisiting the process again, to make sure it still lines up with their legacy goals. “I'm not even sure how much Guiding Light is going to get after we're gone. But we've picked out a percentage for them.”

“We want to leave our kids a legacy of giving and sharing,” Mary says. “That means a great deal to us. They've all become givers themselves. They too have found their own paths and causes that God has called them to, and that thrills us a lot.”

JOIN US FOR GUIDING LIGHT'S ANNUAL BANQUET!



"Affirming Dignity Through Personal Relationships"

with Special Guest speaker Ron Hall,
co-author of *Same kind of Different as Me*

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2016

6 PM Registration • 6:30 Dinner and Program • \$75 per person

FREDERIK MEIJER GARDENS & SCULPTURE PARK

1000 East Beltline NE • Grand Rapids, MI 49525

Please RSVP by September 20th at
www.lifeonthestreet.org/event/2016-banquet/
or call 616.451.0236 ext. 20.

Ron Hall will be available for a book signing immediately following the Banquet. Books will be available to purchase at the event.

WHY IS WORKING IMPORTANT?

We believe that when a man works toward self-sufficiency, he's honoring the Father that created him. Whatever pain or hardships he brings to our doors, we show him he is capable and worthy of responsibility and love. We encourage steady work, saving money, and making healthy choices. Through these things and a connection to God, his shame and despair can fade, replacing discouragement with confidence and dignity.

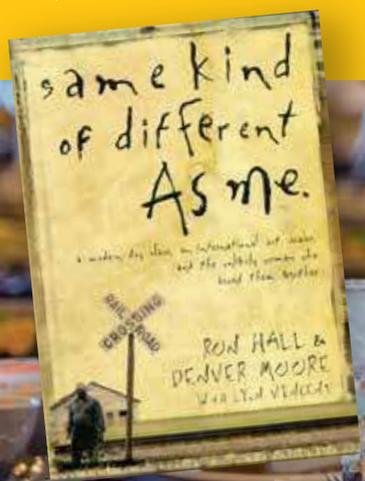
HELPING GUIDING LIGHT IS AN INVESTMENT IN YOUR COMMUNITY!

Helping men get back on their feet helps the economy! When we put men back to work, they're paying taxes, buying local groceries, and paying for their own housing and transportation. We don't charge money for our services or receive government funding, so we rely on the community to help us remain strong. With your help, we can be that last remaining hope for a man who might have lost everything.

"YES, I WANT TO INVEST IN MEN BECOMING HEALTHY AND SELF-SUFFICIENT."

Please consider donating any amount you can to help make this our best year ever! As always, Guiding Light is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Gifts are tax deductible as allowed by law.

Please mail donations to: Guiding Light
255 S. Division Ave, Grand Rapids, MI 49503
or donate online at lifeonthestreet.org





OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

Through the guiding light of God's Spirit, Guiding Light Mission partners with individuals to fulfill their God-given potential through rescue, recovery and re-engagement in community.

GUIDING LIGHT
255 S. DIVISION AVE
GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503

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