

# GUIDING LIGHT

OF GRAND RAPIDS

SUMMER 2017

## A NEW LEASE.

# ON LIFE.

## BREAKING BARRIERS AND OPENING DOORS.





# GUIDING LIGHT

Executive Director Stuart P. Ray

As I'm sure you know, we've changed a lot over the years. With Guiding Light now offering the services of The Job Post, Back to Work, Guiding Light Recovery and Iron House, we are better positioned than we've ever been to show Christ's love to those men that are at the end of their rope.

We know that real change is hard work. No single man can change on his own, just as no organization can grow without the support of its leaders and the community. We've been very blessed with a team that continues to forge a creative and compelling vision for Guiding Light.

Much of our forward thinking comes from this group right here, our Board of Directors. Their time and passion for promoting a healthy and supportive re-engagement option certainly deserves to be mentioned. Together, they've carved out an ambitious three-year strategic plan that will take us through 2019.

(The plan is viewable to the public at [guidinglightworks.org/about/strategic-plan/](http://guidinglightworks.org/about/strategic-plan/)).

This strategic plan helps keep us focused on who we are and where we need to go. It's a statement that reminds us of each man's God-given



## MEET OUR BOARD!

potential, no matter how beat down he is. When men are restored to their God-given dignity, they can once again contribute to the beautiful and vibrant cities of West Michigan.

Every good thing that takes place here is because of our Almighty Father and you, dear reader. We thank God every day for your gifts, prayers and trust. The Board of Directors, the staff, our volunteers, and I could not do this work without you. Thank you once again, for offering salvation to those who need it most.

Blessings,

Stuart P. Ray  
Executive Director  
Guiding Light

*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



# BEING ABLE & AROUND THE TABLE

**(SIX GUYS AND SOME COFFEE HANG OUT AND CHAT)**

*Last month, five Back to Work program residents and one Recovery resident gathered around a table and shared, from their own perspective, what Guiding Light is like. They were open and honest about the challenges behind them and ahead of them. They shared their hopes, stories, plans and a lot more in a candid, and sometimes funny, conversation.*



**Q.** Interviewer: Please introduce yourselves.  
What is your story that led you to Guiding Light's Back to Work program?

**A.** Jaime: I had a fall out with my girlfriend of 15 years. It was all downhill from there.

**Would you mind sharing what happened?**

Jaime: We had a condo together. We got into a fight, and she started attacking me. I pushed her off me, and she tripped and fell and broke her arm. Then I was thrown in jail for domestic violence. I went to jail for the next five months, then they decided to put me in a mental hospital, and I was there for almost a year. I turned 40 years old while I was there.

My dad didn't want me to end up homeless in Detroit, so he brought me out here to Grand Rapids because of the good programs. This is my first week at Guiding Light, so I'm still looking for work.

**How is it going?**

Jaime: I've been grinding on the computer every day, filling out applications, calling temp services, and going around town on the bus. I'm trying to get work as hard as I can.

**It sounds like it will happen for you.**

Jaime: Hopefully. I don't want to end up back in any other mission, sleeping out in the cold or sleeping next to someone who smells like puke or a garbage dump. I don't want to do that again.

**That's understandable. Melvin, how did you get here?**

Melvin: Well, I'm 56 years old. I'm a recovering addict.

Starring: Jaime, Melvin, Brad, Rick, Dennis and then Aaron.

I was released from prison in July of last year. When I was released, they sent me to a recovery house out in Wyoming. I've walked by the Guiding Light a million times, and I never stopped or tried to get in here. Before, when I was down here, they didn't have this Back to Work thing. After they released me from the recovery house, I was inches from going back into that madness when I rode by here on the bus. A little voice in my head said, "Wait a minute, try the Guiding Light!" So I stopped in.

### **Brad, how about you? What lead you to the front door?**

Brad: I'm 46 years old. I was in Tennessee for three years with a girl when she decided to kick me out, so I came back to Grand Rapids where I was raised. I was living with a friend, and his landlord said the place was too small to put me on the lease. So after five months of living there, I had to move out. And I was like, "Where do I go?" I started looking up places on the internet, and I found this place.

I walked in, asked about their programs, and they asked if I could pass a drug test and I said, "Yeah, not a problem." But they were full and didn't have a bed for me, so I spent the night in another mission, which I will never do again. It was awful. It was enough to make me want to work even more. The next day, I came back to Guiding Light and passed the drug test, so they let me in, gave me a bed, and set me up with an application for The Job Post. I've been working and saving money since.

### **Rick, how about you?**

Rick: I was living with my brother in Zeeland, but that wasn't working out. I was working for a construction company and got laid off in the winter. I didn't take the time to figure out my unemployment, but I saw Guiding Light's Back to Work sign, and I walked in to check it out. They did a drug test. I passed it. I filled out some forms, and they gave me a bed. Half an hour later The Job Post gave me a job.

### **What do you mean 'half an hour later'? Like an actual half hour?**

Rick: I mean like a half hour after they gave me a bed they gave me a job.

### **Seriously? How is that possible?**

Rick: Well, as I was going through intake and getting processed for a bed,

THIS IS A  
SAFE SPACE  
FOR TRUTH  
TELLING

I stopped over at The Job Post, and they said there was an immediate job opening at a local factory. I filled out the application, and they made it happen. I came here on a Thursday, and that next day I was working. I've been here about three weeks now.

**That's amazing. Dennis, how about you?**

Dennis: I'm 52 yrs old. I'm an alumna of the Guiding Light, actually. I went through this program in 2001. I came in here broke, busted, disgusted and couldn't be trusted. By the grace of God, the Guiding Light was a safe place to be. When I left in 2001, I had completed my CDL certification for trucking and got a job driving the very next day. I got my own apartment and bought my own car. But I didn't maintain my support group or the structure to stay on the straight and narrow to keep my sobriety going. I lost contact with those in recovery, and that's when the enemy started coming back in and clouding my judgment. Just last year, in August of 2016, the day of my Mother's funeral, I was incarcerated for having crack cocaine on me. I completed the sober living unit at the Kent County Correctional Facility. Shortly before my release, I talked to Jeff Courtley (Guiding Light Intake Manager) and asked him about coming here upon my release.

**Have you found a job since being here?**

Dennis: I had an interview yesterday for a driving job, but I was shot down because of my felony. With me being on probation, I need to get permission to leave Michigan. So I'm searching diligently for a job that will let me stay in the state, at least until I'm off probation. But I can't let anyone deter me. I'll get on that computer, keep shooting out my resume, keep calling people, and by the grace of God, I know there's a driving job in this city that I'm going to find. And when I do, I'm going to be the best blessing that company has ever had.

### **So you still have your CDL?**

Dennis: I still have everything except my DOT (Department of Transportation) physical. I need to update my medical certification. Then I'll be good.

### **So how long have you been here then?**

Dennis: I've been here just over a week. I'm still crawling, but I'm trusting that God will open a door with the right company so I can continue to move forward.

**Okay, so for the next topic I want to combine a couple of questions into one. How new is this experience of seeking help from an organization like this? And also, what was that first day like? How did it feel? Were you a 'fish out of water'?**

Jaime: It wasn't a good feeling, more so when I went to a different mission, but when I got here it was definitely a better feeling. It's cleaner and better here than the other places I visited.

Melvin: I would say it was like a breath of fresh air. I would compare it to being on the front lines of a war and then returning home to society again. Because being out there on the battlefield of life, with drug addiction and criminal behavior, is definitely a war, a personal war.

Brad: It was different for me. I've never had to get help from anybody before, and I was able to meet all the requirements to get in within an hour. I had a job history and no criminal record, so I was able to start a job that following Monday. I was still recovering from some injuries, so the first job I had was a little demanding. But then I was able to get another job, and I've been doing that ever since. It has been working out great.



## FRONT DESK

Obviously, the first point of entry is the front desk. Here, the public can inquire about The Job Post Staffing Co., the Recovery Program, or the 90-day live-in option affectionately known as Guiding Light's Back to Work program!



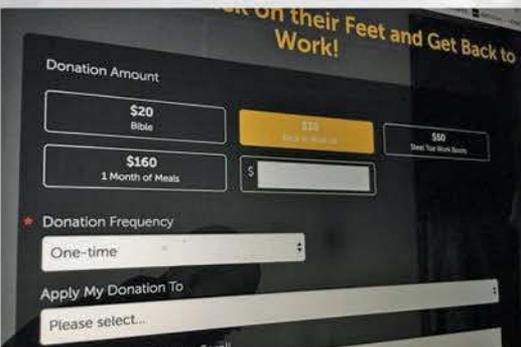
## INTAKE

Those needing the 90-day Back to Work live-in services can talk to Intake Manager Jeff Courtney. He'll share a bit about the program and help men decide if it would be a good fit.



## GO!

Each day, Guiding Light enjoys a constant buzz of activity. Men are looking for work, eating healthy meals, and saving money for their future independence.



## INVEST!!

As these guys invest in their lives, we ask that you also invest in us. When you donate to Guiding Light, you're helping men get back to work. This helps boost the local economy. You're improving your city!

When you come in here, you don't know what to expect. When you've moved around as much as I have, you realize a lot of towns don't have stuff like this. They might have a flop house, and that's it. But here, you start seeing other people in the program working and getting their own apartments, and you're like "wait a minute, we're actually accomplishing something here!" But yeah, I was wary at first, but I'm really impressed by what Guiding Light does.

Rick: I was kind of apprehensive at first, but when I got here they gave me a bed, locker, and I was able to get a job very quickly. You can't just go anywhere here in Grand Rapids and get that. So I was relieved, I guess, to not have to worry about what I was going to do next.

Dennis: Like Melvin said it was a blessing. Coming here after seven weeks of incarceration and being able to walk outside and smell the fresh air—it was a blessing. Each day when I rise, I spend time in the Word, spend some time alone with the Father, and thank Him for the day. I see Mr. Ray (Executive Director Stuart Ray) every morning, and he'll greet me, and I'll greet him back. Each morning, we keep looking for jobs, we fellowship with each other and motivate each other. Networking is the key here. And yeah, we have The Job Post, but word of mouth travels a lot faster than a computer.

**All of you guys are in the same program but you've had different experiences, and different things have brought you here. From what you've seen, how long before someone can regain a sense of pride?**

Rick: Well, I had my own apartment and lost it. I lost everything I had when I went to prison. **Coming to a place like this was not in the plan at all!** But I couldn't find work anywhere at the time. Nobody would hire me. I don't have a drivers license; I haven't had one for 15 years. Sometimes, it's hard to get around the city, you know, you gotta take the bus everywhere. Nobody on the bus lines was hiring. It was like those jobs were all taken up. Plus, I'm a seven-time felon so that makes it difficult. Look, I had a job; I had a good paying job. I had my own place, and all of a sudden, bam, it's gone.

Melvin: Me, I'm grateful because I've been to hell and back and wrestled with the devil. So when I came to this place, it was like I stepped into heaven. If I see a gentleman come into this program and he's saying he doesn't like it here or if he's always complaining, I just can't help but think that he needs to take a closer look at himself. To come into this facility and see what it has to offer and not appreciate it or be grateful—I just can't see

anything negative about Guiding Light.

Rick: No, I don't want to complain about being here, but I just want to work hard and someday be in some place better.

**I can tell that even years later, you're still lamenting the loss of your home, your own space. It was important to you.**

Rick: It was mine.

Melvin: See, I had the same thing, but my thing is, I'm surely not where I want to be but also not where I used to be.

Rick: Well, I'm not either. I haven't done drugs in over eight years.

Melvin: Right, so you know. We may fall, but as long as we have God in our lives, we're gonna stand again.

Rick: I'm an atheist.

Melvin: Okay, you may be an atheist, and that's another thing, but you're gonna stand up again with the determination and the drive to get back what you lost! And I'd say, this time, it might be even better!

**That brings up a great point. What do you do when someone seems frustrated to be here? How do you help others get acclimated and encouraged to move forward?**

Melvin: Now that I'm back on top, I have no problem helping the next man up. I don't care if you're black, white, green, or orange, if you come in here, I'll do what I can to assist you, to help you stay positive, and do things to better your life. **The way I see it, I only receive a blessing by being a blessing.**

**So let's talk again about the job situation. Those of you who have jobs, do you think you'll have this job a year from now? Are any of you hoping to have something different, or more suitable, down the road?**

Rick: I actually love the job I have. I work noon to 8:30 pm as a line clerk. I've never found a factory job that was so easy in my life. I'm 54 yrs old; I've worked in a lot of factories, and this job is gravy. I just need some biscuits and sausage, and I'm set! (The room erupts in laughter)

Rick: But yeah, I hope to be there long term.

Brad: I work at the same place as Rick. But I work from 4 pm to 12:30 am or so. But last night I worked until 2:30 am.

**So you might be a little tired this morning, right?**

Brad: Yeah, I'm still trying to wake up. But I don't mind my job. It's a good job. And for me to just leave this job, you're gonna have to be offering up some pretty serious upgrades. Otherwise I'm sticking with what I've got. Even if I was injured again, I could still do this job, so this is gonna work for awhile. And I like everyone I work with. (Brad looks over at Rick, his co-worker). Well maybe, I'll rephrase that. (The room laughs again)

Melvin: The job I'm working is a little tough. I'm 56 years old, and it's physically demanding for me. It's also a mess. I try to clean and sweep the floors whenever I can, and I know the CEO of the company appreciates it, but I'm always sweeping up cigarettes, loose tobacco, scraps of wood and building materials all over the place. That combined with the loud music the younger guys are playing, it's a bit of a hazard. If I ever got hurt at my station, no one would be able to hear me yell, so it's a little dangerous. But I know I gotta be thankful for any job I have. If I want something better than this, I have to first be grateful for what I do have. I could do this job for five years, and there'd still be no chance for advancement. I need to find a job where there's opportunity to move up as well as get higher pay.

**So what's your next step?**

Melvin: Some of the guys here are telling me about the other places that are hiring, so I know there are other opportunities. But wherever I'm at, I need to work as though I'm working for the Lord.

**Jaime, what about you? I know you're new here, but are you encouraged about the job front?**

Jaime: Well, I've got some issues with scoliosis and arthritis so that makes it harder to find the right work. I'm a little nervous about it.

**What kind of work are you hoping to find? What kind of work could you do?**

Jaime: I could do some light industrial work. Standing for 40 hours a week

2017 in progress...

74

**MEN ACCEPTED INTO THE  
BACK TO WORK PROGRAM**

58

**AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAYS MEN  
STAY IN THE PROGRAM**

(Ideally, we want them to stay the full 90 days)

73

**PERCENTAGE OF MEN WHO  
COMPLETE THE PROGRAM**

(the full 90 days)

96

**PERCENTAGE OF MEN WHO LEFT  
BTW WITH EMPLOYMENT**

(our goal was 92%  
so we're doing pretty good here.)

73

**PERCENTAGE OF MEN WHO  
MAINTAIN THEIR HOUSING  
SITUATION AFTER SIX MONTHS**

Our goal is 80%. We're working hard to focus on independent and sustainable housing situations for our guys. Because Guiding Light is not a revolving door for services, we really aim to get this right while they are here.

would be okay, as long as they'll understand my issues and let me sit down or stretch when I need to. Then I'd be okay.

Brad: The place we work would be perfect for you, man. It's not hard work. I mean, they keep you moving, but it's not super fast like some other places.

Rick: Yeah, and they're very nice people to work with. I feel like they'd work with you. You should check them out.

**Back to Work is typically a 90-day program. So, ideally, each man has approximately ten to twelve weeks to live here and save money. Besides slipping up and breaking the rules, what are some of the reasons that cause men to leave the program early?**

Brad: I've heard people say "I got a job now and this woman wants me to move in." They'll say things like, "I don't want to ruin my chances with her." I'm like, "Good luck with that," because every time I've changed my life for a woman, it has never worked out well for me. Those guys are putting their hope in something that has no proven track record.

For me, I just want to get through this program first. Let me get myself back on track. Let me keep working, save my money, get my own place; then I can entertain letting someone in my life. Until then, I need to focus on myself.

Melvin: Your purpose and goal when you come in here is to make your money and get your own autonomy. It isn't to go live with the first girl that takes an interest in you. That's not reliable. You're in Guiding Light for a reason. If you deviate from the plan here, things start happening that you don't want to happen.

(At this point, Melvin leaves for work, and newcomer Andrew joins us. He was initially part of the Back to Work program but is now in Guiding Light's Recovery program.)

**Let's talk about the Back to Work program's emphasis on saving money for a stable place to live. How is your progress going?**

Andrew: Guiding Light stipulates that you save 75% of your paycheck every week. And they'll help you pick a place that is affordable. If you can't afford your own place to live or you have bad credit, a lot of debt or child support like I have, then Guiding Light might help set you up with a couple of roommates in an apartment to rent.

**I assume child support makes it harder to get back on your feet?**

Andrew: Yeah, I'm supposed to pay \$1400 a month for my three kids. It's about \$360 per week.

**That's quite an obstacle. How will you deal with it?**

Andrew: Well, I did find out that when I am accepted into a place like this, that I am now considered homeless so it freezes my child support temporarily.

**What happens when you start working again and you only take home \$350 per week?**

Andrew: Hopefully, by being in this program, it will be adjusted. The way the law is, once I get up to \$10,000 behind in child support, it becomes a felony. So one small light at the end of the tunnel is that my 17-year old will graduate high school soon. He wants to join the military, so his Mom and I will both sign off on it once he graduates high school. Then in three years my 15-year-old will graduate and then it will go down again.

**So your finances for the next few years will be tough.**

Aaron: Right.

**Let's talk about living with roommates. I'm sure some of you want to live alone, but living with roommates is more affordable. Are there any thoughts on your personal options?**

Rick: I have trust issues. I've been treated badly by some people, so I'm hoping to live alone.

Brad: Living at Guiding Light, I've had to adjust my way of dealing with people. I can't just tell people to "leave me alone," so I've been forced to be social. So far, the people here have been cool. But when I leave here, I'm hoping to live with a friend of mine, who I've known for 28 years. His lease is almost up on his place, and we're talking about renting a place together.

Jaime: I'm open to living with people, too.

FACT: A 90-day STAY IN OUR BACK TO WORK PROGRAM COSTS US ~\$4,200 PER PERSON! THIS INCLUDES COSTS FOR FOOD, SHELTER, COUNSELING, & STAFF

Andrew: For me, I'm trying to remain sober, I'm hoping to find a roommate that is also completely sober. That way he could help keep me on the straight and narrow. I won't have to come home and know there is a bottle in the cupboard.

**Andrew, you've experienced both the Back to Work program and now the Recovery Program. How do the two groups interact with each other?**

Andrew: Well, both programs at Guiding Light have high accountability. On St Patrick's Day, they tested everybody for drugs and alcohol. That next day, seven people were gone from the Back to Work program. You know you're in a safe environment when you don't have to worry about someone being drunk or high when you're trying to stay sober.

Dennis: We see the Recovery Program members at meals, but other than that, we don't get to interact too much. Usually, the Back to Work guys are working and sleeping. We each have our own schedules we need to stick to.

But I can relate to them, because I need to stay sober too. I have a fiancé I need to prove myself to, so I'm doing everything I can to stay clean, just like those guys.

Brad: Well, I'm usually a social drinker. But since I'm in the program that's the rule: no drinking for anybody! I've never had a problem with alcohol, so I'm fine with that until I leave the program. But whatever program the guys are in, everybody gets along pretty well here.

**What are some habits or practices you've learned here that you'd like to keep implementing going forward?**

Dennis: During the morning meeting, Matthew (Back to Work Program Director) said, "When you get up always make your beds." It's mandatory for us to make our beds. I don't even leave the room until that gets taken care of. There are a lot of simple disciplines that one can learn here—good habits that you can put into regular practice.

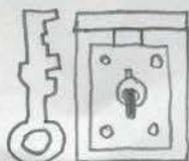
Rick: Yeah, the guys are here to better themselves so they should keep picking up after themselves and practice structure. They should be neat, keep their hygiene up and try to help themselves before letting others help. And they should recognize and appreciate all of their opportunities.

## Any other comments about the Back to Work program?

Dennis: I knew this was the place for me. Here, we have access to what we need to get back on our feet. The staff here is helpful. They bend over backward to assist us, to aid us, and to keep moving us forward in the right direction. We are given the opportunity to grow, you know, to work, save our money, and make that transition. We don't have to stay stuck in the madness of our past. We can let that go, and be blessed along the way. Me myself and I; I am truly blessed.



# FROM CELL



# TO HOME

*ONE MAN'S WORK TO KEEP IT REAL.*

Robert doesn't seem like a guy who would know the inside of a prison cell.

He's kind, thoughtful, and can articulate a smart ideology, one that includes a gratefulness to his Almighty Father, as well as to his mother.

"I have a praying mother. And her prayers are finally being answered."

Robert grew up in a loving middle-class home, with married parents and a younger brother in the small town of Dowagiac, Michigan, very near the Indiana state line. His parents taught their kids right from wrong, took them to church, and did their best to instill a value system in them.

But young Robert had a rebellious side to him. In his teenage years, he started hanging with a bad crowd. He and his friends would dabble with drinking, smoking pot, and eventually, they dared to try the harder stuff. "In my teens, that's when the crack cocaine was really popping." It didn't take long for young Robert to start having a little rap sheet. He was caught stealing from people and stores, doing what he could to make quick money for his new habits.



“It was recreational at first, but of course, it led to addiction.”

Once Robert hit adulthood, it was no more kids gloves. Now he was facing real consequences for his actions: a small stint in jail here, a prison sentence there, and each time he was let out, his lack of money and resources sent him back to what he knew best—drugs and conning people for money. Because of this, Robert spent 23 years of his adult life behind bars.

“In prison, if you have an addiction and become incarcerated, you know that getting the drugs is harder. The drugs that did get behind bars, I chose not to do. I figured, if I can’t stay clean in prison, then how am I going to stay clean out in society?”

Robert’s most recent stint was five years and ended this past September. He credits the prison chaplain with helping him set up a good place to go. That place would be Guiding Light, where he’d be part of their Back to Work program.

“The first thing they did was give me a drug test, which I passed of course. Then I was assigned a bed and a locker.”

Robert was shown the on-site computer lab, where Back to Work program residents can begin their job search. He also sat down with Christina Felan at The Job Post, and she had him fill out a packet of application papers and helped him set up some interviews.

Within two weeks, Robert found an entry level assembly job in town. It didn’t pay much at first, but after a couple of months on the job, he was able to move up and get a raise.

As the paychecks started coming in, Robert was able to pocket 25% of his income as spending money, and the rest was put into savings by Guiding Light. Typically, a resident in Guiding Light’s Back to Work program will have around \$2,000 or so saved up, which can help him find stable housing after 90 days in the program.

Back to Work Program Director Matthew Holmes explains how this doesn’t always happen: “Often, these guys can’t find a landlord willing to rent to them, so they end up crashing on a couch with a friend or relative somewhere. But that isn’t stable. It’s a place to crash, sure, but without that lease or paper agreement, these guys can be kicked out anytime, and then they’re back at square one.”

Guiding Light works hard to address the reasons for client recidivism. Executive Director Stuart Ray has always tried to promote and practice the ideology of “taking the time to get it right.” And that has led to some hard conversations in the past. “It’s like we’re always pulling back layers of an onion,” Stuart says.

The onion layer, in this case, is the lack of safe and secure housing for people like Robert. He doesn’t know anyone in Grand Rapids, and with

his record, he'd be hard-pressed to find someone willing to rent to him, even if he does have the money in his bank account.

So Guiding Light, after ongoing conversations, is trying an experiment. The organization leased an apartment in a safe neighborhood and then began subletting the rooms to men who've saved up money and completed the program. In Robert's case, Guiding Light leased out a very nice, clean and modern three-bedroom apartment for \$1500 in the Forest Hills area, a fifteen-minute drive from downtown. Then Guiding Light turned around and rented out each room for \$500 to people in the Back to Work Program who might otherwise struggle to find housing. Guiding Light, as the primary leaseholder, can guarantee the property owner that rent will always be paid and on-time.

"I have no credit history and no renter history," Robert says. "So this saved me."

The stipulations for renting a room in this manner are pretty simple. Each man must have at least \$1,000 saved up and must pay a \$600 security deposit. This way, when he leaves the apartment, he can use that deposit for the next apartment he might rent.

"This helps because when I leave this apartment, I'll have established a renter's history and Guiding Light will write up a recommendation for me," explains Robert.

In the meantime, Robert shares his apartment with two other roommates, also from the Back to Work program. They too have the same requirements Robert has, and they all get along pretty well. They share a nice large kitchen and living room. There are two full bathrooms, a den and a basement for storage. "It's really nice here," says Robert.

Since being released, Robert was able to reconnect with family. He and his mother are close again, and they talk on the phone often. This past Christmas he was able to spend time with his brother and his family and see his nephew and nieces. "I had concerns about how the younger ones would receive me. I hadn't met the five-year-old and the eight-year-old I hadn't seen since she was two. His 19-year old I hadn't seen since she was 14. She's in community college now! But once I spent some time with them, they warmed right up to me. It was like they'd known me their whole lives."

With his days of stealing and using drugs behind him, Robert doesn't want to take any of this for granted. "I guess I always had this level of support in my life, but I just chose not to utilize it."

He often thinks back on his life and tries to make sense of it. He wants to come to terms with all the lost time spent behind bars. "One of my friends used to ask me, when I was out and in my addiction, 'Don't you like your freedom? Why don't you like your freedom?' And I said, 'I love my

freedom!’ And she was like, ‘You can’t love your freedom doing the things that you do. Because when you like or love something, whether it’s another human being, freedom, or whatever, you can’t put yourself in a situation to have it taken away from you.’ So back then, I guess I didn’t like or love my freedom.”

With his bad days behind him, Robert swears he has no more desire to use drugs. “I know the results,” he admits. “I know what using does for me. It’s not a matter of ‘if’ I go to prison, it’s a matter of ‘when.’ I might as well walk up to the nearest police station and tell them, ‘put me in prison,’ because that’s just how it is with me and drugs.”

Robert was always taught to believe there was a God. He grew up with this knowledge. But he didn’t quite reach out in prayer until recently. “I just started talking and praying to God and expressing to Him what I wanted to do, and what I needed to do. I’ve been asking for His guidance and direction. Sometimes I’m just in awe, like, I can’t believe all this is happening for me!”



*Robert, Back to Work resident, celebrating his kitchen, his job, and his new life.*

# THE TOUR



*This pilot house for the Back to Work program has three bedrooms and two and a half baths!*

*Robert pays \$500/month to Guiding Light and shares the townhouse with two other roommates.*



*Guiding Light holds the lease to guarantee payment to the landlord. Then the guys pay Guiding Light.*



## SOME GIFTS ARE HARD TO WRAP!

Aid can come in many forms. Volunteering, networking, fundraising, and donations, etc. All have a part in sustaining an organization like Guiding Light. Sometimes though, a donor will call with a wild idea.

“Does Guiding Light need a house?”

A house?

“Yes! I have a four-unit, multi-family house that I’m thinking of giving you!”

The caller, who wishes to remain anonymous, has supported Guiding Light the past few years. The impetus for he and his wife's big decision was seeing an article in our last newsletter about the growing need in the area for more affordable housing for our Back to Work participants.

“When we read about the need, we just knew the Lord was putting this on our hearts.”

The donors had purchased the house over 30 years ago as an investment property and also as a tool to help their kids understand responsibility. As their children would get older, they’d learn how to clean, paint walls, do yard work, perform general maintenance, and eventually, even approach tenants to collect the rent.

“The kids would come with me at first, just to see how I did it,” the elder donor says. “But then they’d learn how to approach the tenants themselves. Our kids learned many skills because we had the place.”

Several decades later, the donors are retired, and their children now have families of their own. This past year, they discussed putting the house up for sale, but then a little booklet arrived in their mailbox.

“I came home one day, and my wife said, ‘Here, read this article from Guiding Light.’” Impressed and moved with the story, the couple conferred with each other about how to help. “We like what Guiding Light is doing with these men; they walk beside them, encourage them, guide them, and lead them to success.”

A week later, the couple toured Guiding Light and learned more about the programs. “We were extremely impressed with what we saw.” So much so, that the husband woke up several times during the night with a voice in his head saying, “There is a need for your place. **Here is something you can do!**”

“It was totally God’s leading,” the couple maintains.

The house they gave has four apartments, each with a kitchen, full bathroom, living room and one bedroom, making it perfect for a man who is transitioning out of the Back to Work program. Each occupant will pay rent to Guiding Light and establish a renter history. If the tenant can demonstrate responsibility and make timely payments, Guiding Light may write him a letter of recommendation for his future housing options. It’s a great stepping stone for those taking their lives back, one step and one payment at a time.

“The investment paid off very well over the last 30 years,” the donor reflects. “The Lord blessed us with good tenants, and we are certain that this is all part of God’s plan for our lives.”

No doubt this house is an incredible and unique gift. We at Guiding Light, and those that seek refuge within our walls, will remain extremely grateful for years to come.



# EVENTS

## "SAVE THE DATES!"

### **MONDAY, JULY 24 - GOLF FUNDRAISER**

Invite your friends and competitors for the Builders Exchange Golf fundraiser for Guiding Light's Back to Work program! Even if you lose, you're still helping Guiding Light win! Call Starla to sign up! (616)451-0236; Ext 20

### **JUNE 1st - NEW BILLBOARD KICKOFF!**

Keep your eyes peeled for our next series of billboards! They feature the real people and faces of Guiding Light. Your gifts helped them personally, and they're incredibly grateful.

### **TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5 - FALL BANQUET**

Last year's Annual Fall Banquet was a huge hit. This year will be even bigger. Tickets will go on sale in July. Watch your mailbox and our Facebook page for the official announcement.

(Can you guess who our Annual Fall Banquet guest speaker will be?)



# GUIDING LIGHT

WHY IS WORKING

## IMPORTANT?

We believe that when a man works toward self-sufficiency, he's honoring the God who 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 commitment 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 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 [guidinglightworks.org](http://guidinglightworks.org)



# OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

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

*"By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches."*

Proverbs 24:3-4

## GUIDING LIGHT

225 S. Division Ave  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

616.451.0236  
GuidingLightWorks.org



ANXIETY

DIVORCE

DEPRESSION

SELF-MEDICATING

ADDICTION

CRIMINAL RECORD

BAD ROLE MODELS

LOW SELF-ESTEEM

CRIPPLING

ALONE

SAD