

THE LIGHT

November
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A PUBLICATION OF ATLANTA UNION MISSION

FINDING YOUR MISSION

Giving Thanks All Year Round

A Story of Rescue, Recovery and God's Grace by Nicholas Bourg / AUM

November introduces yet another hectic, festive holiday season. While temperatures cool and spirits warm, we give pause to consider all we are thankful for. The Mission's Addiction Recovery Program residents and alumni have much to give thanks for every day. Juanita Jones-John, a former Program resident at AUM's My Sister's House facility, has made incredible strides in life since her graduation. This holiday season, she expresses gratitude and thankfulness for the journey God has seen her through. Here is her personal account:

"During the last months of my addiction, my body was tired, my mind was weak and confused, and my heart had been broken so many times over the years – It just shattered under the stress of it all. I knew I needed help and I began praying, something I hadn't done in a while, not knowing if God was hearing the prayer because I didn't know God – but God sure knew me.

I prayed for a place where I could be comfortable and left alone with my thoughts for a better life. I needed to be in a place where there was peace, green grass beneath my feet and the fresh aroma of budding flowers; a safe place where all the drugs and drug dealers were locked out. I longed for some normalcy in my life and to laugh again and to see my mama without being judged or criticized in a hurtful manner.

I entered Atlanta Union Mission's Personal Development Program with just the clothing on my back and nothing else. Once I walked through those

some fourteen years ago. This gospel concert for AUM was designed to lift spirits through gospel music.

With the help of AUM, my counselors and my peers, almost 18 years later I am owner of Events by Juanita & Company, a full service catering and event planning business located on Virginia Avenue in College Park, GA.

Although the struggle with the drugs and alcohol was devastating, and I thought that I'd never see the end, today, I can simply say 'Atlanta Union Mission saved my life'. During these times of thanks giving, I reflect back to the times when I was hungry and homeless. I remember walking in the doors hungry and they fed me. I remember having lost everything I had ever owned having only the clothes on my back, and they clothed me. The counselors gave me new purpose in life. They gave me purpose to continue life and not be afraid to dream. That dream now allows me to operate my own business with a great staff and support from my friends and family. Most importantly it allows me to share my blessings with those who are less fortunate. This Thanksgiving I gratefully want to give back. Now I know why the volunteers and donors support AUM. It feels wonderful and it's the right thing to do."

Once I walked through those doors, I knew that my life was about to change.

doors, I knew that my life was about to change. I didn't know how and I certainly didn't know that I would be embraced with the love of God and all those around me. I remember saying to myself, 'He heard me! Oh my God, you heard me!'

AUM had everything I prayed for including the beautiful grounds. The first thing I did was walk barefoot on the grass. Now, my recovery wasn't instant – it took time! First I had to get to know God and accept Him in my life. I had to rediscover myself. I had to be still and allow God to work in my life. I had to learn how to share His blessings with others recovering and in need. With that (idea), I started the Juanita Jones-John Winterfest



Juanita Jones-John
Owner of Events by Juanita and graduate of AUM's
Personal Development Program

Juanita's story under-scores how much we have to be thankful for this holiday season. If you would like to read more about Juanita's incredible accomplishments or find out about her business, visit her company website at www.eventsbyjuanita.com.

How to give to the Mission:

- Donate online at www.atlantaunionmission.org/donate
- Read about volunteer opportunities
- Find Thrift Store locations near you





Jim Reese
President & CEO

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Thanks be to God for in the midst of nothing, we see many that have everything because of Him

*"Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are you who are hungry
now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you
who weep now, for you shall laugh."* Luke 6:20-21

As we celebrate at the Thanksgiving table with family and friends, we usually begin the holiday meal by thanking God for our material blessings. But when you sit at a table with a person who has everything he or she owns in a plastic bag, you are confronted with the question, "how can this person be thankful or, for that matter, have any hope?"

Truth is, on their own they usually won't be thankful or hopeful! But, miraculously, I see many who have nothing materially but experience a joy that can only be explained by their love for Christ. While most of these stories would make reality TV look mild, the reality is that they have met the life-changing person of Jesus. As I consider Thanksgiving, I am thankful for the reality of Christ, His transforming work in lives, and fantastic opportunity to see these transformations each day at the Mission!



I spoke with a man recently who had lost everything. Bad choices combined with drugs and alcohol had stripped him of his family, his livelihood and his meaning in life. When he hit bottom, he finally opened his eyes to a Savior

who loved him just as he was. It has been a hard journey. At times he wanted to run while at other moments he sat paralyzed with almost unbearable pain personally and for those he had hurt. But now he studies God's word, experiences fellowship with others, and writes in his journal about the Savior who brought hope. This is the priceless gift of God's grace in a life. Our brother knows that difficulties lie ahead, but he now has the companionship of Christ and the assurance that his needs will be met. This Thanksgiving will be special as he recalls all that God has done in his life.

Or another story about a Mom, who has fought the chains of addiction but, now, has a solid hope based on her love of the Savior who changed her life. Her transformed life, along with a son successfully attending college, will make for a genuine expression of "Thanks-giving" this holiday. The hope of Christ and a family restored; what a powerful testimony to God's grace and His love for us!



As we approach Thanksgiving, I want to encourage and thank you for your support, prayers, and gracious hearts for the Mission. Because of your response to God's prompting, this Thanksgiving

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(and future ones) will be an occasion of renewal and hope for those in need. It will also be a time to consider the sacrifice God made by sending His Son to die for us not so our lives would be easy but that we would have eternal hope. As a Mission and a ministry we thank God for His love and provision.

I pray you and yours will have a very special Thanksgiving. Also, please pray for all of those we serve that they will have receptive hearts to discover the one true Savior, Jesus Christ.

From our family to all of yours, blessings,

Jim Reese

President & CEO

*Atlanta Union Mission is a Christian ministry
that brings Christ's healing power to any
person in crisis through programs of rescue,
recovery and re-entry.*



Conversations with Jake

A Thanksgiving Message from a Young Heart

by James Gleghorn / Chief Development Officer



Each morning I spend time with my 7 year-old son, Jake, talking about the coming day and how we can honor God by doing our best. Several times in recent months, Jake has asked about how things are going at the Mission and “are you doing okay bringing in money?” He also has asked what happens if there isn’t enough money. What happens? Homeless aren’t fed, addicted aren’t counseled and, most importantly, Christ isn’t introduced to those who need Him. But how do you answer a little guy who has been blessed with an incredible amount of mercy and love for others? I don’t want to crush his spirit, but, also, I want to be honest with him.

Most of you familiar with the Mission have read the incredible stories of God’s love and redemption, or you may have witnessed it first hand by serving at a facility. I feel blessed each day knowing that I have a great team and we are making a difference. We play a part in the miracles God performs through the lives of our clients. What happens when we don’t raise enough dollars and cents? Just ask Jake and he will tell you that “it isn’t good and people will be sad”. While that is true, I often remind him that we need to praise God for what we have, not worry about what we don’t have. I also tell him how generous the “friends” of the Mission are and that God will provide. It’s great to describe to him how God’s faithfulness shows up through the responsiveness of all of you. I’m so thankful for the positive feedback on each month’s newsletter, for your incredible generosity in response to the flooding last month, and, of course, for the regular giving of our donors. I am blessed through and by you!

But I have a confession to make. (Bear with me as I brag on my son.) I’m even more grateful for the young boy in my home who is learning to be a Matthew 25:40 Christian. Jake loves to give to the men, women and children of the Mission. I have never asked him

to give, but he would empty his bank if allowed. For Jake money is a tool to help other people. He gives freely because he simply trusts that God will provide and continue to do so. I wish I had his trust, faith and generosity when I was 7; in fact, sometimes I don’t believe I have the lesson mastered now!



How did I respond to Jake? “Jake, the Mission had a hard time last year but we are trying to be stronger than ever. Everyone at the Mission is praying to God for provision. We believe and trust He will provide. If enough people chose not give, we will still praise God, but the Mission might have to close.” The answer seemed to pacify him and we both went about our day. The next morning there was an envelope at my bedroom door. He had taken all of his quarters and put them in an envelope and sealed it. On the envelope in Jake’s little boy handwriting was a note: “So you can keep the Mission open”.

The King will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” Matthew 25:40

Lord, I am grateful and thankful for the donors to the Mission. Father, I thank you for the generosity of so many allowing us to work for You. Lord, I thank you for Jake and pray I will continue to be challenged to give by his example. In Your name I pray. Amen.

OnX Charity Golf Tournament Benefits AUM and Other Charities

While a bit damp and rainy, spirits were bright and sunny at the first OnX Charity Golf event on October 15th at Stone Mountain Golf Course. The beneficiaries of the tournament are Atlanta Union Mission, the Georgia Black United Fund, and Atlanta Junior Achievement.

OnX Enterprise Solutions, Ltd., with offices in Alpharetta, Georgia designs, builds and operates complex computing and data center solutions for clients internationally. More information is available at www.onx.com.

James Gleghorn, Chief Development Officer for Atlanta Union Mission, along with the two other benefitting charity representatives, praised the efforts of OnX and their commitment to corporate outreach that benefits those in need and the Atlanta community in general. “It was a fun day of golf and a pleasure to see the enthusiasm of the OnX team about helping others,” said Gleghorn.

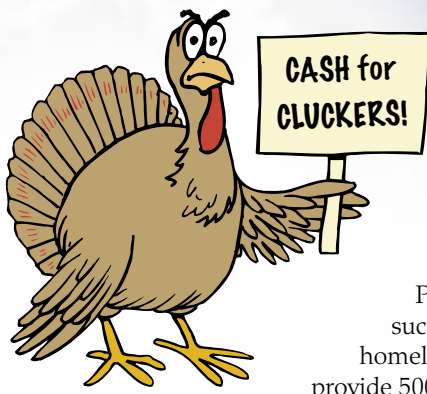
On behalf of the clients, staff and volunteers of Atlanta Union Mission, we extend our heart-felt thanks and appreciation to OnX and to the supporters of the tournament. This is an encouragement to the Mission and a welcomed addition to our funds this year.

Thank you, OnX team!!

Donate Your Car or Truck*

- * Help People.
- * Get a Tax Deduction.
- * Feel Great!

To donate, purchase or find out more—call Dean at 706-354-5569



Thrift Stores “Talking Turkey” Again in 2009

Shoppers asked to donate cash for Thanksgiving turkeys to feed those in need

The Mission is pleased to announce the 2nd Annual Cash for Turkeys Program during the 2009 holiday season. The campaign was highly successful last year raising money to purchase some 400 turkeys to feed the homeless and Mission clients at our Shepherd’s Inn facility. The 2009 goal is to provide 500 turkeys for the holiday meals that are served during Thanksgiving week.



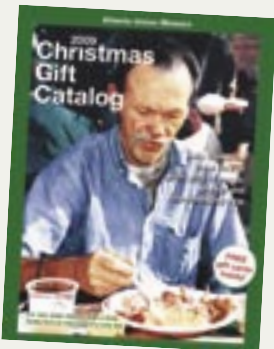
Shoppers in the four store locations are asked to consider a cash donation toward the purchase of the turkeys. Any size donation is gladly accepted. Spare change, big dollars and personal checks are appropriate and appreciated!

When presenting a cash donation, shoppers are encouraged to fill out a “turkey donor card” with their name affixed for placement on the store’s display board.

All money collected will be used to purchase turkeys as a part of complete meals served on Thanksgiving Day and the Wednesday before the holiday.

Thrift Store & More stores are located in Gainesville, Athens, Winder and Commerce, GA. For more information please visit www.AtlantaUnionMission.org or call (404) 588-4000.

“... you found people digging in their pockets and giving whatever change they had. Even though many were in need themselves, they still wanted to help.” – Store Manger / 2008



2009 Christmas Gift Catalog arriving soon!

A great way to send the hope of Christmas to those in need at the Mission

This holiday season you can warm the hearts of friends and family with the very best kind of gift; a gift that will touch a life and provide a special caring message to someone who will appreciate your kindness. Consider selecting gifts from the 2009 edition of the Mission Christmas Catalog.

There is no better way to impact the homeless and hungry in Atlanta and north Georgia than by providing gifts that meet the basic needs of life. And another big plus, you can avoid the hassles of those crowded shopping malls! From the ease and comfort of your home, select gifts for neighbors in need and bring joy and happiness to others.

The 2009 Christmas Gift Catalog affords Mission supporters the opportunity to provide meals, nights of shelter, and other vital services to the men, women and children during the upcoming holiday season in honor of those designated by the gift-giver. With a few clicks on the computer, you can help Atlanta Union Mission provide thousands in our community with food, shelter, staples of life, and hope. And you can notify those you are honoring with an attractive Christmas card!

During 2008 holiday season the Mission served over 145,000 meals and provided over 55,000 bed nights to thousands of men, women, and their children in the months of November and December. Additionally, over 100 children were provided with memorable Christmas gifts thanks to the generosity of donors.

During November and December, Atlanta Union Mission serves the greatest number of people by providing warm meals, safety and refuge from cold weather (providing beds for up to 1,148 individuals every night), and hope that the chains of addiction and homelessness can be broken. Without the support of Mission donors like you, we would not be able to provide thousands of disadvantaged individuals with nourishment, shelter, and joy during the holiday season.

Atlanta Union Mission’s 2009 Christmas Gift Catalog is a great way to help support those individuals in crisis while gifting your loved ones with the knowledge that men, women, and children are being fed, housed, and loved during the holidays in their honor.

To access the 2009 Christmas Gift Catalog and all its exciting features, please visit www.AtlantaUnionMission.org/gift today!

Free Pick-up of Donations!

Call (404) 588-4000

or go to www.AtlantaUnionMission.org and click on “Donation Pick-ups”