

MTM newsletter

You bless neighbors experiencing homelessness with comfort, hope and life-transforming resources.

INSIDE:

Stories of hope and renewal

How skills training changes lives

Upcoming MTM events

With your help, DeMario continues to pursue God's path for His life.

DeMario arrived in Grand Rapids by bus from Memphis, Tennessee, with no one and no place to welcome him.

Before he left Memphis, DeMario says, "I asked the good Lord to be with me and lead me on the right path."

At the station, a local experiencing homelessness told DeMario about Mel Trotter Ministries.

(continued inside)

From the President/CEO

Dear Friends,



As we embark on a new spring season, we are reminded that God told us He is doing a new thing. A new thing is a good thing. He is making a way for us in the wilderness and giving us streams of living water in times when we are in the wastelands (Isaiah 43:18-19).

Speaking of water, I just love spring when we see new life awakening after the long winter — I don't even mind the rain showers! The rain refreshes and nourishes the new growth of plants, reminding me that a new spiritual season is here. Spring gives us a glimpse of the promise that God has given us about new life and renewal. A promise that one day, everything will be made new (Rev. 21:5).

We often see new life spring forth here at Mel Trotter after our guests stay with us for a short season. Guests like Hester, who is working his way back to a home

of his own, and like Paul, who is working his way through our workforce development program after losing his wife of twenty-one years. He told me he simply "lost his way" after she passed away. When life on earth is lost, that is when we must remember God's promise: one day, everything — including us, as believers in Christ — will be made new.

Yet, being made new did not come without a price. Jesus' crucifixion, death and burial preceded his ultimate sacrifice on our behalf. Every year, we wait with great anticipation to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday and say, "He is risen!" In God's great mercy, He has given each of us new birth and a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

As our guests continue on their journeys out of homelessness, they too hope to be "resurrected" to new life on the other side. A life, through Christ, filled with freedom and hope.

I am honored and grateful for the many ways in which you continue to partner with us. You help by coming alongside those we serve as they transition from an "old way" of living through a circumstance of homelessness to a new way, one filled with hope and plans for the future. One filled with reunited family and friends. One filled with an unwavering belief that they are uniquely and wonderfully made in His image — and loved unconditionally.

Friends, I pray that you have a blessed Easter season, one filled with a renewed sense of joy and peace. Thank you for all you do here in our community and beyond. Your impact is far reaching, and your kingdom impact everlasting.

Grace and peace,



Dennis Van Kampen
President/CEO
Mel Trotter Ministries



DeMario

(continued from front)

DeMario needed a nourishing meal and a safe night of rest and received these essentials and much more as he began to share his story with Mel Trotter staff.

Before he left Memphis, DeMario says, "I asked the good Lord to be with me and lead me on the right path."

He and his mother experienced homelessness when DeMario was young — but his mother set an example for him by getting a

good job that allowed the two to progress from temporary housing at a hotel, to an apartment and, finally, to a home of their own.

"If she can do it, then anyone can do it," says DeMario.

DeMario's mother passed away seven months ago. Although no longer here to guide him, her memory motivates DeMario in his goal to find employment and have his own home in Grand Rapids.

DeMario discovered our Next Step Workforce Development program and received access to

resources and opportunities to learn and unlock valuable skills for stable, gainful employment.

He was reminded that he was created in the image of a God who loves and has blessed him.

"I thank you all for everything," he says of the food, shelter and support he's received from Mel Trotter and its family of donors. He adds that he will continue to be patient, stay positive and put God first and make the most of the opportunity he's received."



When Paul thought all was lost, God met him in his place of need.



In Paul's complete brokenness, he was offered hope and restoration

Death drove Paul to destitution and despair. Then he discovered light in the darkness.

"When everything went downhill for me, this is where I ended up," says Paul of his first visit to Mel Trotter Ministries four years ago.

He arrived following the death of his beloved wife. "I basically lost my mind," he says of his bereavement. In addition to his wife, Paul lost his house, custody of his son and soon found himself overwhelmed by legal problems.

"Everything spiraled out of control," he recalls.

Paul was able to work, but he grappled with a serious drinking problem. He sought to overcome his issue, entered rehab, enrolled in a sober living house and began working two jobs. One night, he celebrated his progress with a beer, but quickly found himself in trouble again.

Over the next few years, Paul spent significant time living on

the streets of Grand Rapids. He would intermittently turn to Mel Trotter for a hot meal or a warm place to spend the night. He was always welcomed with love,

"Living on the edge, you fall one way, you're a miracle. You fall the other, you're a mistake."

Paul

dignity and respect.

During his visits, Mel Trotter staff would encourage Paul to embrace God's call for his life and to walk in the Lord's fullness.

This was exceptionally difficult for Paul, who says he has struggled at times to get along with God.

"When your life is going great, it's easy to believe and to have faith and say, 'God loves me,

and I love God,'" Paul shares. "When everything's turned upside down, you ask, 'Where's God in all this?'"

Paul spent his childhood between 13 foster homes, which left him asking: "Why me?" "Why did I deserve this suffering?" The immense loss he's suffered as an adult only compounded his anger and hurt.

"When you lose everything, it's too hard to believe in anything," shares Paul.

But recently, Paul stepped out in faith and enrolled in our Next

Step program and discovered that out of death and despair, God creates new life.

"I was mad at the world for four years, for losing everything in my life. One day I decided something's got to give,



Paul receives skills training to help him build a better, brighter future for himself.

something's got to change. Because this is no life," says Paul. "Thank God there are programs here at Mel Trotter - and I can keep learning and hearing about God. I know He cares and is listening to me when I talk to Him."

Paul credits his instructor at Next Step for helping him overcome his negativity and skepticism of the intentions of nice people. Through this support and the compassion, grace and generosity of friends like you, Paul has found something he hasn't had in years — hope.

As Paul holds fast to this renewed hope, he says he's taking his recovery one day at a time, one step at a time, determined to do the right thing with every choice before him.

Hester went from homeless to hopeful with your help

Hester sought shelter from the cold and found warmth, guidance and God's path for his future.

Hester was born and raised in Grand Rapids. He's always been a hard worker but found himself struggling to stay sheltered in recent years.

Reflecting on what led to his personal housing crisis, Hester can see a pattern of ill-intentioned people taking advantage of his generosity and desire to care for others. Multiple times, he lived with so-called friends who squandered the rent he paid them, leaving them both unexpectedly homeless.

Last year, Hester lived in his car for eight months. One night he fell asleep and awoke to find himself nearly frozen. A concerned friend recommended Hester seek safe shelter at Mel Trotter Ministries.

For the past few months, Hester has received hot, hearty meals, a warm, comfortable bed to sleep in and personalized support to help him find stability and secure affordable housing of his own.

"Mel Trotter is a great steppingstone," says Hester, noting that the resources he's received combined with the positive influence of the Mel Trotter team have helped put his dream of having his own apartment within reach.

He's also grateful for the guidance that has helped him set personal boundaries and inspired him to surround himself with people who are beneficial to his growth and want to see him succeed and achieve.



Hester's time at Mel Trotter Ministries has been a profound turning point in his life.

With your help, Hester is getting educated and equipped to pursue his childhood dream of constructing homes.



Next Step Workforce Development

Health and growth through work and relationship.

Next Step of West Michigan is a division of Mel Trotter Ministries, providing job skills training and employment opportunities in construction, manufacturing and municipal clean-up.

NEXT STEP

OF WEST MICHIGAN

“Mel Trotter is a good place to figure it all out, because they’re going to point you in the right direction every time.”

Hester

Hester always dreamed of a career as a builder and renovator, and with the encouragement of his caseworkers, he joined our Next Step program. Now, he receives job skills training that will lead to employment in the construction field where he will not just build homes for others but also a brighter future for himself.

“I’m not ashamed of where I’m at,” says Hester. “I wear my Mel Trotter badge proudly when I’m in the streets, letting people know I’m in a program at Mel Trotter and trying to get my life together.”

Hester says that in addition to his physical needs being met at Mel Trotter, he is also growing spiritually.

“Ultimately, my prayers led me here,” he says. “And I continue to pray every night. Not just for myself, but for others around me who are struggling. Because this is a serious fight that’s not easy to face alone.”

“And with my faith and with the help of Mel Trotter, I will be ok,” he adds confidently.

As you fight homelessness in Grand Rapids, you share the hope of Christ with more neighbors like Hester and transform lives by offering life-changing opportunities with dignity, safety and compassion to those hurting in our community.



Find us on social media for stories, videos and upcoming events!



We serve people who have barriers to employment — broken relationships, lack of resources, insecure housing, previous incarceration or addiction — but who are determined to build a better future for themselves and their families.

We engage with members of our community, inviting them to work shoulder to shoulder with us and helping them rediscover their identity as beloved, creative and dignified people created in the image of God.

Our work throughout the greater Grand Rapids communities stabilizes and empowers our teammates and results in high-quality products and services for our customers.

Our goal is to cultivate a sustainable place in our city where people can heal, grow and thrive through relationship and equal access to resources and opportunities.

Season 2 of our Everyday Humanity podcast is out now!

This podcast shares stories of life transformation — the kind that happen when demonstrated compassion meets unconditional love.

Tune in as we uncover and share the way God works and moves through each of us through Everyday Humanity. Our podcast can be found wherever you get your podcasts or you can visit meltrotter.org/everyday-humanity.



Events & Announcements

Art & Experience Auction

This inaugural MTM event — supporting day-center operations — begins Thursday, March 24, 2022, at 6:00 P.M. at The High Five GR.

The Art & Experience Auction will highlight art from:

- Heartside Art Ministry
- Local artists
- Donated pieces from people's personal collections

The auction will also highlight local venues and the experiences they offer, such as:

- A wine tasting and pairing with a local restaurant
- A game and something extra with a local sports team
- A private chef creating a meal for you and your friends in your home

The majority of items will be available through a silent auction that culminates the night of the event. Select items will be auctioned live at the event on March 24.

To register for the event, or become a sponsor, please visit meltrotter.org/auction.

To donate items or for questions, please contact Heather Osterink at 616-588-8753 or heatherosterink@meltrotter.org.

Mel Trotter Ministries Annual Golf Outing

Join us Monday, June 27, 2022, at Railside Golf Club for fellowship and fun in support of outreach programs at Mel Trotter Ministries.

Morning and afternoon flights are available for \$125 per golfer and include 18-hole scramble, practice facilities, lunch, commemorative gift and chances to win prizes.

Register online at meltrotter.org/golf.

All funds raised support the MTM Outreach Division, which works to connect unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness to necessary provisions, including clothing, hygiene supplies, food, hot showers, transportation, resource referrals, and medical care.



Online Storefront

Mel Trotter Ministries recently opened an online storefront featuring handcrafted goods from Next Step of West Michigan, apparel and books. Each purchase supports individuals on a transformational path to a more stable living environment. Browse and shop at meltrotter.org/shop.



MEL TROTTER MINISTRIES

225 Commerce Ave. SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
meltrotter.org

Our Mission Statement

Mel Trotter Ministries exists to demonstrate the compassion of Jesus Christ, through rescue and restoration for anyone experiencing hunger and homelessness.

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