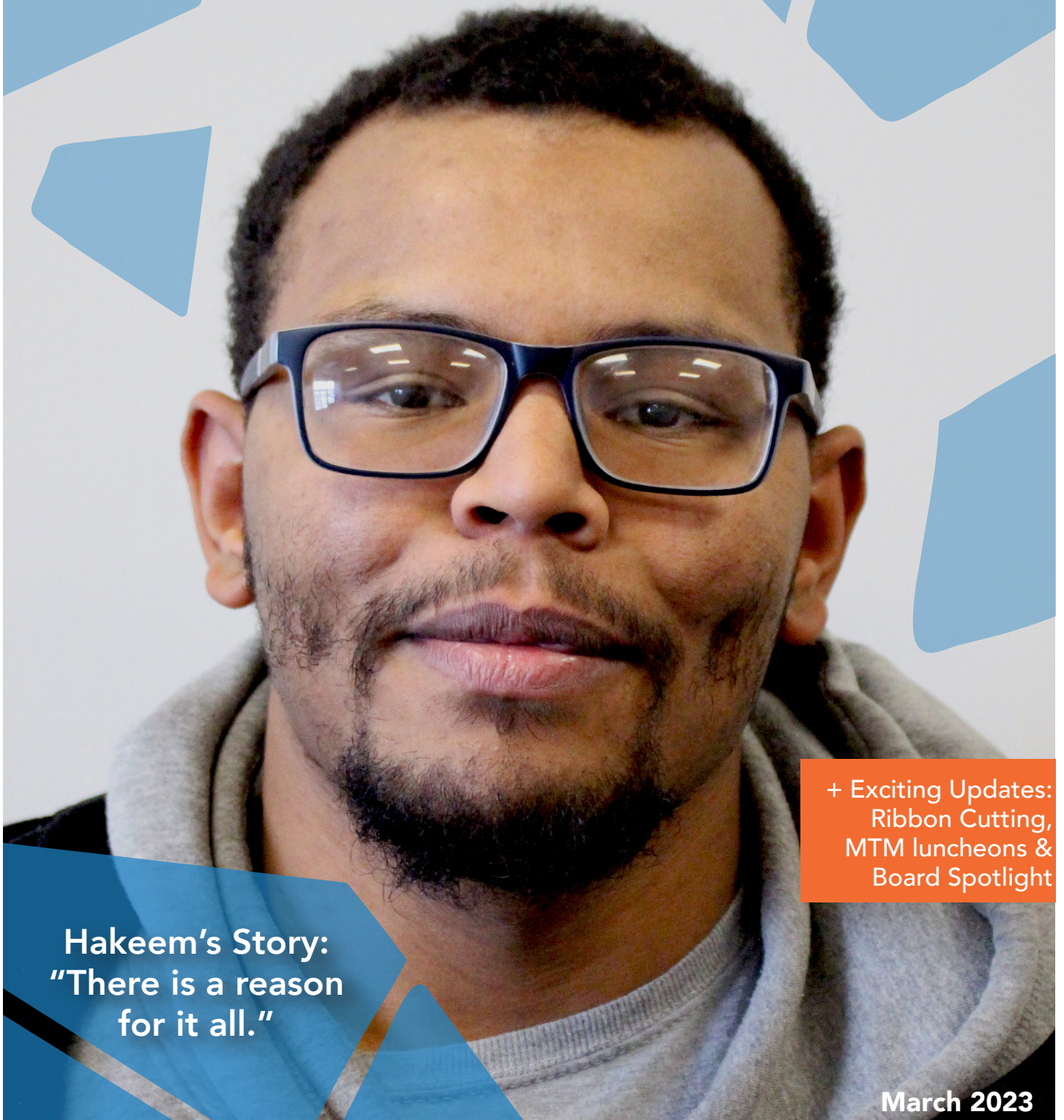


MTM *newsletter*

Demonstrating the compassion of Jesus
to individuals and families.



+ Exciting Updates:
Ribbon Cutting,
MTM luncheons &
Board Spotlight

Hakeem's Story:
"There is a reason
for it all."

March 2023

Ripples

DEMONSTRATING THE COMPASSION OF JESUS

Have you ever thought about ripples?

Have you ever taken a running start toward a swimming pool, jumped as high as you could, tucked your knees to your chest and landed the most spectacular cannonball ever? Have you ever thrown a rock into a still pond and watched the ripples form? What amazes me about ripples is that you cannot stop them. Once your body or a rock hits the water and the ripples are created, it is impossible to stop them.

125 years ago on January 19, 1898, a drunken, homeless, petty criminal named Mel Trotter was guided into the Chicago Pacific Garden Rescue Mission and that very night put his faith in Jesus. Two years later, February 23, 1900, that very same man opened what was then called the Grand Rapids City Rescue Mission. Mel ran that organization for 40 years until he

died. It was then that the board changed the name to Mel Trotter.

Occasionally we hear people say that they don't think MTM is a valuable organization because we have been around for over 100 years and there is more homelessness now than ever. I certainly understand the question and that belief. However, I don't agree with it. Because of ripples.

During the 40 years that Mel Trotter led the mission, he began 68 other missions around the United States. Ripples: one man, one ministry in one city impacted the nation. Ripples: **in 123 years, thousands—perhaps hundreds of thousands of people, have conquered addiction, found employment, found housing, reunited with families, come to faith in Jesus and become leaders.** Ripples. Multiply those ripples times 68 other ministries around the country and those

ripples become tidal waves.

While it is true that we still have far too many people experiencing homelessness, ripples are still happening.

There is a story of a man who was walking along the beach. He saw thousands of star fish had washed up on shore. He began picking them up, one at a time, and throwing them back into the sea. A young man came by and scoffed, "you will never make a difference, there are too many," he said. The old man bent down, picked up a starfish, threw it back into the sea and looked at the young man. "It made a difference to that one," he said.

One well-known former university president told me that his grandmother came to faith in Jesus through Mel Trotter, and his grandfather was given his first suit by Mel Trotter. Those ripples

continued and multiplied for generations because each person helped another person, who then helped another. And the tidal wave grows and rolls on and on.

How did Mel Trotter get into the Pacific Garden Rescue Mission that night? He was drunk and on his way to the pier in Chicago to commit suicide by walking off it, into icy Lake Michigan in the middle of a blizzard. What changed the trajectory of that night for Mel? God using a person to create ripples.

A staff of the mission saw Mel staggering toward the lake. That staff person demonstrated the compassion of Jesus Christ by jumping in. He grabbed Mel and wrapped him in arms of love and compassion, not judgement and condemnation. He gently walked with Mel back toward the entrance of the mission and away from the suicidal trajectory Mel was on.

Once inside, Mel was met with more love and grace and compassion. It was through these demonstrations of compassion that Mel found help that quickly led to hope. The ripples began to build and continue. And they continue today in 2023.

Sometimes we will hear critics say that Mel Trotter is no longer who it once was. I would respectfully disagree. Mel Trotter is who it has always been. A ministry striving to demonstrate the compassion of Jesus toward anyone hurting, hungry and experiencing homelessness. Whether that is someone living at the river, a youth who is all alone and has been trafficked, a single mom living in her car with her babies, or someone walking into our shelter or brought in drunk, wet, suicidal, and lost. We are a ministry working to bring an

end to homelessness one life at a time, through housing, workforce development programs, addiction recovery programs and so much more. **We are a ministry who has always been, and will always be, centered on Jesus Christ as we do our best to share the love, hope, and life offered through Jesus to everyone. Never forced, never required, but always offered with love.**

I look forward to sharing the visions we have for the future of MTM. We believe they are exciting and will move the needle significantly in a positive direction. Regardless of what the future holds, several things are and always will be true. Mel Trotter Ministries exists to demonstrate the compassion of Jesus toward all, and we will continue to work to bring an end to homelessness one life at a time. Those truths and our efforts are true now for the very same reasons they have always been true: because of our faith in Jesus, and the unwavering belief that he has called us to make ripples that will build into tidal waves and cannot be stopped.

So, my question for you in 2023 is simply this. **Will you jump into the pool with us and do a gigantic cannonball, so that together we can create ripples that will last for eternity?**

Grace and peace,



Dennis Van Kampen
President/CEO
Mel Trotter Ministries

RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY!

Please join us on Thursday, April 27th for a very special ribbon cutting ceremony as we unveil the results of our Immeasurably More Capital Campaign renovations. You'll hear remarks from cabinet members, local government officials, and MTM staff before tours begin. We can't wait to see you—and for you to see the immeasurable changes. Light breakfast provided.

9:00 am at Mel Trotter Ministries
225 Commerce Avenue SW,
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

MTM LUNCHEON INVITE

Join us on March 14 or March 28 at 12:00 p.m. for a Meet the Mission Luncheon. You'll learn about how MTM works to restore lives of the hundreds of men, women, and children who experience a circumstance of hunger or homelessness at some point on their journey. You will also learn how you can get involved and partner with us to change lives. Lunch is provided and complimentary. Register at meltrotter.org/luncheon

If you have questions or need further information, please contact Heather Osterink at 616-588-8753 or heatherosterink@meltrotter.org.



HAKEEM'S STORY

Hakeem grew up in Grand Rapids with his parents and three siblings. Life was anything but easy. Having been born into an already struggling family, his situation went downhill at age 6 or 7 when they were involved in a housefire, and his dad ran off.

After his father's abandonment, his mom couldn't find herself, but rather filled the void with other relationships. Hakeem recalls "I didn't establish a father figure with any of them." Later, she got remarried and began to abuse alcohol. During this time, Hakeem was being bullied at school.

When his mom's hours were cut at her job, she began cheating on her husband, and he filed for divorce. Hakeem remembers her never being home; therefore, they didn't establish a mother-son bond. He says, "everything spiraled when we got evicted" and his family began moving all their belongings into a storage unit, then sleeping in their car. His mom called around and they landed at Mel Trotter Ministries. Hakeem, his brother, and his mom stayed at MTM for one night. While his mom was at work that day, Hakeem and his brother stayed in the car. Eventually management found out that they were sleeping

in the storage unit, and they got kicked out. After that, Hakeem and his family stayed at a Knights Inn and during that time, his stepdad came back into the picture. Hakeem, his mom, stepdad, sister (who was pregnant at the time), her boyfriend, and his brother all crammed into one hotel room. Hakeem recalls playing around at the hotel and getting kicked out. The hotel called the police, so his mom had to leave work early, which got her fired. "The situation took my childhood away," Hakeem says while recalling this part of his journey.

"There is a reason for it all."

Hakeem Lockhart

He and his family found themselves at the doors of Mel Trotter Ministries after having no place else to turn. Through Mel Trotter Ministries, they were put in contact with Family Promise. As they started to be case managed by Family Promise, Hakeem and his family got plugged into a local church. Between their new church family and Family Promise, they were able to get to the depths of their situation and begin understanding the root cause(s) of their homelessness. They stayed at Family Promise

for 5 months, and they helped his mom find a home.

Hakeem says **“being homeless is more than not having a home. It is not having a meal; it is shopping at thrift stores... it is deeper than ‘we don’t have a home’.”** He says, **“I was trying to live two lives. I was trying to be me, but I knew I wasn’t going back to a home.”**

Because his mom couldn’t afford to give him a bed, Hakeem slept on a futon. They didn’t have enough money to buy a school uniform, which got him expelled from school even though it wasn’t out of defiance. “Everything became too much to handle while experiencing homelessness,” says Hakeem.

His mom was making the kids pay half the rent, so she didn’t have to pay as much, and they got behind on house payments and were evicted. “I wasn’t ready to personally live on my own,” Hakeem lamented, but he moved out when he was 17 and lived with his sister and her baby at an apartment. They were first-time renters and didn’t realize they were in a short-term lease, and they couldn’t re-sign. They ended up staying with a friend in their basement.



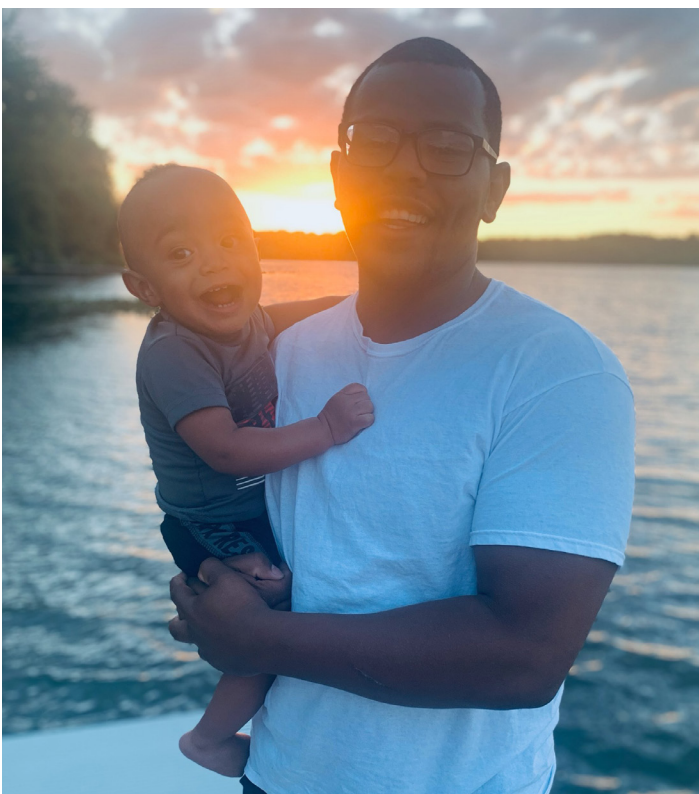
While working at McDonald’s, Hakeem completed his GED online and walked with his graduating class. He was able to finish the program six months early. Today he lives with his fiancé and his son, Messiah.

After being fired from multiple jobs due to various reasons – many of which stemmed from his childhood trauma and experiencing homelessness – Hakeem says he asked God, “Why am I going through this?” It was in that questioning moment that he decided to apply for a position at Mel Trotter Thrift. Ron, the supervisor at the MTM Thrift Distribution Center, called him for an interview and Hakeem sat down and shared his story. The rest, as they say, is history.

Hakeem has now been working for Mel Trotter Ministries since September. “From day one, he [Ron] has been there for me...he is more of a mentor than a boss. I was a broken person and I needed reprimands,” says Hakeem.

He and his mom don’t have the greatest relationship, but there is progress. Hakeem says, “I had to learn forgiveness...you have to forgive them as if you were in their shoes.”

Today, he credits Mel Trotter Ministries with helping turn his life around and get back on his feet. To give back and show his appreciation, he serves at Family Promise every Thursday by picking up the donated clothing they are not able to use and bringing it to the MTM thrift store.



A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE ART & EXPERIENCE AUCTION COMMITTEE:

Pamela Alderman, Hannah Berry, Jamie Bush, Ben Dykhouse, E'lla Luster, Tara McCrackin, Michele Mclsaac, Cheryl Randall, and Garrett Steir.

We are grateful for their hard work in helping to plan the event, procure pieces and experiences, and encourage the community to attend. The Art & Experience Auction benefits art therapy at Mel Trotter Ministries. Art therapy is crucial in helping guests

HEARTSIDE UPDATE

While these cold winter months are especially hard on the guests we serve who are experiencing homelessness, our Heartside Ministry division is working hard to provide not only a warm place to visit, but a place of joy, laughter, community and creativity. Smiles and laughter fill the room on Thursday afternoons for "Karaoke Thursdays," and creativity can be experienced every day in the Art Studio as art pieces are created to the sound of a guest playing the piano.

No matter where you find yourself within Heartside, the sense of community is all around. We recently had the pleasure of hosting a group of men from



ART + *experience* AUCTION

overcome trauma through giving them a way to interpret, express, and resolve their emotions and thoughts.

We welcome you to join us for the Art & Experience Auction on Thursday, March 23, 2023 at 6:00 pm at The Goei Center. You will be able to bid on Silent Auction items and participate in a Live Auction, while learning more about MTM. To register, visit meltrotter.org/auction



Seven24 Ministries. They helped with some physical labor tasks, which led to a fun game of BINGO, in which a guest later expressed, "those guys are awesome! When are they coming back?" We are so thankful for community partners like Seven24 Ministries as well as Anointed Life Ministries, who provides a worship service each month to our guests. Groups like theirs, and many others, are working with us to help our guests feel seen, valued and loved!

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STEVE KELLEY

MTM BOARD SPOTLIGHT

Steve Kelly's acquaintance with Mel Trotter Ministries started with turkeys. As the Morning Show host of West Michigan's Morning News on WOOD Radio, he broadcasted live from Mel Trotter's annual Turkey Drop—and continues to do so every year.

He also has a much more personal tie thanks to his cousin, who was a guest at Mel Trotter for several years when experiencing homelessness. Both Steve and his cousin are alcoholics, but David ultimately lost his battle with the disease.

"I kept a job and my family, but David lost everything. I so easily could have been my cousin," said Kelly. "And that's one of the things that keeps me coming back to Mel Trotter. My patience was tested with my cousin, but Mel Trotter Ministries has the patience, training, and resources that I don't."

Kelly joined the MTM board less than a year ago, currently sitting on the Advancement Committee. He sees his role in life and on the board as part of what he feels he was put on this earth to do: tell stories.

"Telling MTM's story is my biggest strength right now. I'm here to support Mel Trotter in a physical way—to talk about it, interview people, be part of a ministry that is so uplifting, as well as supports and celebrates its own staff," said Kelly.

Kelly has a special affinity for the Prevention & Diversion program, which helps individuals and families prevent homelessness through a variety of stabilizing services designed to keep them housed. He counts himself lucky to have had resources such as a car, money, access to therapy, and loving family

to help as he dealt with his addiction.

"Mel Trotter Ministries takes all the blessings I had and puts them in one place so that I and others can help steer people in their direction," he said. "There is lots of federal and state money, but so many restrictions. MTM helps access those resources, helps guests learn the system, and empowers them to move forward."

Steve Kelly knows that his path to redemption and recovery doesn't work for everyone, that each person is on his or her own journey. His included liver disease, which is what finally got his attention and set him on a new path. His feelings of survivor's guilt—so many of those he used to drink with are no longer here—are part of his drive to help those who struggle like he did.

"Now I think about how it's a blessing I became an alcoholic. I can see people through those eyes. And now I will talk anytime to anyone in recovery," said Kelly.

Which brings Kelly right into the front door of Mel Trotter Ministries, a place he intends to stay as long as possible. He sees himself in the story of Mel Trotter himself, both of them in the process of killing themselves but who met God on the way.

"My role is to say yes, to do whatever MTM asks and to do it wholeheartedly," he said. "MTM is a leader in the community, serving those who experience homelessness. I'm proud of the example they are, awed by the staff and how united they are in their message, and how Christlike they are as they help people deal with these complex issues."

2022 Year In Review: MTM's Impact

4,988

Unique guests served

789

Community Partners
Medical Clinic
(CPMC) visits

1,873

Showers provided
in our Mobile
Shower Unit

298

Families - nearly 1,000
children - diverted
from homelessness

417

Guests chose to
follow Jesus or
rededicated their lives

298

Guests found
housing

521

Referrals to
local partnering
organizations

3,178

Outreach visits
with local unsheltered
individuals

136,890

Nights of shelter
provided

207,330

Meals served

1,041

Sobering Center
visits

177

Dental, chiropractic
or vision visits

107

Meijer employees supported
and connected to resources
through MTM's Prevention
and Diversion division

396

Guests found
employment