

80 Adults Graduate from the Long-term Program; Hear Grads at "Field of Hope" Luncheon July 23 at the Terrace Club at Progressive Field



The City Mission

Press Release

The City Mission's 80 Adult Grads Let Go & Let God

For some it was their first-ever graduation.

For all, it is a new lease on life.

By Joe Jancsurak

Cleveland, OH - July 6, 2009 - "I'm so proud that I might as well be graduating Harvard today; I would not trade this experience for anything," said Ann, a 25-year-old child daycare worker, just moments before graduating from a local program with most unusual admission requirements on a beautiful June Saturday afternoon.

To qualify, you must first experience depths of despair that few of us know firsthand. Then you must seek help and commit yourself to a life-changing experience known as the [The City Mission's Crisis Services Program](#).

Ann looks forward to "following her dream" of working with special needs children beginning with early-childhood education classes at Cuyahoga Community College.

For Carolyn, a 52-year-old mom and grandmother, graduating the program encourages her to serve in prison ministry, an environment that is familiar to her as a former inmate. "I am blessed," she says humbly and confidently.

Ann and Carolyn were among the 80 women and men who completed the Crisis Services Program (CSP) through The City Mission's [Laura's Home Women's Crisis Center](#) and [Crossroads Men's Crisis Center](#). After sharing the significance of the day, they joined their fellow graduates, clad in bright blue caps and gowns. As they filed into the bright white multi-purpose room at Laura's Home they were encouraged by an enthusiastic, two-minute standing ovation by approximately 120 family members and guests.

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The celebratory mood throughout the 1-hour, 45-minute ceremony reflected the life-changing achievement of these 39 men and 41 women that included young twenty-something singles seasoned grandparents in their 50s and 60s, and lots of middle-aged graduates-all eager for a second shot at life. "We're excited and ready to bust with excitement," said The City Mission's CEO Rev. Richard Trickel, who delivered the invocation.

The City Mission Board of Trustees President Brian Broadbent told the standing-room- only crowd that the graduates have "allowed the transforming power of God's love to work in their lives; they have chosen true inner transformation over mere outward conformity."

Such results don't come without a price. "The men and women graduating today have gone through an intensive process," said Learning Center Supervisor George Mason.

The program is six months in length to help clients live independently, find steady employment and make healthy life choices. Continuing education curricula for success at work, at home, and in the community are focused on Bible study, information technology, financial integrity, job-search strategies, life transformation (coping skills), and soft skills for the workplace (essentially people skills). Clients are eligible for graduation upon case workers' approvals, coursework completion, and completion of onsite service hours.

Keynoter Dr. Deforia Lane, a Mission Trustee and resident director of music therapy at University Hospitals' Ireland Cancer Center and UH's Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital, expressed her amazement over what the graduates have overcome in their lives and recognized the pride felt by family and friends as they shared the moment. She recalled her two sons' school graduations and said those events were the biggest source of pride, outside of giving birth, adding "it was a little less painful too."

Looking beyond this day, Lane encouraged graduates to PRESS forward. With hand gestures to accompany each letter, she explained that the 'P' is about praying for everything, without ceasing; 'R' is for releasing the junk in our lives; 'E' is for elevate, to rise up above the negativity in our lives; 'S' is for simplify and to focus on what matters most; and the final 'S' represents God's desire for us "to soar and rise up on eagle's wings."

In closing, Dr. Lane shared her musical talent by singing the beginning and ending of "Over My Head," an African American spiritual she learned from her mom, and which captured the essence of the day. The song starts with the words, "Over my head, I see trouble in the air." It ends, however, with, "I hear music in the air; there must be a God somewhere."

Worship songs were integral to the ceremony, with emotionally charged numbers sung by graduates Karen ("My Redeemer Lives") and Melissa ("And Now My Lifesong Sings"). Also serving to move and inspire were the words of King Solomon (Proverbs 3:1) and the Apostle Paul (Colossians 1: 9-14) as read by Mission Trustees Mark Adler and Sherrill Marino, who presented graduates with their certificates of completion.

Before delivering the benediction, the Mission's Bible Teacher Pastor Randy Brown gave props to case workers, staff, families, and friends, all of whom received standing ovations. Though he didn't sing the words, Brown echoed Dr. Lane's closing message: "When you look at The City Mission's graduates, the staff that works with them, and our board that provides the opportunity to do what we do . . . there must be a God."

Following the ceremony, graduate Jerry, 43, said Pastor Brown was a major influence in restoring stability to his life by showing him how to apply the Bible to everyday living.

"He breaks it down and shows you how to really study it," said Jerry.

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Jerry's favorite scriptures have to do with wisdom and understanding, and include Proverbs 3:5-6: Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Jerry, a former high school athlete (basketball and football) says he wants to go back to school to be a teacher. "I love kids and I'd love to coach."

Scott, 25, said he arrived at the Mission without money and with a skeptical attitude and an alcohol addiction. He's leaving with college grants and the drive to be a full-time nursing student with a minor in accounting at Cleveland State University.

After losing his fast-food, minimum-wage job, and while living on the streets, Scott said a former coworker recommended the Mission. Once there, he embraced the spiritual aspects of the program and came to understand he needed to let the Lord work through him in order to get to that place where he needed to be.

Today Scott is at that place: "I know my Lord forgives me and that I need to do His will, not mine." As for those burnt bridges, Scott said he has apologized to family and friends for past wrongs and reports that some relationships are restored, while others remain badly charred.

Looking ahead, Scott says, "I know that so long as I continue to do God's will, not mine, everything will be fine."

For Diana, a 61-year-old great grandmother with a high-energy smile, this was her first-ever graduation ceremony. The recovering addict was court-ordered from the county jail to Laura's Home. She says the program helped her come to terms with a troubled relationship she had with her mother.

"Growing up, my mother was always the one who was busy helping others, and I didn't feel she had time for me. Now I understand that was her purpose, and I intend to carry forward my mother's mission -- to reach out unconditionally to others who have gone through some of the stuff I have."

Having survived drug addiction, rape and molestation, and physical assaults to her head and throat, Diana says she is on an awesome journey and that Laura's Home and her case manager gave her life.

"They say you can't teach an old dog new tricks," said Diana, "But I'm here to say I'm not a dog, and I'm willing to learn."

Although she has her GED, she said this graduation day was special because it represented completion of something she set out to do. Today, she manages a cafeteria at a senior center and spends Saturdays delivering meals to aged. Her dream is to one day operate an independent-living home for troubled women.

For Nathan, 47-year-old dad, this, too, was his first-ever graduation. And like Diana, he also came from the county jail. Nathan, however, has the distinction of claiming this as his second Mission experience, having lived there in 1991 only to go out and "fall" again.

How has this return visit been different?

"The difference was me," Nathan stated humbly and without hesitation. "The staff is awesome; they really have it together. There's a lot of love here. But you really have to want the help, and I wanted the help."

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Nathan says he now has a sense of accomplishment. "I finished what I started and stayed on course. Now I have a job washing uniforms for hospitals. Everything is coming together. What I want to do is work at a halfway house so I can let everyone there know that there's only one way, and that's God's way."


Joe Jancsurak is a Cleveland-based freelance writer and volunteer with The City Mission.

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“Field of Hope”
Luncheon**



You are invited
to the
**“FIELD OF HOPE”
Luncheon**
on reaching
the hearts of
men and women
who find themselves
out of the game




**“Field of Hope” Luncheon on
July 23: Hear Some of Our
Graduates for Yourself**

Spend a lunch hour with other concerned Northeast Ohioans examining what it means to be a homeless man or woman in Cleveland and the practical things that can be done to make a difference.

Hear from a few men and women who have come out of homelessness and are on their

way to wholeness for their perspective.

Please join The City Mission, DesignTech, Salem Communications, Cleveland Magazine and Christian Blue Pages for

**“Field of Hope” Luncheon
Thursday, July 23 at Terrace Club at Progressive Field
2401 Ontario Street, Cleveland, OH 44115**

Doors open at 11:40 am
Lunch and presentation are from noon to 1 pm.
Cost: \$15 per person or \$60 for a table of 4

[For more details](#)

Reservations are required:

- [Register online](#) until July 17. Note: If you do not see a confirmation screen after pressing submit, please call (216) 431-3510 ext. 237 or email deaddy@thecitymission.org.
- To register by phone or after July 17, call (216) 431-3510 ext. 237 or email deaddy@thecitymission.org.

About The City Mission

The City Mission serves over 11,000 clients annually at three different locations within Greater Cleveland through a variety of programs: crisis services through short-term and long-term programs for homeless men, women and children; spiritual aid for those incarcerated; youth programs; necessities for the poor including clothing and food; and a retreat center that hosts an overnight camp experience for urban youth and families.

Website: <http://www.thecitymission.org>

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