

THE MISSION

let's end homelessness in LA

Homeless for ThanksgivingSM

For almost 30 years, drugs robbed Elias of the things that matter most — family, home, and Thanksgiving joy. Union Rescue Mission gave them back ... thanks to you.

"For me, Thanksgiving was always about family. It meant home," says Elias, who grew up in South Central Los Angeles. "All my aunts, uncles, and cousins would be around, and we'd spend the whole day eating, laughing, and playing. But in those days, I was especially close to my mom. I love my mom. She was everything to me."

But Elias lost sight of "home" in high school, when his involvement with gangs and drugs landed him a five-year sentence in the California Youth Authority system. After leaving CYA at the age of 21, Elias spent the next 29 years searching for a way back to that sense of family and home.

He was married in his early 20's and celebrated the birth of two daughters. It felt like home again — until he discovered his wife was a heroin addict. Soon after his divorce, Elias got lost in a haze of cocaine, crack,

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SPECIAL THANKSGIVING ISSUE!



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and crystal meth.

"After that, I just didn't want to work anymore. So I started hustling people at casinos or on the streets, selling cans, mowing lawns, whatever I had to do to keep my habit up," Elias says.

He sacrificed everything — Thanksgivings, home, and even family — for drugs.

"My daughters knew what was going on and they weren't happy. Even my mom said I wasn't welcome around her house when I got too deep into the drugs," Elias recalls.

By 2007, Elias had lost all his possessions, his home, and even his family. He knew he needed help. That summer, he walked into Union Rescue Mission. He didn't tell anyone — not even his daughters or his mother.

Three months later, on Thanksgiving Day, Elias received



permission to leave URM for the day. That's when he learned his mother had passed away.

"I didn't know," he says. "That broke my heart. I almost decided not to come back to URM. But I knew this is where she would want me to get help. So I came back. It still hurts,

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though, and I think about her every day."

Elias graduated from URM's Christian Life Discipleship program in November 2008. Looking forward to this Thanksgiving, however, he knows where he'll be. Right here at URM, celebrating that sense of home and family he lost so many years before.

"The people here at Union Rescue Mission, this is my family now. I love everybody here. I'm so thankful for God's mercy. He's given me a second chance and a second family. This is home, for me. And one day, I know I'll go to my real home — in heaven. That's my dream."

In Everything Give Thanks

(1 Thessalonians 5:18)



Cheryl
Women's Apprentice

"Grateful for What I Have"

"I believe Thanksgiving all comes to being grateful for what you have, instead of focusing on what you don't have. I am thankful for God being in my life. And really I'm thankful for Union Rescue Mission because this is where God has placed me. I may be homeless, but I'm still grateful for my life as it is today. Because it's better today than it was."



Michael
Men's Apprentice

"I'm Looking Forward to a Reunion"

"Every year, between 50-75 of my family would come together in one spot. I miss that. I've been away from my family for about 15 years because of drugs and alcohol. So I've missed a lot of Thanksgivings. Now that I'm clean and sober, I might be able to join them this year. I'm looking forward to a reunion more than anything."

"I Didn't Want to be Alone"

"I would say Thanksgiving is all about being among other people. I've been homeless before, and it wasn't a happy time being homeless around the holidays. I didn't want to be alone. My family would let me come home for Thanksgiving as long as I wasn't using or stealing or drinking. I'm so thankful I have a place to live now."



Jay
Christian Life Discipleship Program



4,000 Pounds of Thanksgiving Love!

We believe every precious soul on Skid Row deserves to experience the joy of Thanksgiving. That's why, every year, Union Rescue Mission blocks off the street in front of the Mission and throws a giant celebration to all the residents of Skid Row.

Games and activities for the kids, live music, arts and crafts — and, of course, food ... 4,000 pounds of turkey, 2,000 pounds of stuffing, 2,200 pounds of sweet potatoes, 800 pounds of mashed potatoes, and 4,080 pieces of pie!

See what YOUR gift means at Thanksgiving.

But it's more than great food. The love and compassion experienced at Thanksgiving can lead one more precious soul back home again.

Please visit www.urm.org/thanksgiving to watch how your gifts — your love — fills Skid Row with love and joy.

Thanksgiving Celebration, Saturday, Nov. 21

Just \$1.84 provides a nourishing Thanksgiving meal!



A Thanksgiving Timeline — Your Gifts at Work!

Homeless for Thanksgiving™

Days before Union Rescue Mission's Thanksgiving event, staff begins preparing turkeys and all the trimmings.

1:00 A.M.
CEO Andy Bales and volunteers begin to deep fry turkeys.



3:00 A.M. San Pedro street closes and street cleaning begins.

4:00 A.M. Next wave of volunteers arrive (10-20 people) to help prepare food in the kitchen and to help set up the street.



4:00 – 8:00 A.M.
Staff and volunteers set up tables, chairs, canopies, stage, sound equipment, and electrical hook-ups.

8:00 A.M. Sponsors arrive and set up their booths.



9:00 A.M. Third wave of volunteers (300 people) arrive and register.

9:45 A.M. Volunteer orientation and instructions.



11:00 A.M – 2:00 P.M.
URM's Thanksgiving event kicks off with volunteers serving food to guests who are homeless. The event includes live music and entertainment, snacks, games, and activities for kids, arts and crafts, and face painting.





Notes from Andy

A Thanksgiving Feast for Everyone

I am what some psychologists call an “Includer.” It bothers me when anyone feels left out. So I bend over backwards to make sure everyone feels included.

Maybe that’s why I’m so determined to make Thanksgiving extra special for our beautiful guests at Union Rescue Mission and all our neighbors on Skid Row. While millions of families nationwide bask in love and good food at Thanksgiving, too many people on Skid Row feel abandoned, left out, and alone.

Every Thanksgiving, I open our “house” to all our friends and neighbors. We leave no one out. We roast and deep fry the turkeys, sending the aroma up and down the city streets. We mash the potatoes, fix the stuffing, and cut the pies. We shake hands, we laugh together, play together, and offer thanks together.

This is our family — a family of precious men, women, and children who have no home and nowhere else to go. When they feast with us, we treat them like kings, we serve them, we remind them of home. We love them.

For some of them, that’s enough to set them back on their own road to healing and home. And you and I get to be a part of all that!

Blessings, Andy

To read Andy’s blog, please visit revandysblog.com.



Thanksgiving and a Way Home — With Your Help

Please give hurting people a taste of love and the chance to start over this Thanksgiving.

For most people, Thanksgiving is a day of warmth, love, family, and gratitude. But for people who are homeless, it’s too often a day of painful memories of wrong turns, families lost, and forgotten love.

All year round at Union Rescue Mission, your gifts offer these hurting souls the chance to experience that love again through safe shelter, nutritious meals, and God’s care. But at Thanksgiving, your generosity means even more — a day of celebration, special food, and *family* love — which gives many the hope and courage they need to find their way home. *Thank you!*

Your gift of \$25 will provide 13 holiday meals!

With volunteers cooking and serving, and with generous donations from local markets, each Thanksgiving meal you provide costs \$1.84. We expect more than 5,000 guests this year. Your gift of \$25 will help feed 13 people, \$50 will help feed 27 people, or any amount you can send will help. So please give generously this Thanksgiving. Thank you!

To put your gift to work even faster, go to www.urm.org/thanksgiving

Homeless for ThanksgivingSM

Our Mission

We embrace people experiencing homelessness with the compassion of Christ — giving hope and healing for a changed life — helping them find their way home.

New Opportunity to Love Your Neighbor!

On November 14th, URM will deliver 3,000 special boxes to residents throughout Skid Row. These boxes are filled with shampoo, soap, toothpaste, mouthwash, deodorant, razors, socks, and a special invitation to celebrate Thanksgiving with us at Union Rescue Mission.



For just \$3, you can provide one of these special boxes to one of our Skid Row neighbors — and add a personalized blessing signed by YOU!

Please check the special \$3 box on your remit form, then sign the Blessing Label with your first name only. It’s a wonderful way to love your neighbor this holiday season!



Union Rescue Mission[®]
the way home

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