

Thank You for Giving Christmas Hope to Hurting People



URM's 19th Annual Christmas Store Making Children's Christmas Wishes Come True!

The holidays can be hard for families like LaTanya's and Jocelyn's, who are struggling and experiencing homelessness. But for 19 years, Union Rescue Mission's Christmas Store has brought joy into their difficult lives — just when they needed it most.

This year, thousands of underprivileged children at Union Rescue Mission, Hope Gardens Family Center, and other agencies throughout the greater Los Angeles area will receive brand new gifts because of the 19th annual Christmas Store.

On **December 18-19**, more than 700 moms and dads with little or no income will enjoy the dignity of being able to provide their children with gifts they select themselves (for free) and give to their children personally.

All year round, Union Rescue Mission embraces people experiencing homelessness with the compassion of Christ and offers

healing and hope to help them find their

way home. And thanks to the Christmas store — and generous friends like you — hundreds of families will find that new hope this holiday season.



For information about donating toys to the Christmas Store this year, please contact Chris Stode at (213) 673-4801.



Christmas Can Be Special ... Anywhere by LaTanya

Christmas has always been my favorite holiday. I love spoiling my five boys. When my husband and I both had good jobs, every Christmas I'd buy presents for them that piled up to the ceiling, everything brand new.

But a few years ago, I lost my job and had to start working at a 99c Store. My heart broke when my husband abandoned us in 2007, and in June 2008 I was in a car accident. I could no longer work.

Last Christmas was the worst ever. I'm thankful we had a roof over our heads, but we had no presents, no tree — we didn't even have electricity or heat.

Then last June, I couldn't even pay the rent anymore. Suddenly we found ourselves homeless. The only shelter in Los Angeles that would take boys the ages of mine was Union Rescue Mission.

I know God has us here for a reason. Living here we've seen how many families are homeless just like us. And now my boys and I are determined that if we ever get the chance, we want to help other families who are homeless.

This Christmas, I hope we're living in our own place. But Union Rescue Mission has taught me that no matter where we are, Christmas can be special. You don't have to be rich or live in a mansion or a house. As long as my sons and I are together, loving one another, that's all that matters.



"My boys and I are determined that if we ever get the chance, we want to help other families who are homeless."



Notes from Andy

My Christmas Wish

Christmas always reminds me that Jesus came to give everyone the chance to live a new life in a new and better world.

But Christmas is the absolute toughest time of year for every precious soul experiencing homelessness. But it's especially hard on young mothers and kids like Jocelyn, whom you read about on page 1. New life and a better world seem impossible for mothers and kids forced to spend Christmas on Skid Row.

Every year, my personal Christmas wish is to bring as much joy, love, and dignity into their lives as possible. We bake the cookies, deck the halls, sing the noels, and even give them the chance to shop for one another at our annual Christmas Store.

But this holiday season I have an even bigger wish — to move every single mother and child here at Union Rescue Mission out of Skid Row and into our Hope Gardens Family Center or other housing far away from these mean streets.

And it's a wish already coming true, as we're moving 14 more precious mothers and their children to Hope Gardens this month. And this Christmas, I pray that each one rediscovers hope for a new life in a new and better world.


Blessings, Andy

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

"GroWinG Up FAST" CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

My dad had started his own business with a partner, and it was going pretty good until the economy got bad and my dad's partner got into trouble with the police. The business fell apart and we had to move into a motel, then a shelter in Glendale, then in another motel, and finally my dad brought us to Union Rescue Mission.

It hurts being homeless, especially on Skid Row. I hear violent threats, and see adults doing things no kid should have to see.

I used to blame God. I wondered why He hated us so much. My mom would go to church, but I wouldn't go. Why should I go pray to God when He's done this to me and my family?

But I think I know why, now. Ever since we came to Union Rescue Mission, my family has been getting closer to God and to each other. We've had to learn to depend on God and to be strong for each other. And I'm learning to quit whining and blaming other people — or God — and to man up and help out.

I'm only 15, but I'm looking for a job to help my parents.

"The Christmas story has taught me that I can't lose hope."

In the meantime, I'm selling bus tokens and collecting cans and other items that we can recycle for extra cash. I hope this Christmas we'll be in a new home. But no matter where we are, I know we'll be OK. After all, Jesus was born in a stable — but He changed the whole world. The Christmas story has taught me that I can't lose hope. I may not see a miracle right away, but I'm going to do whatever God asks.

Maybe this is the best Christmas gift of all. Thanks to Union Rescue Mission, I'm growing up.



Union  Rescue Mission®
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