



The Midnight Journey

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MIDNIGHT MISSION

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THIS
IS THE DAY ...

...to follow your dreams.

Mario Ocampo is living proof that it is never too late to start over again. At 50 years old, Mario personifies transformation. Mario credits his incredible journey to The Midnight Mission (TMM). What was once a life of drugs and crime is now a productive existence, rich in hard work and accountability. Mario's story is just one of the many examples of transformation to come out of TMM.

When Mario arrived at TMM in May of 2017, it was by court order. He was in dire need of a change. Prior to his arrival at TMM, Mario had spent 18 years in and out of prison. He could not remember a time when he wasn't dealing or using drugs. After beginning the Recovery program at TMM, Mario quickly became involved with the "Last Project" and obtained a job in TMM's kitchen. He recognizes these opportunities as major factors in aiding with his recovery.

Currently, Mario is part of ARC, an organization that helps formerly-incarcerated men. He attends classes at West LA College, and is making a living by restoring old cars. His true passion, however, is working as an extra [character] actor. Mario has worked on shows including CSI LA, SWAT LA, Testify by filmmaker Rob Zombie and LA Casa de mi Padre with Will Farrell. Mario's application to become a member of the SAG-Aftra Union is currently being processed, bringing him one step closer to achieving his lifelong professional goal of making his living as a working actor.

Mario's is just one of the many stories to come out of TMM. His transformation and continued progress have been made possible by organizations that partner with TMM, as well as the generous support from individuals like you. The Midnight's goal is for all of our programs is to help restore those in need to self-sufficiency. But, we go beyond that. We don't want to help our participants find just any job. We believe that everyone deserves a shot at their dream job. For Mario, that job is acting. Although Mario's story is still unfolding, he knows that by continuing to participate in the programs TMM and its partners have to offer, his life has a renewed and bright future.

This is the day . . . to follow your dreams.



...to reunite a family.



His life had become an endless cycle of buying and using alcohol and drugs when Jose came to The Midnight Mission (TMM) for help. During his initial assessment, the intake staff asked, “Do you have any family? Any kids?” Jose looked down into his folded hands and began to open up about his wife who had passed away. His case manager pried Jose a bit more and asked, “Did you have any kids?” Jose quietly began to talk about the drug use; the alcohol use; his wife passing away, ending up homeless and living in shelters with his kids. He explained the pain of having the Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) take his children away. He talked about going from being a loving father to becoming someone he didn’t recognize.

At TMM we know that drugs and alcohol tear families apart. We do our best to help rebuild and reunify those families. While Jose continued his dedicated journey in sobriety, Program Director Jeanette Rowe began reaching out to DCFS. Persistence paid off and Jeanette was able to connect with the social worker handling the cases to talk about family reunification. The DCFS Social Worker was thrilled to hear that Jose was sober and stable, because the children were about to be placed into the Foster Care system.

Jeanette worked with Ricardo Rosales, Director of HomeLight Family Living, a program of TMM, to begin family reunification immediately by transferring Jose from TMM’s Crisis and Bridge Housing program to a family unit at HomeLight. The social worker was then able to work with Ricardo, Jeanette and Jose to keep the family together and keep the children out of the Foster Care system. Now, Jose has custody of his children, is employed, takes regular classes to enhance his parenting skills, and proudly takes his kids to school every day.

This is the day . . . to reunite a family.

...to find a place to call home.

On any given night The Midnight Mission's (TMM) downtown facility houses over 300 men and women experiencing homelessness. Keeping track of all of those people would be nearly impossible without Kyle Harpt. Kyle is TMM's Database Administrator. He tends to the extensive list of names, conditions and work therapy placements of our homeless guests; and a few months ago he was one of them.

Kyle came to TMM on July 13, 2016. Kicked out of his parents' home, seeking treatment at a local psychiatric facility and living on the streets, Kyle had no place to turn. He couldn't afford traditional therapy options. So, when he heard about a place where he could sleep, eat three hot meals a day, work and receive treatment for his substance use disorder, all free of cost, he thought it was too good to be true. He was skeptical of TMM, but would soon learn to call it home.

Kyle lived at TMM for a year and a half. During this time, his work therapy assignments included working in the kitchen, the library and as the data entry temp for the development department. After only 4 months in development, Kyle was hired as a full-time employee of TMM. In March, and as the result of being restored to self-sufficiency, Kyle moved into his very own apartment in downtown LA, a few blocks away from The Midnight.

"This is my first time having my own place," Kyle said. "I love having some privacy, a place to call my own, and a kitchen that I can stock with food that I paid for with my own money."

Kyle explained the bittersweet feeling that overcame him on his first night in his apartment. "I hadn't been alone in a long time. I felt kind of down because I missed all of the people I had spent a year and a half with."

So what's next for Kyle?

"People keep telling me I should go to school because I'm bright," Kyle said with a smile. He explained that his goal is to take things as they come and try to help others along the way. "I have my own place now. Anything is possible."

This is the day . . . to find a place to call home.



COURTYARD CORNER

Most of us have had to use a porta potty or public restroom at some point and know that the experience is far from pleasant. Imagine being homeless, and never having any other option. Worse yet, imagine having little or no access to any restroom at all.

Led by Director of Security Marcus Butler, TMM recently opened our renovated Courtyard Hygiene Center for the Skid Row community. Linking his 15 years of experience with his understanding and compassion for the people we serve and ALL that entails (the good, the challenging and the seemingly bad), he created a thoughtful framework for the project. He put all of the moving parts together to make it function successfully, including onboarding and management of more than a dozen new staff. Our community now has a safe, clean and dignified option to the streets.

Did you know that TMM offers the only permanent, 24/7 restrooms to the thousands of people living in Skid Row? There are very few other restrooms available within the Skid Row area, all of which are either porta potties or only available during certain hours of the day. One of the greatest indignities of being homeless is not being able to find a restroom when you need one. At TMM, one of our goals is to ensure that we can restore dignity to those in need by providing access to clean and safe public restrooms.

This is the day . . . to restore dignity to someone.





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DID YOU KNOW?

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Front cover photo by Todd Snyder.

In the last year The Midnight Mission has helped...

165

*guests and
participants find
jobs with the
help of our career
coaching.*

565

*guests and
participants
access services
for substance use
disorders in an
effort to change
their lives.*

780

*men and women
get off of the
streets and
into our nightly
shelter.*