



The MIDNIGHT JOURNEY

A QUARTERLY NEWSPAPER OF THE MIDNIGHT MISSION

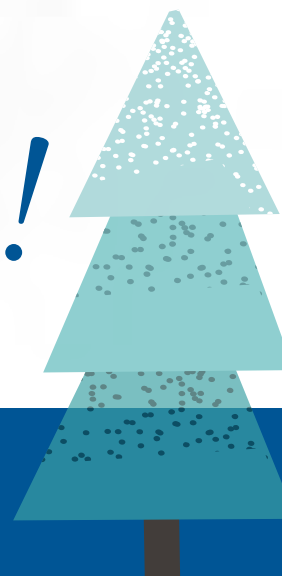
Holiday 2019



For nine years, Jerome Berkovich kept the spirit of Christmas alive by playing Santa Claus for the children and families of Skid Row. Jerome is gone, but his legacy lives on through his nephew Gabe -- and caring people like you who support the work of The Midnight Mission.

See the heartwarming story inside.

Christmas is Alive!



You can help bring the joy of the season
to people who are homeless and in need.

It Hurts to Be On the Street at Christmas

A Letter from our President & CEO



Most of us think of the holiday season as a time for family, friends, and celebrations. As the old song says, "It's the most wonderful time of the year." But, it's not if you're alone and struggling to survive on Skid Row.

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When people come to The Midnight Mission for the first time, they are usually tired, hungry, scared, and alone. Their hearts are truly broken. While they desperately need the food, shelter and other help The Midnight Mission provides, it's the last place they expected to be on Thanksgiving or Christmas.

But thanks to people like you who support The Midnight Mission, we can show them the care and compassion they need. A meal here is often the first step toward a changed life. With your help, we also provide safe shelter, counseling, education, training and job placement.

We are so thankful for your support, which makes hope, recovery and a new life possible. On behalf of our board of directors and our staff, we wish you a wonderful and safe holiday season. And remember, you are making a huge difference in the lives of many by supporting The Midnight Mission.

With Sincere Gratitude,

G. Michael Arnold,

President & CEO of The Midnight Mission



Joyful children on Christmas morning with Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus.

No Worries! Santa Claus is On His Way.

Gabe Berkovich was a high school football and track star who appeared to have it all together.

But off the field, he became addicted to alcohol and drugs. Thankfully, he also had a legacy of summers spent with his Uncle Jerome and Aunt Georgia, who worked for The Midnight Mission. Together, they showed him how a strong work ethic can lead to a good and satisfying life. But it didn't seem that was enough.

When Gabe was 19, he moved to LA to live with his uncle permanently. But he continued to drink and smoke crack, so Jerome kicked him out. Gabe wound up at The Midnight Mission. Here, he received a bed, toothbrush, towel and clean clothes. But most importantly, he received help for his addiction.

When Gabe was about six weeks sober, **he was amazed to see that his uncle had assumed the role of Santa Claus at The Midnight Mission's holiday events.**

When he saw the joy on the faces of the children as they sat on his "Santa's" lap, he realized this tough, strict man had a heart worthy of emulation. Soon after, Gabe moved back with his uncle, and this time he sincerely worked on his recovery. The following year, he bought an elf costume and assisted his uncle in his Santa duties -- and did so every year thereafter.

Sadly, Jerome died in August of a heart attack. But Gabe is determined to honor his uncle's legacy of bringing joy to homeless children and families. Although Gabe greatly misses his uncle, he knows that putting on that Santa costume this year, and in the years ahead, will keep his uncle's giving spirit alive.



Gabe Berkovich, The Midnight Mission's New Santa Claus.



You can put Christmas morning smiles on children's faces.

Needed: Toys for Children in Skid Row

Once again this year, The Midnight Mission is joining with our community partners to bring hope and cheer to children and families in Skid Row. We are working with individuals, schools, places of worship and local businesses to secure toys and gifts for homeless and near-homeless children. These toys are then distributed on Christmas morning in our Santa's Village.

This year, we especially need your help. Donations may be dropped off at The Midnight Mission until Christmas Eve, but are preferred by December 23. If you need to schedule a pick-up, please let us know a week or so in advance. We will be scheduling pick-ups on a first-come, first-served basis throughout December.

We want every child to experience the joy of the holiday season. Our wonderful donors have never let us down; please stand with us again. Let's give every child a reason to be merry this Christmas.

Please let Andrew Linares (alinares@midnightmission.org 213-624-9258, ext. 1249) know if you will be participating, as we need to keep track of donors and donations to ensure that we will have enough toys for Christmas.

If you can't donate a toy, please consider a cash donation to The Midnight Mission so we can make the season joyful for those experiencing homelessness.

Food for the Body – and Laughter for the Soul

Food fills one's stomach and a warm bed brings safety and solace, but it takes more than that to fulfill one's soul. It takes the camaraderie of sharing laughter and music and art. It takes the socializing together of our cultures. And that's what our With A Mission programs are all about. *Art With A Mission*, *Music With A Mission*, and *Laughter With A Mission* provide ways for us to bring the simple, precious joy of music, art and laughter to the neediest in our community. There is no cost and all are welcome to attend these events. Just bring a smile, an eye for art and a song in your heart ... and share.



To find out more, call The Midnight Mission at (213) 624-9258 ext. 1249.

A Heartfelt Thanks to our Wonderful Volunteers.

Where would we be without our wonderful volunteers? Without them, there is no way we could serve 1 million meals to our homeless, hungry guests and neighbors each year. If you haven't yet served as a volunteer, come on down and experience the joy of serving a meal or volunteering in other ways.

By the way, we always have all the volunteers we need on Thanksgiving and Christmas, but, we do need help almost every other day of the year. If you wish to volunteer at a time when there is a greater need, please **contact our Volunteer Center at (213) 624-9258 Ext. 1242, or email volunteer@midnightmission.org**



We love our volunteers and would be delighted to have you join us at The Midnight Mission.

Thanks to you and HomeLight, Sara got the Gift of a Brand-new Life.



In her own words, Sara was “homeless, separated from my son, completely shut off from any contact with my family, broken, living in constant self-hatred and fear...and desperate for something I wasn’t even sure existed...hope.”

After five years on the streets, she was approached by a homeless outreach team and given a chance to live in a dual-diagnosis treatment facility. Though it wasn’t easy and much was expected of her, she was determined to make the necessary changes so that she could someday be reunited with her son and family. She worked hard to turn her life around, and was eventually accepted into a Bridge Housing program, which provided her with a bed in their sober living home, and outpatient treatment for an additional six months.

Sara began looking for her son shortly after celebrating six months of sobriety, and they reunited on a very auspicious day -- her son’s birthday. She desperately wanted to welcome her son into a real home, but without credit or employment history, that seemed far out of reach. That was when a social worker told her about our HomeLight Family Living Program. Sara realized that everything she had been doing over the last few months was leading her here, and she was ready for the challenges that lay ahead.

Because of The Midnight Mission and HomeLight, Sara and her son are together, and she is able to handle everyday responsibilities, like holding down a job, investing in a savings account, keeping appointments, etc. She was even able to successfully resolve a DUI and get her driver’s license reinstated. And she recently completed an accelerated phlebotomy training course and is now preparing to take the national exam and become certified.

Sara is very grateful to friends like you, who make The Midnight Mission and HomeLight possible. When she came here, she found more than shelter and a hot meal. She also found a brand-new life, restored relationships and something else that had eluded her for so long -- here she found hope. Thank you and God bless you, for making it all possible.

Hunger Never Takes a Holiday. *Please help!*

This has been a tough year for many here in Los Angeles, especially those who are homeless and near-homeless. Your donation of food items will help feed these hungry, men, women and children. We are especially in need of things like:

- Turkey
- Glazed ham
- Potatoes
- Yams
- Butter
- Stuffing

Any of these or similar items will help make our homeless guests’ holidays even brighter. These traditional foods don’t just fill a hungry stomach; they bring a sense of warmth and community -- a sense of home. **If you would like to donate food, please call Blake at: 213-624-9258, ext. 1040.**

Foundation *Partners*



The Midnight Mission would like to publicly say thank you to **Nathen and Ross Sobel and The Smidt Family Foundation** for their continued support. The Smidt Family Foundation has been supporting our efforts since 1988.