

# CONNECT

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## I Always Have Him

Melissa was on the waiting list when the Kansas City Rescue Mission Women's Center finally opened — in fact, she was the first one to sign up!

"I was very scared," she remembers, "and I couldn't wait to get my life turned around. My first day, I saw Joe Colaizzi [KCRM's executive director] walk through the door, and I had to thank him for opening this place."

Melissa struggled with drugs as a young adult, but had been clean and sober for more than seven years. Then her husband dropped a bomb: "He gave me divorce papers ... I never saw it coming," she says. "Before I knew it, he had put me out on the street. I was scared and had nowhere to turn, so I turned back to drugs. I lived on the street as an addict for the next two years."

When Melissa came to KCRM, she entered a world vastly different than the one of bitter loneliness she had known. "The love, the support, the kindness — I could open my heart here and be vulnerable again," she recalls.

"The counseling had the biggest effect on me because I could be so open, but the classes were wonderful, too. I found out there were others who had lived through similar experiences. I found out I wasn't alone!

"On the street, everyone you meet or know wants something and you can't ever trust," Melissa says, "but the only thing asked of me at the Women's Center was to open my heart.

"You can't have a heart out there [on the street]. You take someone who has lived in the dark and evil of addiction, prostitution, abuse, physical abuse ... and you hand them the sunshine that God intended us all to share, and it's like a dream you never want to wake up from."

Melissa welcomed the sunshine of hope into her life and let it change her from the inside out. Addictions were broken, and a new identity and way of thinking took root in her heart. When she finally moved out and into the community, she was a very different woman.

Since leaving the Women's Center, God has blessed her with a good job, a place to live, a renewed relationship with her children, and continued hope for the future.

"It's always scary to go back out there [into the real world]," she admits, "but as long as you step out with faith in God and in obedience to Him, all things are possible!"

Melissa's best tool — no matter what she faces — is to remember she is never alone: "Even in times of turmoil or pain, I have *Him*. I will *always* have Him."



Women for Restoration

June 9, 2015

(Men, you are invited, too!)

# Connecting with Marilyn Colaizzi

In 2015, we're celebrating Rev. Joe Colaizzi's 30 years of service as executive director here. But as anyone in ministry leadership knows, spouses don't just come along for the ride. Most have critical support roles that often leave them juggling home and ministry. We asked Marilyn Colaizzi to weigh in on her experience as Joe's partner in ministry back in 1985 and in the years since.



**Above:** KCRM Board President Terri Bachtel presented Joe and Marilyn with a certificate honoring their 30 years of service at a recent event.

**Below:** Marilyn's favorite photo from the early years: son Joey "helps" Norman wash dishes in 1985.



**Connect:** What has been the greatest challenge as the ministry has grown in size and complexity?

**Marilyn:** It sure has grown — we're now up to 60+ staff, 50+ program participants, and we serve hundreds of overnight clients each week! I enjoy the friendships, praying for the KCRM family, and being personally involved. The challenge for me is to find new ways to stay engaged and connected. It's like watching your family grow up, relationships change, and you have to learn to let go. I'm growing and learning, we're growing as a Mission, and 30 years later we're still looking toward the future with excitement and anticipation.

**Connect:** What was your response when Joe was offered the job at KCRM in 1985?

**Marilyn:** Excitement, anticipation, looking forward to the adventure of this new journey! Joe was halfway through seminary and working part-time as a custodian. We had a new baby, and I was working full-time. With my background in social work and Joe's involvement with the homeless in New York City, it was our desire to work in compassionate ministry. But the doors in Kansas City hadn't opened yet. Looking for direction, Joe took a retreat and I stayed home to pray. That's when God threw the doors open and called Joe to KCRM.

**Connect:** What was it like to be a young mother of two whose husband had just inherited a struggling rescue mission? How did you balance home and the Mission?

**Marilyn:** Joe and I were in it together; it was our life. And the Mission operated as a community ... even a family. The men at the Mission, and the handful of employees — they were our personal friends, our community. The men "adopted" our kids. So that I could be with our children, I left my fulltime job and began working for the Mission from home. I tackled computerizing and managing the Mission's database, we produced newsletters, did graphic design, printed and organized mailings to hundreds — I helped wherever needed. Joe was a great dad and always took time for the kids and family, still does. Joe and I have a partnership, and I think that's key.

*Women for Restoration*

Reaching Up, Moving Forward

Tuesday, June 9, 2015  
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

*The Guild*  
1621 Locust Street  
Kansas City, MO 64108

**Our Goal: \$100,000**  
Your gifts and commitments to give will provide 20 percent of the KCRM Women's Center's annual operating budget.

**Our Program**  
Music  
by Victoria Barbee  
Testimonies  
from KCRM Women's Center residents  
A Message  
from the Department of Justice about Human Trafficking in Kansas City

**Sponsorship Opportunities or to RSVP**  
For information about sponsoring this event or to reserve seats, please contact Julie Larocco at (816) 421-7643 or [jlarocco@kcrm.org](mailto:jlarocco@kcrm.org).



*I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now...*

**Philippians 1:3-5**

Thank you to all who have partnered with KCRM to build this vital ministry to the least-served of our community's homeless. As these snapshots from last year's event show, good food, great company and inspirational moments can make a life-changing impact.

## Why Giving to Women for Restoration is Important

The KCRM Women's Center was established July 15, 2013, to offer residential case management and recovery programs for single, homeless women with co-occurring disorders. Since opening, our staff has housed more than 40 women between the ages of 20 and 70, providing nutritious meals, clean, comfortable and secure housing, life-skills classes, group and one-on-one counseling, case management, recreation and advocacy.

When the Women's Center opened, KCRM added more than \$600,000 to its annual budget. KCRM receives no government funding, choosing instead to rely on the gifts of individuals, private foundations, churches and businesses. Thanks to our ministry partners, we have remained debt free! This is your opportunity to bring freedom from the past and hope for the future to homeless women in the coming year.

## KCRM Food Service Receives Food Service Safety Award

**Imagine serving almost 1,500 meals each week.** Now imagine that an inspector may turn up at any time, unannounced, and rate your kitchen, food storage and dining area for a long list of potential infractions. Stressed yet?

That is what Tara Richardson, KCRM's food service supervisor, and her staff face each week at the Men's Center. And they're glad to do it.

"This is my calling," Tara says. "This is my ministry. Some people are called to preach; my ministry is a call to serve people."

Tara and her team (pictured right), along with many volunteers, serve the men who walk into the dining hall each night by making sure the food tastes great, the facilities are clean and inviting, and that each one who comes is treated with respect and honor. "We serve family style," Tara explains. "That

means our guests don't line up to get a plate, but we have them sit at our tables, and we bring a meal to them."

Recently Tara and her staff were surprised by the City of Kansas City with the Grade A Food Safety Excellence Award for 2014. This award was presented to recognize that KCRM's food service had received perfect scores by the Health Department at every inspection in 2014. So far, Tara reports, they continue that record in 2015.

We are proud of you, Food Service team!



# May-September 2015 Calendar of Events

To participate in or learn more about any of these great events, contact our development department at (816) 421-7643 or [jlarocco@kcrm.org](mailto:jlarocco@kcrm.org). Thanks!

## May 1-31 Change for Change

Empty those mason jars and mugs and donate your change to KCRM! We'll turn your pennies, nickels and dimes into bus passes and prescription medications for homeless men and women at KCRM.

## May 15-16 Waechtersbach

Waechtersbach USA will hold a benefit sale for KCRM. Great quality, great cause!

## May 18 Drive by Donations Day

Drop off food donations, 7 a.m.-7 p.m., at our Men's Center and Main Office, 1520 Cherry St. We'll be outside to accept your donation and trade it for coffee and donuts for your morning commute! Find our food list at [kcrm.org](http://kcrm.org) and on Facebook.

## June 9 Women for Restoration

See page 3 for details.

## July 1-31 KCRM Awareness Month

KCRM hopes to give a tour every day in July! Reserve any day of the week for a tour — we'll even treat you to lunch at our Men's Center or Women's Center.

## August 1-31 TP Tower Challenge

This drive is a blast for kids and adults alike! Accept our challenge to build the highest tower or win the ultimate prize — a TP trophy for the most TP collected.

## September 4 Works in Progress Art Show and TP Tower Rally

KCRM will join the Crossroads Art District for a First Fridays art show with activities for the whole family! Are you an artist or musician? Call us!

# This Poor Man Cried Out...

**"Pretty ironic, isn't it."** Chris doesn't smile, but simply shakes his head. "For four years I worked at a warehouse that distributed Alcoholics Anonymous materials around the world and most of that time I lived under a bridge."

Chris called that bridge "home" for more than five years total. Every check he earned was cashed and used for drugs and alcohol. "I became used to this way of life," he admits. "I thought I was in control."

In early February 2014, Chris found an abandoned warehouse for shelter during a snowstorm. He thought he could ride out the cold as he had so many times before, but he awoke in the night unable to feel his toes.

"For the first time in all my years of being homeless, I realized if I didn't get help I was going to die, and I cried out to God," he says. "That day I pushed my way out of the warehouse and came to KCRM."

Almost eight inches of snow fell that day, and the Mission opened the chapel and day room at the Men's Center for those seeking shelter. "It was so bitter cold they let us stay inside all week," Chris says. "The storm turned out to be a blessing for me because I came in out of the cold and never left."

Chris stayed at KCRM for the entire week, which meant he had to remain sober. And that's when the residents of our recovery program — the Christian Community of Recovery — began to plant seeds of hope in him.

"The guys didn't push me, but they would just come by to talk to me and tell me that if I was ready to change, this was the place I needed to be. They said to just give it a try. I finally listened and joined the program here.



"I realized I was done. I ran out of excuses to drink," he admits. "I've never had another drink since that day in the snow."

Chris had never been religious and couldn't remember praying before that morning in the warehouse. But at the Mission he began to realize that Jesus is real, and he opened his heart.

"I began to pray. I prayed and prayed and prayed. And it has worked! I have a relationship with Jesus, and I am a different person. I used to dread waking up, not knowing where I was going to get a meal or find a place to wash up, living just to drink or get high. Now I love waking up every morning!

"My favorite psalm is Psalm 34:6," Chris continues. "This poor man cried out and the Lord heard him and saved him from all his troubles ... it's that simple for me. I cried out, and He saved me. I've never been so happy! I don't worry about the future, and I don't worry about the past. I love living here and working here because every day I get to be reminded where I've been and every day I get to see where I'm going."

*In the photo above, Chris, now a member of KCRM's food service team, and Tara Richardson show off the new dining hall tables donated by **Ervin and Fran Cash**. Thank you, Ervin and Fran!*

The **CONNECT** newsletter is  
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