



February 2024



Compassion Around the Corner

Monthly Newsletter

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Our Mission

Sharing God's love with inner-city children through Biblical principles, with physical and spiritual solutions.

Our Vision

To meet the physical, emotional, and educational needs of inner-city children by instilling hope in a safe, Christ-centered environment.

Our Motto

Help for **TODAY**, Hope for **ETERNITY!**

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Program Hours: M-Th 5 PM-8 PM

Scan for more information about Rock House Kids



Board of Directors

- Mark Morris, *President*
- Barry Kramer, *Vice President*
- Beth Yock, *Secretary*
- Marla Gregory, *Treasurer*
- Matt Hevrin
- Bob Mellon
- Dee Lacny, *Executive Director*

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR...

Last month I wrote about **hope**. Since February includes Valentine's Day, it just made sense to write about **love** in this month's newsletter.

Love is a **feeling** that looks and feels different to people, depending on their life experiences. But love is also a **decision**. Love can be expressed in various ways. Some believe love is shown by giving gifts; others think love is spending time with someone. Others feel loved when someone believes in them and speaks kind words.

Love is not to be earned. It is to be unconditional, just as Christ's love is for each of us. Unfortunately, some kids at RHK have a skewed understanding of love. They think love must be earned by what they do or don't do. If they are "naughty", they think they are no longer loved or loveable.

There is a young lady who is in third grade. When you talk with her, she will tell you no one loves her. When you ask her why she thinks this, she replies, "Because I am a bad girl." If you dig deeper, she will tell you how bad she is, and that she can't be good.

She is a bit of a stinker. Most of the time, she does choose wrong actions over right ones. We are working with her to see what will help her make right decisions. When she asks why we are helping her, we tell her the truth: it's because we love her.

I wish I had the words to explain the look she gives us when she hears that. It is a look of disbelief and wonder. Then it happens: her eyes fill with tears, and she asks if we think she is a good girl. The answer is yes! And we want to help her to be the best little girl possible.

I want to add that after we have conversations like this with her, she acts much better. She has been encouraged, and her behavior improves. There are moments when she has self-control and makes good decisions, but they usually don't last long. So, we begin again. Why do we do this? Because she is loved **unconditionally**. We will not give up on her.

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FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR continued...

We have been blessed to have some RHK graduates return and volunteer or check in to say Hi. One of the things they like to do is reminisce. When they do, they talk about how RHK was the only place where they felt they were cared about. Love and care were shown to them here when they didn't experience that feeling elsewhere.

One young gentleman was making poor decisions and going down the wrong road. He said he knew, no matter what he was doing, he would always be welcomed at RHK. He did not feel judged. He knew he was loved when he walked in the door here. He said he could feel it.

At RHK, we emphasize the importance of being a safe place for the kids to come and be kids. Talking about being safe is not just about being off the streets. It is being safe emotionally, as well. Why do we love hard at RHK? It's because real love doesn't give up. 1 Corinthians 13:7 states, "*it (love) always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*"

The kids at RHK are protected and cared for. The volunteers and staff trust the kids will see Jesus at RHK as they are loved the way He loves. We have hope the kids will feel the love of Christ and see it in action when they are here. That's why we at RHK will persevere and continue to fight for the kids. We never give up on them, no matter how hard it may get.

May all of you reading this feel Christ's unconditional love today and throughout 2024.

Blessings,



Dee Lacny, Executive Director, Rock House Kids

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF MINISTRY!

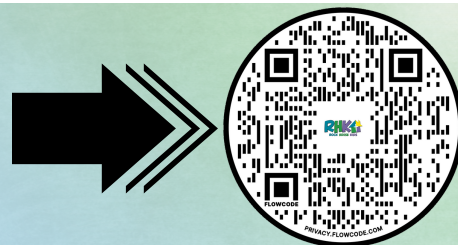
This year marks 25 years of ministry for RHK.

Rock House Kids began in 1999 with a nine-year-old boy who was running away from a dangerous home situation. Our Founder, Dola Gregory, assisted him with food, clothing, school support, and other items he needed. Soon after, his friends joined him, and over the years, RHK has become a safe haven for Rockford's inner-city children.

A program was developed to give them a safe place to be off the streets in the evenings and to be fed a hot meal, mentored by loving staff and volunteers, and supplied with essentials (i.e. hygiene supplies, winter wear, etc.) that, otherwise, they might lack.

Since its inception, RHK has made it our mission to share God's love with inner-city children through Biblical principles, with physical and spiritual solutions.

Throughout 2024, we will share special memories from the past 25 years. Use the QR code to follow along on our website and social media pages. Be sure to watch for updates on special celebration events in honor of this milestone anniversary.



LOVE POURED OUT AT CHRISTMAS

Each year, we work hard to plan memorable holiday celebrations for our kids. However, we couldn't do it without community support. The incredible support we received this past Christmas was humbling! So many people purchased gifts, volunteered, prayed, gave financial donations, and more. Our weekly volunteers who serve in our evening program or the kitchen went above and beyond to help during all the festivities—many thanks to each of you who gave so selflessly to show love to our kids.

Here are a few highlights from our Wrapping Party and parties our kids enjoyed because of the love you shared:

RHK WRAPPING PARTY - December 16, 2023



KIDS' CHRISTMAS PARTY - December 18, 2023



After all the other activities are over, it's time to open presents. Nothing compares to the looks on their faces as they light up and exclaim, "It's just what I wanted!"

TEENS' CHRISTMAS PARTY - December 19, 2023



The hardest part of making gingerbread houses is NOT eating the decorations.



Racing to unwrap a Saran Wrap ball with prizes inside while wearing winter gloves is more difficult than you think!



Nearly 70 volunteers came out to wrap presents at our "Annual Wrapping Party".

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT - MARSHA RODRIGUEZ

Meet Marsha Rodriguez. Marsha serves as a volunteer mentor with our third and fourth grade girls during our Monday evening program.

Family is very important to Marsha. A single mom, her son is now in his last year of college at UW Milwaukee. Her large extended family living nearby, were a huge source of encouragement and support as Marsha worked hard to become a registered nurse. She now works as an Infectious Disease Nurse Practitioner at UWHealth Swedish American. In her free time, she loves being outdoors, bike riding, traveling, and especially spending time with family.

She also has a passion for children's ministry. Marsha volunteers at RHK because she wants to be a positive role model and a light for the girls. "I want to build relationships with these young girls and encourage them to strive to be successful individuals in the community. The kids are the reason why I keep coming back. I've built relationships with my girls and love how they feel comfortable listening and talking with me," she said.

Marsha believes "Anyone looking to make a positive impact in our community should definitely consider volunteering at RHK."



WELCOME, NEW RHK VOLUNTEERS!

Misha Holubev Sarah Mandzen
Emma Maines Ostella Lockett
Steve Williams

Volunteers are needed in all areas, including a specific need for:

Van Drivers
Mentors (men) - 5th/6th grade boys on Wed. evenings
Mentors (men and women) - teens on Thursday evenings

ROCK HOUSE KIDS + ROCKFORD ICEHOGS: A WINNING EVENT!

Rock House Kids is partnering with the Rockford IceHogs this season! We will be featured as the "Non-Profit of the Game" on Friday, February 16, 2024. This amazing opportunity doubles your impact by supporting two local organizations on one amazing night. Rock House Kids will receive a portion of each ticket sold through this QR code.



The more tickets sold, the larger the portion that the Rockford IceHogs organization will donate back to us. Rock House Kids will also have a table at the game, and staff and a group of volunteers will be attending, so feel free to stop by and say, "Hi!"

Look forward to seeing you there!

GENEROUS GRANT RECEIVED FOR SECURITY UPGRADE

RHK is getting a security upgrade, thanks to the Woodward Charitable Trust!

Woodward awarded us a \$20,000 grant for the purpose of upgrading our outdated security cameras. These funds will also enable us to add new cameras in the expansion area once the construction is complete.

Safety is high priority at RHK. We do all we can to ensure all who come through our doors are safe. We are grateful for Woodward's help in addressing our security needs. Please join us in thanking them for this grant and for the impact their work is making in our community.

MONTH AT A GLANCE

604

TOTAL ATTENDANCE/
MEALS SERVED

NEW KIDS

0

0

RETURNING KIDS
(AFTER 6+ MONTHS ABSENT)

TOTAL VOLUNTEERS

196

5

VOLUNTEERS (NEW)

VOLUNTEER HOURS

1116.4

Many of you show your "love in action" for our kids by providing items from our monthly wish list. Thank you! We appreciate your care and support.

Donations can be dropped off at our office from 9 AM to 3 PM (M-F) OR order through Amazon or Walmart and have items delivered during office hours to us at 1325 7th Street, Rockford, IL 61104. Please include your name on the receipt so we know who to thank.

Thank you!!



FEBRUARY

Wish List

Frank's Hot Sauce
Disposable Ice Packs
Sleepng Bags (adult size)
Bottled Water (16 oz. and 8 oz. sizes)
Disposable 3-Compartment Plates
Cereal (indiv. serving size)
Fruit Cups
Regular and Valentine's Candy
(indiv. wrapped)



Thank you for supporting our kids!

