



O F F E R I N G H O P E

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PGM

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PACIFIC GARDEN MISSION PREPARES FOR HOLIDAY SEASON AS IT INAUGURATES NEW TRANSIENT WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Many Friends Contribute Holiday Cheer For the Homeless at America's Largest Continuously Operating Rescue Mission

Chicago, Nov. 6, 2009 (The Religion Wire™) — As Pacific Garden Mission prepares for the 2009 Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year Holidays, it can look back on still another year of its needs being met as they have been since September 15, 1877.

Occupying its new 155,000 square foot building at 1458 S. Canal Street for two years, the doors to America's largest continuously operating rescue mission have been open every day, 24/7, a span of over 48,200 consecutive days – over half the age of the United States, spanning the terms of 26 US presidents.

All services are free at Pacific Garden Mission, including overnight shelter three nutritious daily meals prepared by licensed food handlers; clothing; and medical, dental and eye care. Last year, Pacific Garden Mission provided 267,155 shelter days [732 daily average] and served 767,668 meals [2351 daily average; 784 per meal]. Each year, the Mission distributes over one million items of clothing and provides free medical care to thousands in its on-site medical clinic.

PGM is not a soup kitchen, but a place where comprehensive care and programs become stepping stones to the physical, spiritual and social betterment of lives. Programs include GED educational assistance, job and life skills training, computer courses, and the care that helps the homeless out of their situation.

Among many faithful supporters from all over the world are a number of benevolent organizations in the area whose contributions help make Thanksgiving at PGM very special. Levy Restaurants [11 year participants], Food For Friends [7 years], and players from the Chicago Bulls [4 years] arrive with enough volunteers to serve 1,000 men, women and children, and provide a full course meal with beverages and desserts.

David McCarrell, the Mission's President, recently noted, "As we begin our 133rd of serving Chicago's homeless, God's amazing faithfulness is more and more evident. Psalm 107:1 is appropriate, "O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever."

[MORE...]

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On Christmas Day, in addition to a complete holiday dinner, many generous friends provide new toys, clothing and other assorted gifts so that the annual PGM Christmas Store can bless many more needy men, women, children and families.

Today, an increasing number of homeless families are headed by women. Thanks to a generous grant from The Chicago Community Trust**, 2009 saw the launch of a brand new PGM ministry to care for this growing segment. When asked what new challenges faced Chicago's homeless, PGM President David McCarrell replied that he long had wanted to see a higher level of care for transient women. These are women who visit PGM and eat, sleep clean up and leave and, for whatever reasons, do not enter the Bible Education and Career Development Program. When he presented his vision for transient women, The Chicago Community Trust was in full agreement and funded the program.

Today, a Director is in place. Rhonda Davis, RN, once walked in a homeless woman's shoes and has firsthand experience with drug addiction and alcohol abuse. A graduate of the Bible Education and Career Development Program, she has implemented a program that includes Social Services, Parenting classes, Health Care & Hygiene classes, basic computer skills and many other enabling tools to help women reenter society. Two additional staff have been chosen to help Rhonda work with the increased number of women, mothers and their children.

At each mealtime, it is a moving sight to see so many women with babies cradled in their mother's arms, or with toddlers happily moving at their mother's sides, prompting David McCarrell to say, "That's what we're all about."

As it has since 1877, the Mission relies on private donations for its day-to-day operations. For more information or to make a donation, contact Pacific Garden Mission at 312/492-9410 or visit www.pgm.org or pgmofferinghope.org.

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*** For David McCarrell interviews, please contact Laura Stenberg at 312/492-9410**

** For 94 years, The Chicago Community Trust [cct.org], our region's community foundation, has connected the generosity of donors with community needs by making grants to organizations working to improve metropolitan Chicago. In 2008, the Trust, together with its donors, granted more than \$100 million to nonprofit organizations. From strengthening schools to assisting local art programs, from building health centers to helping lives affected by violence, the Trust continues to enhance our region.