

Homeless to Housed

Have Mercy – (616) 225-8055

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Joe and Amy

(names changed for privacy)

At an early age, Joe, the son of alcoholic parents who had divorced, moved from Michigan to California with his father. At age 13, his dad left him there, alone and bewildered. For whatever reasons, he also changed Joe's last name during those years in California. Thus began his life of homelessness and hardship.

Joe soon learned to build a "home" out of pallets. His 4'x4' shelter was often located in areas where police or social workers couldn't gain access (high in the mountain brush, over the water, etc.). Joe learned to look like he was not living on the streets. He kept himself presentable so as to gain odd jobs and/or handouts. It was at that time that he began to do drugs, a habit that he was finally able to quit cold turkey two years ago with the help of his wife.

Amy came from an abusive situation where she survived a bad beating and a bout with cancer. Family services took her children from her during this time. She fought for them and became a legal advocate for abuse cases through the District Attorney's office where she lived in California. Even though it gave her a stable income and a somewhat affordable apartment, she was unable to regain custody of her children. The job wasn't long lasting though. Later, she found work at Walmart. About that time, she met Joe. They partnered up and supported each other through the rough times that were facing them. They worked when they could, scavenged dumpsters, panhandled, and did any other things they could to help provide food and some semblance of home. At times, the police found their shelter and

evicted them and they would lose most of what they had gained at that point.

Eventually, Joe and Amy were able to move to Tennessee where his mother was living; she was ill and needed care. It was during the next few years that Joe was able to successfully complete and obtain his GED, a feat that he is very proud of. He earned money by walking the roads and picking up cans and aluminum, an effort that was recognized in the local newspaper by the mayor of the city they lived in. Amy was able to get jobs at a local Walmart and also became trained as a counselor for Children Family Services. She made repeated trips to California, trying to regain custody of her children, never giving up on them. In 2006, both Joe and Amy faced some events that rocked their world. Joe's mother and a sister passed away and Amy's brother committed suicide. Joe's trust in others became non-existent. Amy pulled into her shell. They gave up on God. But after a time, their strength and reliance on each other helped them to regain a forward momentum.

Two years ago, they rented a U-Haul and moved to Michigan where Joe has some extended family. It was winter. In Benton Harbor, their U-Haul was vandalized and Joe lost all of his ID. They continued north to Ionia and lived in the U-Haul there for a while until they had to give that up. They ultimately moved to Greenville, living in a pop-up tent trailer along the river near Federal Mogul. During a hard storm, a huge tree fell on the trailer,

Who We Are What We Do



Have Mercy's mission is to reflect the compassion of Christ to homeless families in Montcalm and Ionia counties. We do this by providing temporary emergency assistance while working with them to rebuild their lives. Our goal is to keep these families together, safe, and off the street while helping them solve the issues that led to homelessness.

We promote self-sustaining families through practical steps toward permanent housing, as well as encouraging spiritual growth for long-term stability. Our strengths-based case management approach enables our clients to work toward solutions by focusing on their individual strengths. This partnership is proving to be successful in helping the homeless find their way out of the most difficult situation of their lives. We are privileged to be a part of their success.



breaking it up so it was no longer livable. Police told them they needed to move out of that area in January of this year. Now, shelter became a canvas tent camouflaged with netting and branches. Later, they even had to sleep on the patio of an abandoned restaurant. Food became a primary need. All they had were a couple of suitcases and the clothes on their backs. They needed help.

In 2015, Joe contacted Have Mercy (HM) who put them up in a local motel and got them some much needed food. Staff at HM introduced them to some area churches, counseled them, and set them up with a case worker. Joe walked the city, seeking work. Amy walked out to Walmart and was hired right away because of her past experience. Staff connected the family with EightCAP for more motel time and housing funds. In

April of this year, they finally were able to get some financial assistance that, combined with Amy's income, allowed them to rent an apartment.

Today, Joe and Amy credit Have Mercy for helping them get started in a positive direction and gain a foothold to begin progress toward a self-supporting life. Amy finally got her children and they are now a family unit. They rely strongly on each other for support and optimism, especially when challenges rear up. They recognize that God gives presents every day in the form of blessings and they have been richly blessed. This, coupled with an attitude of determination in spite of the odds, keeps them looking forward and upward, realizing all the while that family is the glue that continues to hold them together.

But the story has not ended there. Joe frequently touches base with his HM case manager. They are still working to help him get his ID back so he can work. Both Joe and Amy volunteer when and where they can to help others in need. Joe has an awesome artistic talent that he hopes might bring some extra income. Even though he is losing his sight, Joe recently had LASIK surgery and is hoping for the best. They both acknowledge that their lives changed for the better once they met the HM staff and started following the process, doing things the right way. They repeatedly express thanks and appreciation for all that HM has done to get them started on this new journey in their life story. It's been a long haul, but God is good and continues to give them strength for each new day. HM staff is just grateful to have been a part of their success.

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