



Midland's Open Door

Spring 2022

Steadfast Service

Joe knows the value of hard work. When he was a young man, he spent over twenty years working in the oil fields. But when an auto accident left him with physical limitations, Joe couldn't work in the fields anymore.

"Facing a situation like I had was not easy," Joe said. "I had to slow down; I had to stop."

Joe struggled with his new limitations and, unable to cope, he landed in prison. When he was released in 2019, Joe returned to the mid-Michigan area in search of housing. Joe knew right where he wanted to be: back in Coleman, where he grew up. But affordable housing in Coleman was hard to find, and Joe soon entered the men's crisis shelter.

"The Open Door helped me realize everything's going to be alright," Joe said. "You can make adjustments for what you've got to live right now."

While Joe stayed in the shelter, he adjusted to a new way of life. Prison had changed the way Joe reacted to delays and setbacks, and when his anger flared, he lashed out at other people. This pattern of impatience threatened to keep him isolated from his true need: community.

But as time distanced Joe from his former life, God began to soften him through opportunities to serve. When the pandemic changed the way the Open Door served lunch at the soup kitchen, Joe found his place. For the first few months of 2020, Joe was named "the coffee wizard" because of how faithfully he filled the hot carafes of coffee and served others from the front porch, even on cold days.

"I enjoy work," Joe said. "Keeping busy helps me get through life."

By learning how to serve with others, Joe replaced anger and impatience with understanding and compassion. He began friendships with several volunteers as he served alongside them in the pantry and in the gardens. And, as Joe shared more of his story, his attitude started to match his actions.

"I feel like God helped me calm down and take things easier," Joe said.

Joe eventually found a place in Coleman that fit his budget and his needs. He still stops and visits in the soup kitchen at least once a week, like last summer, when Joe drove into Midland several days a week before the sun was up to water flowers for a volunteer.

"It's a good atmosphere at the Door," Joe said. "Somewhere down the line, what little I can do is helping somebody."



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Give Local

Give Local Midland is nearly here! The annual 24-hour day of giving campaign hosted by the Midland Area Community Foundation will take place on Tuesday, May 3. With more than 70 local nonprofits competing for prizes and funds, the Open Door needs your help raising money to offer hope to neighbors like Joe.

Mark your calendars today to maximize your impact and #givelocal on Tuesday, May 3 at www.givelocalmidland.org.



Breaking the Cycle



"It started with one person believing in me, not even me," Koren said.

The first time Koren and her daughters stayed in the women and children's crisis shelter, it was 2017. It was not Koren's first time in a shelter: when she was only a child, she often stayed at shelters with her mother and her sister, carrying nothing but a few clothes and her Cabbage Patch doll in hand. Koren never wanted her girls to have those memories, and the feeling that she had fallen short was overwhelming.

"I was angry," Koren said. "Angry at the world, angry at the situation. I didn't want to be my mother. I wanted to break the cycle."

Koren moved out of shelter quickly, bouncing between jobs as she struggled to make ends meet. After two years on her own, Koren was homeless again, with nowhere to turn except the Open Door.

"I didn't qualify for help anywhere else," Koren said. "I felt like, 'I'm always going to be stuck in this horrible cycle, and I can't get free.'"

While in shelter, Koren qualified for Open Door's family outreach program, which pairs low-income, single-parent families with a team of church volunteers and an Open Door case manager to work toward financial stability through community support. Though Koren's history taught her that people couldn't be trusted, she lowered her walls and committed to walking with a team for two full years.

Koren's life began to move quickly. Her family transitioned out of the shelter, and Koren paid rent while working two jobs. With the support of her team, Koren became a pharmacy tech so she could earn a higher wage and spend more time with her girls.

When Koren's car broke down last year, her team helped her research replacements. At the start of the pandemic, when the team couldn't meet together in person, they held virtual birthday parties for her daughters and cheered her on through cards and texts. As an entire community formed around her, Koren's years of anger and hurt finally began to heal.

"Everybody was nonjudgmental," Koren said. "They didn't look down on me for my past."

Today, Koren is a state-certified pharmacy tech, looking to become nationally-certified and pursue higher education to continue her career. This is the longest her family has lived in one place in over 10 years, and Koren finally feels like she can show her girls what she has tried to teach them all along.

"You can do something with your life," Koren said. "You can choose not to throw your life away."

Koren is still in contact with her team members, and relies on their support to encourage her family as they move on to the next chapter of their lives.

"My life is falling into place," Koren said, "and I had to understand how it had to fall out of place to be what I wanted. Not what I thought I wanted, but what I really wanted."



From the Executive Director

"For God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power and love and self-control." 2 Timothy 1:7

It was rocky when Koren first came into shelter. Consumed by disappointment and fear of what others might think, she was angry and argumentative. Joe's initial stay was similar. Worried about the judgment and assumptions that might be made as he tried to reenter the community after spending more than a decade locked up, he was guarded and impatient. Joe and Koren each came from very different backgrounds, experienced different tragedies and traumas, and yet they shared the same fear that threatened to suffocate any movement forward.

But something changed during their time at The Open Door. As Koren and Joe experienced steady compassion, accountability with dignity, and grace rooted in truth, they started to believe that their lives could be different. And that hope brought freedom from the fear that was destroying relationships and hindering growth.

Today, years after we first met them, they are living very different lives because of your faithful investment. Koren is building a different life with new, hope-filled expectations for her daughters and Joe has established a community of support, channeling his work ethic into service for others.

Thank you for journeying with Koren and Joe. And, thank you for your continued investment in the ministry of the Open Door. By God's grace, more men, women and children will learn about the freedom found in Jesus Christ.

With hope,



Renee Pettinger
Executive Director



Seasonal Needs

With warmer spring weather on its way, we need your help to provide hospitality for our guests. For a more detailed and up-to-date list, visit our Amazon Wish List.

Pantry Needs

Paper bags for lunches
Snack bags
Coffee creamer
Canned mushrooms
Chicken or vegetable stock
Shredded parmesan cheese
Shredded cheddar cheese
American and Swiss cheese slices
Apple juice
Ramen noodles
Soft granola bars

Shelter Needs

Men's wallets
Hairbrushes
USB drives
Bike tubes: sizes 26, 27, and 29 inches
Bike tires: 26 inches
Bike brake pads

Walk With Us in 2022

We met Tommy last summer when a DNR officer dropped him and his belongings at our door. He didn't stay in shelter very long. He's been wrestling with the bottle most of his adult life.

But here at the Open Door, we know that true and lasting change isn't manufactured. Change, for any of us, is shaped over time, with support, consistency, endurance and accountability. It demands patience and it doesn't happen without people - walking with one another - in relationship and in community.

After Tommy left the Open Door the first time, our men's shelter coordinator pursued Tommy all the way to the small pop-up tent where he was sleeping in his daughter's backyard. And he continued to pursue him, walking with Tommy and helping him reconcile with family and get the medical care he needed.

The intentional and compassionate care Tommy and others receive is only possible through the faithful support of friends like you. Would you walk with us this year by becoming a monthly supporter? You can give online at www.midlandopendoor.org/donate or complete the enclosed envelope. Your faithfulness means that more neighbors like Tommy can find hope at the Open Door for years to come.



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www.midlandopendoor.org

Bulletin Board

Experience Our Impact

In 2021, we provided over
44,273
meals

and more than
10,000
nights of shelter



How to Give

1. Mail enclosed envelope to:
PO Box 1614
Midland, MI 48641
2. Call: 989.835.2291
3. Visit www.midlandopendoor.org/partnership

Did You Know?

\$0.82

of every dollar donated is put back into
restorative and transformational programming

Find Us Online



www.midlandopendoor.org