

CHANGING LIVES

FORT COLLINS RESCUE MISSION & HARVEST FARM



THE RIPPLE EFFECT

**FORT
COLLINS
RESCUE
MISSION**

MEET HARVEST FARM'S PEER LEADERS

JOIN OUR ONLINE EVENT ON OCTOBER 7

Dear Friends,

It has been more than 30 years since we acquired what we now call Harvest Farm. A lot has changed during these 30 years, but the vision to help men overcome addiction by sharing Jesus in a rural setting has not.

It is unusual to have a farm that is owned and operated by a city-based Rescue Mission. There are only a few of them across the country, many of which we have visited as we made improvements to our New Life Program (NLP) at Harvest Farm. However, what is not unusual is that, at times, people from the rural community—from farms, ranches and small towns—need help overcoming addiction. If they can go somewhere that they are familiar with—somewhere more sequestered that has cows, chickens, pigs, and corn stalks—then maybe, just maybe, they might join us.

And join us they have over the years, from not only Colorado's rural areas, but from other states as well. Our doors are always open to those who need help. In case you are wondering, we have also helped people from the city at Harvest Farm.

I think it is significant that most of Jesus' ministry was in rural settings. From rural people to urban dwellers, we all have troubles. Jesus is there for us all, and that is why we have the Farm. We want to see people's lives changed in the name of Jesus, and we will do what is necessary to reach out to people everywhere.

Through our Peer Leader Program at the Farm, we equip NLP graduates to mentor current participants. We call them Peer Leaders and they offer guidance through their own lived experience with addiction recovery. I hope you enjoy reading about them in this month's newsletter. And I hope that their desire to give back touches your soul like it has touched mine. It is what this work is all about!

God Bless,



Brad Meuli
President/CEO



The Ripple Effect

Like a stone dropped in a pond creating ripples that move outward, one life changed through Harvest Farm has the power to transform many more. The Peer Leader Program allows this ripple effect to happen.

The purpose of the program is to invite graduates of the Farm's New Life Program (NLP), a faith-based rehabilitation for men, to come back and live on the Farm and engage with NLP participants through one-on-one mentorship and group activities.

By being intentional with participants and spending time with them, the Peer Support Specialists (Peer Leaders) are able to encourage them by listening, guiding and sharing their own experiences in recovery.

The current Peer Leaders, Graham, Taylor and Aaron, live in a home on the southwest corner of the Farm's property. They help facilitate Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings, participate in Bible studies, plan activities on and off the Farm, and simply catch up with participants over meals and workout sessions.

NLP graduates are eligible to apply for Peer Leader positions if they have been living on their own for at least one year. "They can go out and live life clean and sober without the Farm holding them accountable," said Steve Pietrafeso, peer leader supervisor at Harvest Farm. "They were outside doing recovery, building a community, going to church. Now, they can come back and tell the guys, 'during my lived experience, I struggled with this or be cautious of this.'"

The Peer Leaders are required to complete training through Colorado Mental Wellness Network, which helps them cultivate skills in social-emotional support, advocacy and coaching. Their main goal is to help participants graduate, so they intentionally reach out to men who are in the initial phases of the NLP—a period of time that tends to be the most challenging for participants who are in recovery.

The ultimate goal? Prepare more stones for the pond and keep the ripple effect going. Because every life changed at Harvest Farm has the power to transform so many more.

The Impact of the Peer Leader Program*

2,015

Number of times Peer Leaders connected with participants

*Numbers reflect September 1, 2019 – June 20, 2020.

**Retention is the ability to keep participants in the program until graduation.

Meet our Peer Leaders

AARON

"I'm from Estes Park. I struggled with [alcoholism] for about 17 years. I went through periods of sobriety and fell off the wagon again. I couldn't take care of myself. My grandmother told my mom about [Harvest Farm]. I was terrified. I didn't know what to expect. **I didn't realize there were people out there who actually cared that much. It definitely renewed my faith a lot.** I'm the older one of the three [Peer Leaders]. You can see that a lot of the older participants are drawn toward me. We usually just barbeque and hang out and talk about life. I take a group to church every Sunday. I'm also doing a men's small group. I'm continuing my career as an electrician. Someday, I want to be a full-time addiction counselor and try and help people. I feel like it might be kind of a calling."



GRAHAM

"When I was younger, I was always in trouble. Liquor is what really started a downward spiral in my life. By the time I was 17, I was physically dependent on alcohol. I got locked up after spending time living under bridges. That's when God changed my life. December 5, 2017 at approximately 3:45 p.m. is when I last did drugs and drank. I went to Harvest Farm, and Jesus continued doing work in me. Hanging out with good people was revolutionary for me in my recovery. I loved that we had to go to church every Sunday. Now, I'm a youth leader volunteer at my church. I have spoken at about 10 schools. **[Being a Peer Leader] gives me a sense of purpose. I never had purpose. I used to live in this cardboard box. That was the lowest point in my life. There was really no reason to live. Now, it's the complete opposite. I have a reason that I'm here.** I went through what I went through to help others. None of my struggle was in vain."



TAYLOR

"I was a farmer. I was eight or nine when I started getting blackout drunk. Then, as I got into junior high, I tried pills. Once I got to high school, I was still drinking, smoking pot and chewing. When I was 22 or 23, I had hernia surgery and the doctor put me on pain meds. That rekindled the fire for an opioid addiction. I had a couple of failed suicide attempts. [The New Life Program] was my third rehab. I thought I was going to sit in a classroom and listen to somebody preach about all my poor choices. But when I got to Harvest Farm, it reminded me of home. I could feed the animals and water the fields. I could clear my mind. I just felt like I owed it to the Farm and the guys to help them get back on their feet. [As a Peer Leader], my deal is going to AA meetings and sharing my experience, strength and hope with them. Another way I interact with them is in the weight room. We talk about lifting or talk about life. **I just remind them that their worst day sober is still going to be a thousand times better than any best high they've had.**

Your gifts are making a profound difference in the lives of our New Life Program graduates, who in turn transform the people and communities around them.

To continue fostering this ripple effect, donate today at FortCollinsRescueMission.org/ChangingLives.



12.5

Average number of hours per week that a Peer Leader spends with participants

6%

Increase in retention** from participants' first 30 to 60 days in the program, compared to the previous year before the Peer Leader Program was in effect



What inspired the Rotary Club of Fort Collins to donate 3,000 masks to FCRM during COVID-19?

At a Rotary meeting, I heard about the challenges the Mission was facing as a result of COVID-19. Many in our community were in need of masks, but those experiencing homelessness were especially vulnerable. We immediately started working on a Rotary District Grant to bring in masks for the Mission, Homeward Alliance and the Northside Aztlan Community Center. The Rotary Club of Fort Collins donated \$500, our Rotary district matched \$500 and we were able to donate 3,000 masks.

How have you seen FCRM make a difference in the Northern Colorado community?

One important thing I've seen FCRM do is make sure that people experiencing homelessness are truly seen and not ignored. It's important to include them in local conversations and consider them as community members with their own needs, rather than as "nuisances." It keeps the community proactively involved and see solutions as beneficial to the community at large.

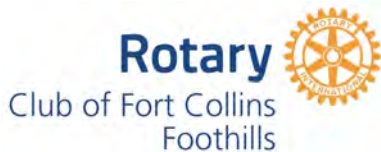
How has your involvement with FCRM impacted you personally?

In the early days of the pandemic, I was feeling overwhelmed and helpless. It was easy to become focused on what my family and I had "lost" due to the sudden changes in our lives. Being a part of something bigger reminded me—as it always does—of what really matters.

- Robin Steele, Member of Rotary Club of Fort Collins

What inspired the Fort Collins Foothills Rotary Club to give \$2,500 to FCRM during COVID-19?

We heard about the increased need for supplies and food to support the collaborative efforts in the community to address the homeless population's needs. We know that with the drastic changes in employment status as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be an increase in homelessness and hunger. Our club's vision is to improve lives, and it's our privilege to be of service to our community during this global health crisis.



What have you learned about homelessness in Fort Collins since getting involved with the Mission?

Most people do not choose to be homeless and want to be productive contributors to their community. The pandemic has increased the number of people who are experiencing homelessness, and we need to collaborate as a community to provide services to help people with a hand-up. The Mission not only provides temporary shelter and food for the homeless population, it also provides help in transitioning individuals to acquire job skills that allow them to return to self-sufficiency.

- Karen Morgan, President of Fort Collins Foothills Rotary Club

LOCATIONS



Meals, shelter and programs toward self-sufficiency



Harvest Farm

Rural rehabilitation program near Fort Collins



Meals, overnight shelter, emergency services, rehabilitation programs, family services, transitional programs and services, permanent housing assistance and clothing distribution



Join Our Online Event!
Wednesday, October 7 | 4 - 4:45 p.m.

Each fall, we look forward to connecting Harvest Farm and our New Life program (NLP) participants with the community at our Annual Fall Festival & Corn Maze. Since we can't gather in person this year, join us for an online event showcasing Harvest Farm and Fort Collins Rescue Mission (FCRM). You will meet the leadership team and hear updates about FCRM and recent changes made to the Program. You will also get a glimpse into the everyday life at the Farm and meet some of the animals.

To register for this event, visit FortCollinsRescueMission.org/2020-Road-To-Recovery.

OUR CORE STRATEGIES



EMERGENCY SERVICES

People are invited inside, off the street where their immediate needs are met and critical relationships are built with Mission staff.



REHABILITATION

Men living with an addiction are equipped with work readiness skills, receive help to overcome destructive habits, find permanent housing, and begin a new life.



TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS

Families and individuals in need receive case management, develop life skills and save for permanent housing.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

People struggling in our community receive assistance with food, clothing, furniture, household items and holiday meals.

