



# Stories

## Charlene Burditt



Charlene Burditt is 82 years old. When told she looks much younger, she giggles like a schoolgirl. In fact, her memories of being a schoolgirl are still razor sharp. And there is one memory, in particular, that she will never forget.

Charlene was just a young girl when she and a friend went to a fair in Missouri. The next thing she knew, a tornado struck. She was knocked to the ground and doesn't remember much else — except that right after the storm, The Salvation Army was there. “Somebody rescued me out of the blue. They were just there helping everyone. I never forgot it,” she says.

Little did Charlene know that The Salvation Army would be there to help ‘rescue’ her during other storms in her life. One time, when she was living in a four family home in a small town in Missouri, someone at the store told her that her house was on fire. “I put my groceries down and started running. And when I got there, everything was burned up,” she recalls. But once again, The Salvation Army arrived on the scene to help. Charlene was given vouchers for food and a light gray blanket with a pink stripe across it. “I can still picture that blanket. I kept it until I wore it thin,” she says.

Years later, after Charlene had a son, a flood ruined the items in her basement. Again, The Salvation Army returned and helped replace some of what she lost. Charlene says she just can't believe how they were always there to help. “I was a single mother and had numerous jobs and didn't want to ask for help, but they were always there!” she exclaims, amazed.

Family was always important to Charlene, so when her only son died at age 42 from leukemia, she “became very sad. She had lost touch with one of her brothers after he went into the Navy. In fact, it had been 50 years since she saw him last. So she again turned to those who had somehow always been there for her: The Salvation Army. And they found him! “I stood in my kitchen and cried like a baby when they told me they found where he was living. That just blew me over!” she says. Reuniting with her brother was nothing less than God's work, she says.

To this day, The Salvation Army has been there for Charlene and others like her who need help — even as recently as this winter when record snowfall left her housebound for a while. Staff from The Salvation Army came by to give Charlene and her neighbor food.

At every turn, The Salvation Army has been there for hurting neighbors like Charlene. Looking back, Charlene says there's one important lesson she tells everyone. And it's this: “Give to help others as much as you can. Because you never know when you will need it!”



# Stories

## Greg Ballard



“The future is unknown but I refuse to accept that I’ll die.” Greg Ballard of Kansas City, Kansas, age 51, says these words softly, but firmly, as he discusses his ongoing and difficult battle with cancer.

Greg is familiar with battles. He fought a three-and-a-half year addiction to crack cocaine, which he overcame with the help of The Salvation Army. For 11 months in 2008, Greg was a client at The Salvation Army’s Harbor Lights Village Addiction Recovery Services Center. The program, which includes social detoxification, intermediate treatment, outpatient counseling and reintegration, is located at 6723 State Avenue in a sprawling complex that also includes a homeless shelter and community center.

It was while he was in treatment for his drug addiction that Greg was diagnosed with stage 3 colon cancer. “I went through chemotherapy at the same time I was battling my drug addiction. There were a lot of rough days. I truly owe The Salvation Army my life.”

Greg left Harbor Lights happy, clean and sober, with his cancer in remission. But it wasn’t long before he learned that the disease had come back, spreading to his liver. Recently, he underwent an operation to remove some of his liver.

Because of his medical condition, he is not able to work but feels lucky to have qualified for rent-assisted public housing in an older, residential neighborhood with a park nearby. His apartment is not big, but he had made it home, with nice furniture he purchased when he was able to work. He was a carpenter by trade, a good one. “I don’t have a high school degree. I can barely read or write, but I am blessed. I know what it takes to move forward and I stay focused. I try to be a light in a dark place.”

Greg spends a lot of time in his little apartment. He has no family in the Kansas City area. He has an adult daughter from a previous marriage but has little contact with her. “I have no family here and no friends. But it’s no longer about me. It’s about helping other people. I believe that’s part of God’s plan for me – to help others.”

Greg likes to speak to other recovering addicts about his journey, hoping to inspire them to transform their lives through the power of Jesus Christ. He knows how difficult it is to kick an addiction. It wasn’t until he turned to God for help that he was finally free. “You have to be hungry for it. You have to really want it. You have to reach inside yourself and listen and be directed. God’s been real good to me. He is my everything. It’s just me and Him.”



# Stories

## Tom K.



Tom K. is one of the millions of Americans who became unemployed in 2009, during the worst days of the economic recession. Within months of losing his job as a long distance truck driver, Tom learned he was facing another serious problem: a medical condition that would require surgery and a long recovery.

It was a one-two punch that meant Tom and his wife could no longer keep up with their monthly rent on their apartment in the Northland. After struggling to try to keep up, on the verge of being evicted, they turned to The Salvation Army for help.

The Salvation Army paid the couple's past due rent and enrolled them in a new program that focuses on homeless prevention. "It means everything to us to be able to stay in our home," said Tom, whose back patio looks out over a wooded area. "We really love it here. We enjoy the wildlife we see from our balcony. It's very peaceful."

The Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program was implemented by The Salvation Army in October 2009 and is funded through federal stimulus monies. Those entering the program must meet certain guidelines and agree to intensive case management and budgeting requirements as a part of their eligibility. Tom and his wife have weekly meetings with their case manager and receive monthly rental assistance from The Salvation Army.

In addition to housing support, The Salvation Army has also helped Tom and his wife with utility and Christmas assistance. "The Northland Corps helped us pay an overdue electricity bill and also provided us with a very nice holiday meal this past Christmas," said Tom. "We have no other family here, so consequently we only have each other. I can tell you, we would not have had a Christmas at all if not for The Salvation Army. It meant the world to us."

It's not the first time The Salvation Army has helped Tom. In 1989, while living in California, Tom was laid off from his job as a commercial credit manager. He was unemployed for two years and exhausted his savings before becoming homeless, sleeping in boxes and cartons in Santa Monica. He turned to The Salvation Army, which provided him with a sleeping bag, food, hygiene products and moral support. Eventually, he made his way back to Kansas City and a better life.

"It was a long time ago, but I will never forget that when I was at my lowest point, living on the streets, The Salvation Army was there for me," said Tom. "And years later, they are helping to lift me up again."

Tom, who is recovering from the surgery needed to save his life, says the view from his back patio is sweeter than ever. And he owes it all to The Salvation Army.

"The Salvation Army has more heart and soul than ten agencies put together," said Tom. "Every single person I've come into contact with at the organization has shown compassion and caring to me. I can never repay the kindness shown to me."