



ISSUE # 2 (FEBRUARY) 2024 | VOL. 8 4

So here we are, the last Newsletter that I'll put together for GCM. This is the 58th issue that I have written since joining GCM as the Fundraising Manager in 2018. I then carried on putting them together when I took over as the General Manager in 2019.

The year ahead is going to be a time of change for GCM but the staff and Trustees know that we are in a good place.

I have learned so many things about human beings during my time and have a head and heart full of amazing memories.

In this issue we have updates from our Nathan about Retreat and from some of our fantastic volunteers about Street Teams and Restore plus please have a read of Johnny's Story (pt.1) on page 3.

And with that it is time to pass on the baton to our new Interim General Manager, Louise Mackenzie.

Every blessing,
Kevin Howie



For those who don't know me my name is Louise Mackenzie but known as Lou to most.

I'm very blessed to have been given this opportunity. Kev will be greatly missed as he moves on. I have learned a great deal from him, he has always happily shared his knowledge and wisdom.

Thank you for being an Amazing BOSS.

My journey with GCM started about 10 years ago Volunteering as a cook, from there Night Shelter Manager, Project worker, Renew Lead, Revive Manager, Kitchen Lead, Cake Baker, and Mum to many of our guests. Here at GCM we do what ever we are called to do.

As both Kev and myself enter this new season I'm sure we will be asking for God's Wisdom **'If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you'**. **James 1:5.**

So I'm inviting you all to join me on the next part of my journey with GCM.

Blessings
Lou
Louise Mackenzie
General Manager



Retreat

A few words from me to let you all know how we are doing at Retreat, I am now eight months into my position of manager at Retreat and what an eight months it's been.

Firstly I have to say and thank our team of awesome volunteers. We could not do what we do without them, they are such an eclectic bunch with so many skills that make us such a great team.

Highlights so far are seeing one of our volunteers move into full time employment in the sector of homelessness and drug and alcohol, he was well on his way on his journey of recovery but it was so good to have him with us volunteering.

Another of our guests has been housed with our help and has been volunteering with us for a few months, he has now undertaken training within another organisation within the homelessness, drug and alcohol sector.

When I first came to GCM in January 2023 to work in the winter shelter I saw a homeless person in Gloucester with the same clothes on and he has stayed in them for nearly two years. That is until last week!

I have been gently talking to him each morning for the last few months and he has eventually come into Retreat, we were able to get him to change his clothes and shoes. Just stop and imagine how that felt for him. It is a case of building trust slowly and sometimes it takes months.

We have had instances of people getting houses and jobs, they return to us on occasions to call in and thank us for what we have done for them, many say 'we would not have made it without you guys'.

Thank you all for the support you give us.

God Bless

Nathan Casey
Retreat Centre Manager

Would you, your church, workplace or school consider Sponsoring a Space in Retreat?
<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/sponsoraspace>



Street Teams

To love and serve the Lord in the Street Teams is both a joy and a privilege. That we can demonstrate His love and care for all of our Street Friends and the people we encounter on our journey around the city is truly amazing.

I have been part of the street team volunteers for quite a time and it never ceases to amaze me how God works both in answering our prayers for our street friends and always providing what we need both in terms of food and hot drinks and spiritual support.

It has been wonderful to see what a difference simply listening to people can make and helping it turn lives around by showing genuine interest and support to those we meet. I can remember one of our guys was truly adamant he was 'quite happy' sleeping rough in a doorway, despite the fact that he was really quite unwell. However, after many weeks of prayer and gentle persuasion we came to him in his usual spot and found him getting his belongings up together and announcing he was accepting the accommodation he had been offered. What a relief it was for all of us.

Disengagement is encountered many times, but with prayer, love and respect, our friends do engage with services and can start to rebuild their lives.

We have an amazing God, and a brilliant team of staff and volunteers at City Mission.

Sue Yates
Street Team Volunteer

Johnny's Story (Part 1)

I have been in recovery and clean for 15 years but last year I found myself homeless and so my journey with GCM began.

When I first met the team at GCM I went to the Wednesday lunch service. There was no judgement and I was welcomed with open arms.

I also began attending the Retreat Day Centre where I could get a shower, clean clothes, wash my clothes, have something hot to eat and get support. I could even have a sleep when I needed to.

I felt through that when the time was right then I would need to give something back.

I was encouraged and supported to engage with Emerging Futures and was housed through

them. This was my opportunity to now give back and so I started volunteering in Retreat. I also began volunteering at Embrace, this is an evening session that GCM run for people in recovery to talk openly and to start thinking about faith.

I was then approached by the GCM staff and encouraged to apply to get a place on a Workforce Development Pathway through a project that The Nelson Trust run. It is a traineeship course that lasts for three months and leads to guaranteed job interviews with The Nelson Trust, Emerging Futures, CGL, the council and GCM.

GCM had faith and believed in me right from the start when I had no confidence or faith in myself. They showed me love and a feeling of belonging to something bigger. My application to the training was successful and I was invited for an interview which I got through and I have loved being one of the successful candidates.

GCM feels like a family to me and I can't thank them enough for all the love, support, laughs, shoulders to cry on, faith in me and then more love.

Johnny
Retreat and Embrace Volunteer

Restore

I started volunteering in Restore last year. Helping to provide clothing and toiletries to those who need them. It has been a rewarding and humbling experience.

Usually we start by helping to sort and store some of the generous donations that have been given, so that its all ready to be given out as people arrive.

It can be a very busy time when Restore is open, finding out what is required, finding something to fit. Some of the clients are regular visitors, some I've only met once, they all have a story to tell. While talking time is often limited when it is busy, I have had some longer conversations with the guys, hearing where they are living and their struggles to find suitable accommodation. I'm often told about the difficulties of living on the street, especially about being cold, wet and unsafe. They are all grateful, especially at the moment for the provision of warm clothing and shoes. Some of our visitors have been particularly thankful and I wish I could adequately pass these thanks on to all those who donate.

Chris Elwin
Volunteer



We had two proud grandparents, Christine and Peter Gardner pop in with a donation organised by their 7 year old granddaughter, Maisie.

She had been sad about seeing people in doorways so wanted to do something to help them. She started a collection with her family and then talked to her church family at Forest New Life Church - Parkend who then collected more.

Thank you so much to Luke and Tasha from The Hygiene Bank - Gloucester.

They joined us for the Big City Sleepout last October and raised £1600 to spend on essentials for us to use this year!

Well today Luke popped in to see Nathan, our Retreat Manager and dropped off the first delivery with £400 worth of cleaning products and essentials for our Retreat Day Centre and Renew Training Centre.

We are so grateful to them and the rest of their awesome team.



The GCM Team

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