

# MISSION GATE UPDATE

Turning Lives From Crime to Christ Since 1985

JANUARY 2024



## Press On! —Rick and Trish Mathes, Co-Founders



Each November, Rick urges Mission Gate residents to stay committed to the Lord during the upcoming holidays.

For many people in recovery, the holidays used to be party days. "Thoughts of your past will flood your mind at this time and try to pull you back," he says.

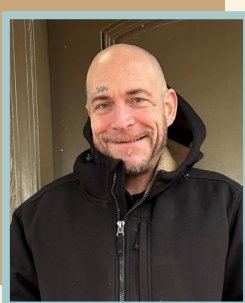
As we begin 2024, we celebrate with our brothers and sisters that they made it through—clean, sober, and stronger.

"Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

Isaiah 43:18-19

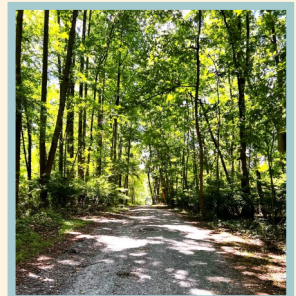
## There's no place like home —Thomas Tennison's story



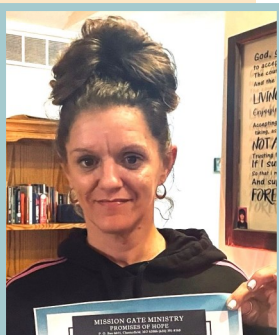
When our residents return after an off-site meeting, they often express feelings of safety. Thomas Tennison says it like this.

"I had to go to my old hometown for my court date. I was scared to death just being there. But when I hit Fort Good Shepherd's gravel road on the way home, I felt safe again. Now that I'm off parole, I can focus on growing my faith and living my life for Christ.

"Your prayers and help mean so much to me. I've never felt such genuine care. It touches my heart in a way I can't explain."



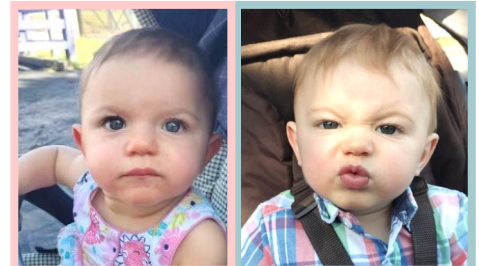
## The road to Mission Gate sometimes takes detours —Jodi Davis's story



In 2013, Jodi Davis received a 10-year prison sentence. After 5 years, she was released to Warren County Family Court. After another 2 years, she finally arrived at Mission Gate. Jodi believed Mission Gate would give her the best chance to regain custody of her children.

Shawnya Blankenship, Promises of Hope's program director, reflects, "When Jodi came to us, she was deeply entrenched in the prison code of conduct, always focusing on survival.

In just 9 months at Mission Gate, she has made more changes in her life than anyone else I've ever seen."



Jodi gets to see her twins regularly when they visit her at Promises of Hope.

Jodi graduates on January 29, 2024. Now, she's not just surviving—she's thriving.

## Now I'm the dad I always wanted to be —Eric Vandiver's story



At 21, I wanted to give my newborn daughter everything she could ever want. So I got a good job, bought a house, and spent all kinds of money. Then one day I lost my job and—along with it—my self-worth. By age 30, I was a broke and broken man in prison.

I cried out to God to make me the dad my wonderful kids deserve. At Mission Gate, I learned to put God first so I can give my wife and kids the right kind of love.

Eric, his wife, and their 2 children volunteered at a residential retirement center as part of sharing God's love.

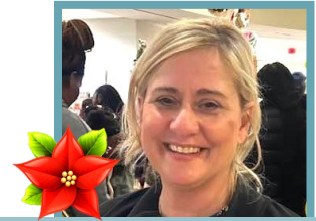
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JANUARY 2024, CONT.

## Thank you to our Christmas angels!

At this year's Christmas Angel Mission parties, we provided over 1,000 presents to hundreds of prison inmates' children and children with needs in our local communities. Thank you for your heartfelt care in selecting perfect gifts for kids who really needed Christmas joy.

One mom told us her 3-year old son never liked stuffed animals, but now he sleeps every night with a fuzzy bee he received at one of our parties!



Hats off to our Executive Administrator, Reyna Rollings, who is the driving force behind this huge effort each year!

Many thanks to Missouri State Representative Ron Copeland who, attending with his wife, spoke at the Crawford County event.



At the St. Louis party, many children accepted Christ after Sherry LoRusso's message.



Elijah Haitte, who lives with his mom at Hannah's Ranch, says, "Thanks a whole awful lot. This has really been a really big journey for me."



## I can't praise God enough —Harley Welch's story



Harley before



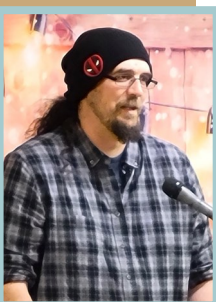
Harley after

I spent 15 years in jails, prisons, institutions ... you name it. While at the Fulton Community Supervision Center, I heard Trish Mathes talk about the Lord and Mission Gate. The second time she spoke, something came over me—I'd never felt anything like it before. I knew then to apply to Mission Gate and was accepted into the 9-month program at Hannah's Ranch.

Since then, I've become someone I never knew before. I've gained self-worth, built trust with my family, and have unlimited visits with my son. I'm in school and hold a full-time job. Best of all, I'm experiencing unconditional love.

Thanks to Mission Gate and its dedicated staff, I have my life back.

## Tax collectors, hotheads, drug dealers. God loves us all —James Fields



Matthew was a tax collector, hated by his own people. But after meeting Jesus, he preached the gospel to the very people that hated him. Jesus called his hot-headed disciple John a "son of thunder." But John spent time with the Lord and soon preached a gospel of love. Saul hated the church, persecuted Christians, and held the robes of those who stoned Stephen to death. But after his encounter with Christ, he preached the gospel, wrote much of the New Testament, and became the persecuted.

I was a drug dealer who cared about nobody but myself. After encountering Christ, I'm a new man whose life and purpose is helping others see the love of our God.

## Meet Scout, the latest pup to find his way to Mission Gate —Trish Mathes



Over the years, all kinds of creatures have found their way to Mission Gate. Some are strays, and others are dropped off in the country by irresponsible owners. Someone even left a pony in our front yard. Scout had been waiting in a shelter for 6 months when we found him.

Our residents love and care for these animals, and the animals give back unconditional devotion. The shelter director said Scout will need "3 days to decompress, 3 weeks to feel safe, and 3 months to feel like he's finally home." We understand this process well.