

Relief Bus Stories of Transformation



Bill Hoffman, on the left, stands with Charles, who was helped out of homelessness by the Relief Bus and its resources.

From 1991 to 1998, Bill Hoffman served as the outreach leader on the Relief Bus. Since then, he has focused on leadership at NYCR's Hope Center and the counseling aspect of the outreach.

Lately, Bill has been back on the streets with the Relief Bus about once a week. It still amazes him, after more than 15 years of service on staff, to see the impact of the Relief Bus on the streets. "It is very exhilarating and reinforces the mission of what we do, day in and day out. I am able to see, every time I go out, how lives are being impacted in a positive, productive way. The seeds that have been planted over the years by our teams and our many volunteer workers have sprouted real change."

During a recent Saturday bus outreach in the Bronx, Bill ran into several people from the past who had turned up at the bus during desperate days. The first one was Wilfredo Torres, who had been coming to the bus for years. "Wilfredo used to sleep wherever he could, in an old, decrepit, abandoned building in front of our location.

Finally, after just hanging around, one of the outreach leaders was able to get him into a detox, and he then went on to rehab, a halfway house, and is now a counselor. He was homeless for 15 years and the bus was the only dependable source for a meal and someone to talk to during that time, the only vehicle to give him the connections to get real help and hope."

Hoffman shares that on the same day, he ran into a couple that came to the bus years before. "About three years ago, Steve and Gloria had been homeless. They had come upon the Relief Bus looking for a hot cup of soup and prayer. They desperately wanted an apartment to get off the streets and find a new beginning. After being rejected by city agencies and resources, they were able to find an apartment after our team prayed with them."

Just a few minutes later, Jean Tillery walked up with her amazing story, "She had come to the bus three years earlier, and has been clean from drugs for two years now. With God's help, she was able to clean up her life, get a fresh start and now she even owns a car."

Bill went on to share, "When I see the lives impacted, the validation and confirmation for what we do is reinforced; I am encouraged to keep on going because

it works, and as we grow our team of outreach workers and leaders, I look forward to the next generation of leadership continuing this necessary and vital outreach." □



Wilfredo Torres standing by the Relief Bus, a place that offered him a way out of a desperate lifestyle.



Steve and Gloria enjoying their new independence.



Jean Tillery shares her victories with Bill Hoffman and volunteers on the bus at the Bronx 148th and Brook location.

More Than A Turkey Dinner...

While many look forward to time with family and friends during the festive holiday season, those battling substance abuse and journeying toward their own recovery often have a different experience on the holidays. It is a time of loneliness and often a season prone to relapse.

But there is a lifeline of hope on Thanksgiving Day offered by the "Overcomers Outreach" 12-step recovery groups sponsored by NYC Relief's Hope Center in Elizabeth, NJ. We call it the Thanksgiving Day Marathon Meeting



Volunteers serve up heaping plates during last year's Thanksgiving Outreach.

One year, during the Thanksgiving Day Marathon Meeting, a woman came in for the free meal and to get out of the cold. She got her plate and sat down to eat. It was obvious this young lady was "on the job" so to speak, working as a prostitute to support her heroin addiction. As she ate and a speaker shared, she began to weep. Her life wasn't right and she knew it, but she shared that she had no idea how to stop living in the bondage of her addiction.

We shared with her a message of hope and transformation, and she was ready to make a change. Our team was even able to get her into a rehab. That woman

came looking for a meal on Thanksgiving Day, and got a whole lot more. Lives like this are transformed every year through a simple sharing of a meal and a message of hope and healing at our Annual Thanksgiving Day Recovery Marathon Meeting.

For nine years, Thanksgiving Day has been a day of intense outreach for our recovery groups as we provide a place of refuge. Speakers share on recovery topics while meals are served. This setting has facilitated our ability to help many individuals, teetering on the edge of giving up on life, placed into detox programs, drug rehabs or shelters, and ultimately, begin their journey to recovery and freedom.

For more information about this year's event, contact Ralph Menendez, Director of Recovery Ministries at The Hope Center by e-mail at ralphm@nycr.org. □

Thank You to Our Foundation/Corporate Partners!

On behalf of our entire NYCR team and the people we serve, we want to thank the following foundation/corporate partners for their support over the past year:

- ❖ Carlton Hill Family Foundation
- ❖ Clark Associates Foundation
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- ❖ Union Foundation
- ❖ Westfield Service League.

Thanks for standing with us to bring help and hope to people in need on the streets.

Winter Needs

- ❖ Paper cups--8-12oz. (URGENT)
- ❖ Hot Chocolate drink mix
- ❖ New Socks
- ❖ Men's Jeans
- ❖ Unisex deodorant/hygiene kits
- ❖ Hats, gloves, scarves

If donating, please call first. If mailing or shipping, please send to the Elizabeth address *not* the P.O. Box.



Our mission is based on Isaiah 58:6-12 and Matt. 25:34-40

The Relief Buses are two converted buses that feed the hungry and connect people in need with resources of help and hope. The Relief Buses currently operate at a total of 10 different weekly locations in NYC and urban New Jersey.



New York City Relief was founded in 1989 by Richard and Dixie Galloway. We are a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization which serves as an umbrella organization for two outreach programs:

The Hope Center is a community outreach center in Elizabeth, N.J., that offers a food pantry, crisis counseling/referrals, recovery mentoring and substance abuse support groups.

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