When God Opens A Window

As a nonprofit, the Fresno Rescue Mission works within any current confines of space and freedom we have at the time. The goal is to use whatever we have to accomplish what God places on our hearts, trusting that He’ll continue to add toward these desires and meet any ongoing needs in His perfect timing. This type of faith-walk creates incredible and unending opportunities to learn and grow.

When we first opened Fresno Medical Respite Center (FMRC) in July 2011, we had but one location where this much-needed ministry effort would work: our basement. Though dark, the Mission’s basement had a ramp, making it the only available space with wheelchair and gurney accessibility. At the time, it was the ideal answer to a huge need in our community. It served us well. We were able to not only collaborate efforts with area hospitals and clinics to meet the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of pre-op and post-op patients (who either lacked housing or family connections to care for them while under intense medical care), but we were also able to do so with little added cost in making ready for the change. It was a win-win situation!

In October 2012, as the women and children moved from our downtown shelter (once known as the Emergency Family Shelter) to our new Rescue the Children community, space was suddenly available for new use. This refurbished shelter now houses the ministries of Community Care, and with it, the ministry of FMRC. Having the added space is a terrific blessing in and of itself, but it also came with the miraculous … the God-sized moments.

Meet Michael...

Michael has been with us the longest. He initially came to us as an overnight guest in March 2012, but through a series of mental and physical issues, he landed in the hospital and then in our respite center. Though details from his youth are sketchy, with timelines and stories skewed, Michael suffers from a head injury and physical challenges following an automobile accident, from which he never received medical treatment. Michael also suffers from a rapid degenerative form of Multiple Sclerosis. When he was first admitted into our FMRC in April 2012, he had the mental equivalent of a 6 year old. So moving from hospital to basement surroundings, with the mind-set of a child, wasn’t an easy transition for him. He spent many weeks in bed. Staff would talk to him and encourage him, but when loud or belligerent guests of the center would act up, Michael would hide under his sheets. During quiet times, he would venture to the couches in our den, but when new guests arrived, he’d once again retreat to his bed. Being social wasn’t an easy practice for him and we were beginning to see his acuity decline. Once in a great while, Michael did have moments when we’d catch a glimmer of his personality. Richard Lopez, Case Manager for Community Care, was being playful with him in passing one day, saying, “Michael, Michael!” To which Michael surprised everyone, sitting up and echoing back, “Howdy, Howdy!”

The miraculous came when we moved our respite center across the street. We noticed an immediate change. Michael was no longer in an area with the limitations of access. He was now in a space with natural lighting and open breezes. It was more peaceful because new practices between staff and new guests had immediate, positive outcomes. Instead of hiding under his sheets or withdrawing from other guests, Michael would move himself to the atrium-style hallway or dining area. Eventually he began engaging with our other guests. He’s now relaxed. He’s smiling.

This Christmas he received a guest gift bag we filled with soft, warm clothing, scarf and hat, toiletry items, and fun goodies. His response surprised us because it was so fluid and clear: “By far, best Christmas ever!”

Michael is no longer deteriorating. He’s coming to life! When one door closes, God opens a window!