

## Long Road Takes Turn for the Better

Alvin Montgomery is not bashful about admitting he's made mistakes in his 55 years. More important, however, are the giant strides he's made in turning his life around.

Alvin today works as an interior and exterior house painter for a Johnson County company and through his own business as Montgomery Painting. The distance between his life today and that of his past as a homeless man is dramatic.

"I made it back," he explained, holding back a tear. "A lot of us don't. I was one in a million. God made it possible; that's all I can say."

Several years ago, Alvin realized he had to change his life. He had begun attending services at True Light Church-Nazarene and started visiting nearby Metro Lutheran Ministry's Saturday breakfast program.

"I met people who helped me," he recalled. "I knew from the beginning they were real. Being out on the street lets you know a phony from someone who is real."

He visited MLM in his work clothes—clothes

not surprisingly covered in paint. Director Jim Glynn introduced Alvin to John Stewart, who in turn introduced Alvin to a contractor from Johnson County. That led to jobs helping a paint crew for the contractor's painting team.

In a perfect world, that would have been the end of the story, but anyone dealing with real poverty knows things are rarely so simple.

Alvin had no transportation. So each day, he would board the earliest bus possible at 5:40 a.m. and navigate the series of transfers that took him as close as possible to the day's work site. Most of the time, that left several miles for him to walk, and he often arrived late—the buses simply didn't start early enough.

"Because he had to walk two miles with all of his gear, it was usually 9:30 before he got to work," Glynn explained. "It just

wasn't working."

Six weeks ago, an MLM board member and Stewart "conspired" to purchase an old pickup

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*Alvin Montgomery: no longer homeless, starting his own company.*

## Experience Plays Role In MLM's Selection

As a veteran of social service work and the daughter of a pastor, it's no surprise Sue Funk became aware of Metro Lutheran Ministry soon after moving here in 1978.

A member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, she quickly became aware of MLM's contributions to the community shortly after relocating from Illinois. "Over the years I've seen all of the good things that MLM does," she explained. "I just think everything they do is outstanding. It's an awesome organization."

So when her financial advisor suggested that

she begin to consider a trust, MLM was at the top of her options for long-term giving. "I was looking for something good to use my estate for, something to help a good organization that I thought was doing the right thing," she recalls. "I decided on MLM."

A Roeland Park resident, Sue brought more than an average amount of critical ability to that decision. A former social worker with Research Medical Center, she has experience in discharge planning, which often involves the types of serv-

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## Long Road Takes Turn for the Better

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truck and transfer the title to Alvin, who would pay off the vehicle at \$100 a month. MLM then stepped in with the first-ever use of the Faye Cowee Fund to purchase ladders, a sprayer and other gear necessary for him to operate independently. The fund, sponsored by the Glasnapp Foundation, was designed for just such unusual needs and was named in honor of a long-time MLM Community Care Manager, who retired.

Alvin also brought significant work skills. He is quick to credit his parents with having given him the tools to succeed. Growing up near Detroit, he had

worked as a painter with his father and remembers well the lessons learned from his mother, a former teacher. “She’s still working as a beautician at the age of 81,” he noted. “We learned to work.”

Alvin came to Kansas City several years ago because of many problems—including time in jail. He’s obviously learned a better way. “The main thing I learned is you can always turn to God, and God is always going to be there for you. There are still good people in this world, really good people who will help you if you try to help yourself. That’s what really got into my head. I’ve got to continue to do the right thing.”

Besides his painting, Alvin is also using another long-time skill, music. Professionally trained, he performed with several widely known rhythm and blues bands. Today, he limits his singing to church, especially with the young people he tries to guide.

“I taught some of the kids vocal techniques I learned,” he explained. “Someone told me when I was on the streets that to make it, I would have to go back to something I loved. The only things I know are painting and music, so I’m using those. They’re what God gave me.”

## Experience Plays Role in MLM’s Selection

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ices MLM offers or coordinates. Today, she serves as the hospital’s Rehabilitation Program manager, which is also frequently involved in community issues.

“MLM gets results and does so very effectively,” she said. “I’ve also seen some of the activities they helped start in the community, like Harvesters or the KC Community Garden. They really make a difference.”

For these reasons and more, Sue decided to become a member of the MLM Heritage Society. The group is comprised

of living stakeholders who have notified MLM that they have made a planned gift to MLM. These gifts take many forms, but for MLM, they help provide a critical continuity to services for the needy, ensuring lasting support to help the homeless and needy of metropolitan Kansas City.

“It just makes sense,” she concluded. “You can help something that will continue into the future.”

For more information on the MLM Heritage Society, contact Jim Glynn at (816) 285-3117.



*Sue Funk found the Heritage Society an ideal way to plan for the future.*

## Clay, Wyandotte Locations See Success and Challenge

Like MLM’s main office, the Clay and Wyandotte County locations have both experienced huge increases in demand and dramatic decreases in donations.

Both continue to achieve success, including recent back-to-school events that served more than 600 children.

Yvonne Brown at Wyandotte County

noted that both faced major issues because of reduced food pantry supplies. “We’re seeing larger numbers of people and our resources are very low,” she said. “The food pantry was very busy this summer but donations, from organizations like Harvesters and individuals, are down.”

Jeani Wells in Clay County said requests for service have increased more than 60 percent. “It’s been rough,” she said. “The phone just rings all the time. And of course our food supply is down like everyone else’s because there is no food.”

### **Teams Sought for Volleyball Oct. 14-15**

Teams, players and adult chaperones are being sought for the Oct. 14-15 Midnight Volleyball.

This fun event is open to all high school church youth groups. Each player is asked to gather pledges from family and friends with a request of at least \$30 per player.

The tournament includes non-competitive matches. Other activities will include sumo wrestling, a comedy troupe and more between matches.

For more information, contact 816-285-3146, [suzannebartling@mlmkc.org](mailto:suzannebartling@mlmkc.org) or you may also learn more and sign up online at [www.mlmkc.org](http://www.mlmkc.org).

## *Creative Problem Solving: Any Stove Will Do In A Storm*

Early one Saturday morning, I met Jim Glynn at True Light Church of the Nazarene, so we could begin cooking the eggs, sausage and pancakes that we serve at our breakfast ministry.

Jim and I unloaded all the material, started the coffee and got ready to cook. We turned on the gas ovens and soon realized the gas was not working. At that point, we needed to make a decision: try and cook with no gas or choose not to serve breakfast that morning. As Jim and I discussed our options, it became clear that the people who counted on this ministry were still coming, and we needed to serve them.

Over the course of the next three hours, we served over 100 people by using two electric grills and one microwave.

This experience confirmed that there is always good work to be done.

Sometimes, we forget that those we serve are not concerned with whether the process is perfect but simply that we care



*MLM's John Nycklemoe sees "creative" solutions for everyday challenges—including cooking breakfast without a stove!*

enough to follow through for them.

"Following through" for those who need our help may be a good way for each of us to think about our individual commitments to Metro Lutheran Ministry. MLM continues to be a primary agency for individuals and families in crises. All three of our emergency assistance locations work daily to provide hope and support, but the need is great.

To help us continue to provide hope and support, I want to personally invite each of you to come and join us at Starlight Theatre on November 5, 2011 and help us raise money for MLM's programs and celebrate our 40 years together. My hope is that the evening will inspire you to follow through and support this important ministry.

Sincerely,  
John Nycklemoe,  
Interim President

## *Attention All Ages: Two Servant Events Scheduled This Fall*

### *MLM Plans New Servant Event*

Metro Lutheran Ministry will host its first fall Congregational Servant Event Saturday, Oct. 29, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The event is modeled after the Spring Congregational Servant Event, which has proven successful at helping the neediest

residents of metropolitan Kansas City. Volunteers of all skill levels help with simple home projects so that older adults, those with disabilities and others in need are not forced from their homes.

For more information, contact Suzanne Bartling at MLM, 816-285-3146, email [suzannebartling@mlmkc.org](mailto:suzannebartling@mlmkc.org) or visit [www.mlmkc.org](http://www.mlmkc.org) where you may also sign up online.

### *MLM Plans Fall Youth Servant Event*

Metro Lutheran Ministry will host a Fall 2011 Youth Servant event for area young people who want to help elderly and people with disabilities in need.

Scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 1 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., this hands-on service project focuses on projects such as yard cleanup and painting. All materials and instructions will be provided.

For more information, contact Suzanne Bartling at MLM, 816-285-3146 or email [suzannebartling@mlmkc.org](mailto:suzannebartling@mlmkc.org). You may

also learn more and sign up online at [www.mlmkc.org](http://www.mlmkc.org).

### *Trivia Bowl Teams Ready for Sept. 9*

The second annual Friends of MLM Trivia Bowl is set for Friday, Sept. 9 at 7 p.m. at Fountainebleau Clubhouse, 12701 Grandview Street, Overland Park, KS.

The Trivia Bowl will consist of ten rounds of ten questions ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous. There will also be a delicious dessert silent auction.

Tickets are \$30 per person and include hearty appetizers and two drink tickets. All proceeds, including bids for dessert, support MLM programs to help the needy of greater Kansas City.

If you have any questions, please email [friends@mlmkc.org](mailto:friends@mlmkc.org) or visit [www.mlmkc.org](http://www.mlmkc.org).

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*"with God all things are possible." —Matthew 19:26*

## *Volunteer Efforts Bring Thrift Store Successes*

Blessings Abound Thrift Store is continuing to succeed, generating funding for MLM and Lutheran Mission of the Good Shepherd.

Shoppers looking for quality items continue to come in increasing numbers. Due to a large, continued increase in donations, Blessings Abound had to rent extra space in June just to handle the volume. The new Donation Center is now open and is located across the courtyard

from Blessings Abound in their shopping center at 95th and Nall Avenue in Overland Park.

The store will soon receive a face lift. Several volunteers have been planning new ways to improve the look and feel of Blessings Abound, as well as planning how to maximize the available space.

In November, the volunteers of

Blessings Abound will be setting up their second annual Christmas Store. Last year's store was a huge success, raising more than \$9,000 in just six weeks.

If you would be interested in being a part of the ministry of Blessings Abound, please call the store at 913-648-0700 or email [blessingsaboundkc@yahoo.com](mailto:blessingsaboundkc@yahoo.com).

### *POEO Planned for Nov. 5*

The 2011 Power of Each One event will be Saturday, Nov. 5.

The evening of fellowship, food and inspirational entertainment will raise funds to support the 40-year-old mission of Metro Lutheran Ministry.

Entertainment will be provided by Kurt Linn, Paul Marino and Phil Reesnes of River Ministries. The event is at the enclosed stage at Starlight Theatre, 4600 Starlight Rd., Kansas City.

For more information, visit this web page, [www.mlmc.org/poep\\_signup/](http://www.mlmc.org/poep_signup/).



*Volunteers at the Blessings Abound Thrift Store have been more than a little busy sorting donations. The store, which helps support MLM, has recently expanded and plans a major face lift in the near future.*