

## A Long Walk Home

On a brutally cold day last winter, Eric found himself at the end of his hope.

**“For more than 18 hours** I hid from security at North Kansas City Hospital,” Eric remembers. Eric had no place to go and no money. He hadn’t eaten in almost four days. Desperate for help, he walked into the ER and tried to get admitted so he could have a bed and food.

“They didn’t have a reason to admit me and had to release me, but I stayed in the hospital and kept moving, trying to blend in, sleeping a few minutes at a time on the floor of a restroom that wasn’t in use.”

Eventually Eric was discovered and escorted off the property. “The security guard gave me a bus pass, so I wouldn’t have to walk in the cold,” he says. “It was about six below zero that day, but the bus never came. So I began walking toward the skyline of the city.”

A T-shirt, thin pajama pants and a light jacket were his only protection from the freezing wind. Eric told himself he would walk as far as he could until he either collapsed or found help. “I felt so alone and weak, and I began to believe I would die.”

But Eric kept walking, uncertain of his destination. He crossed the bridge and as he began to trudge up the hill into downtown, he saw a homeless man, the only other person out on the streets.

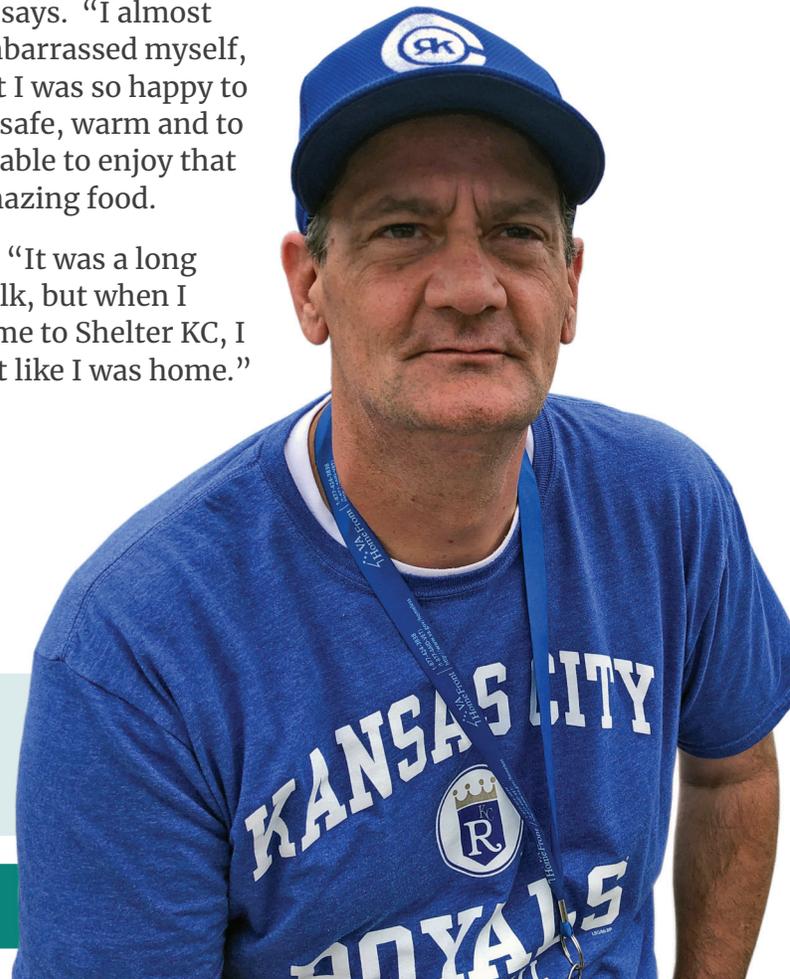
“He asked me what I was doing out in the cold, and he could tell I was in trouble,” Eric recalls. “He asked me if I had ever been homeless before, and I said no.

“Then he said, ‘You need to go to Shelter KC. Those are good people there who will help you. You will be safe there, and they will be good to you.’ He was concerned about me and told me not to go anywhere else but Shelter KC.

“He saved my life.” Eric found Shelter KC not long after, and was welcomed in. “I sat in chapel that night and felt so much peace.

“Then at dinner, the food tasted so good, I realized I was groaning out loud with every bite!” he says. “I almost embarrassed myself, but I was so happy to be safe, warm and to be able to enjoy that amazing food.

“It was a long walk, but when I came to Shelter KC, I felt like I was home.”



**How does homelessness happen?** Eric’s journey into — and out of — homelessness may surprise you. You can read much more of his powerful story at [ShelterKC.org](https://www.ShelterKC.org).

**Shelter KC** is providing hundreds of meals this Thanksgiving season to others like Eric. **Turn the page to learn more.**

# Passing the Torch

A Note from Joe Colaizzi, Executive Director

**As you may well imagine**, it won't be easy for me to say goodbye a few months from now when I step down as Executive Director of Shelter KC. But getting to know Eric Burger is making this transition much easier.

I'd like you to get to know him, too. It's my honor to introduce Eric to you as the Executive Director-Elect of Shelter KC.

Eric is smart, and he has the kind of experience necessary to lead Shelter KC into the next decade. His qualifications are robust, and you can read more about him on the back page of this CONNECT.

But I want to tell you something about Eric that a resumé wouldn't reveal. On a hot midday recently, some of the staff at the Shelter KC Men's Center were taking a walk and encountered a young man who was confused, dirty and afraid.

He called out to the group for directions to the Shelter, not knowing they worked there. Eric, who was part of the group, crossed the street to the man and checked to see if he was in distress. Eric put his arm around the man and asked if he could pray for him. Then, Eric walked with the man to the Shelter and made sure he was comfortable and hydrated.

To people who've spent their lives working with the poor and homeless, that little moment revealed much. The staff saw Eric as someone who wouldn't overlook someone in need, who wasn't ashamed of his faith and who wasn't afraid to get a little dirty to serve someone.

Jesus taught that whoever wants to be great among you must be the servant of all. As I prepare to pass the torch to Eric, it gives me peace to know he not only has a mind to lead, but he has a heart to serve. Welcome, Eric!

*Eric and Joe*



# Tables of Grace...



**This Thanksgiving season**, Shelter KC's staff and volunteers provide **well-balanced meals each day**. Out on the street, Shelter KC provides filling portions of delicious food, where every guest is treated with care.

Throughout the holidays, we expect a full house every day. No one will be forgotten, no one will go hungry.

Kansas City's homeless and hungry will come to us for help. **women and children** will receive delicious holiday feasts. We partner with volunteers with **Operation Family Feast!** This includes providing each with enough food for an abundant **Thanksgiving** and other meals.

We are excited to join many others in providing a table of grace, hope and laughter to our community throughout the holidays. We have questions, contact Volunteer Coordinator at 816.441.1314 or [nfranklin@ShelterKC.org](mailto:nfranklin@ShelterKC.org)

## OUR TH

Bring items to our donation is for

- 280** Turkeys
- 250** Stove Top
- 250** Boxed in
- 250** Package
- 250** 15-oz ca
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**DID YOU KNOW?**  
safely and easily at

# THANKSGIVING AT SHELTER KC



Volunteers will prepare and serve around **250 nutritious**, Shelter KC has earned the reputation as the place that serves people created with dignity, respect and love.

Every single night, and in our dining rooms no one

is, but **1,750 isolated and poverty-stricken men**, meals delivered right to their doors by Shelter KC. We serve **500 single-serving meals and 250 food boxes**, a Thanksgiving feast for a family of five with plenty of leftovers for

compassionate Kansas Citians to provide tables for our neighbors in need, both at Shelter KC and throughout the city. Would you join us? **Here's the BIG food list!** If you need more information, please contact our Volunteer Manager Nick Franklin at (816) 421-7643, ext. 1000.

## THANKSGIVING FOOD LIST

1520 Cherry Street, KCMO. Make sure to note your "Thanksgiving." **Thank you!**

- and/or hams
  - pop-type stuffing mix
  - instant potatoes
  - red gravy mix
  - canned corn
  - canned green beans
  - canned fruit
  - canned cranberry sauce
- 250** Large canned yams or sweet potatoes
  - 80** Lb. russett potatoes
  - 250** 1-lb. brown sugar
  - 250** 1-lb. butter or margarine in tubs
  - 250** Sets picnic salt and pepper
  - 250** Packages brown and serve rolls
  - 300** Pumpkin pies

You can make a financial gift this Thanksgiving season at [ShelterKC.org](http://ShelterKC.org), or with the enclosed reply slip.

## My Shelter KC Volunteer Experience

— Becca Alvord, Westside Family Church

### Westside Family Church has been serving

Shelter KC's **Operation Family Feast** for four years and it's my favorite serving opportunity in our entire church. We bring middle and high school students along with their parents and each person leaves every year feeling completely blessed by the people we get to meet and pray for.

Last year, some of my students and I delivered a food box to a woman struggling with cancer and going through treatments. We sat in her living room for over 30 minutes as she told us how God has met her in the middle of her pain and suffering.

The joy and peace she had could only come from the Lord. We got to pray with her, cry with her, laugh with her and learn from her. As we left, the students were speechless to hear the testimony of this lady and her faithfulness to God in the midst. That interaction challenged my students to take their faith to a deeper level and the experience taught them how to pray for people who are suffering through what seems like an impossible situation.

For those families who are looking for a place to serve, Shelter KC is my first pick. They do a fantastic job of recognizing needs throughout the city. They are intentional about equipping volunteers, and then allowing volunteers to be a blessing to others. Volunteering at Shelter KC is a humbling experience that you will never forget!

The way Shelter KC partners with the local church to bless the city is unlike any organization I have ever seen. Our church is blessed to have a partner like Shelter KC where we serve Kansas City in such a practical and meaningful way.



One of the WFC teams after a day of serving at Shelter KC



## MEET ERIC!

We did a Q&A with Eric Burger who will become our next Executive Director of Shelter KC in February 2020 when Joe retires. Eric joins us after working with rescue missions all over the United States for more than 40 years!

### Q. What other rescue missions have you worked with?

A lot! I started working at Union Gospel Mission in Seattle, Washington in 1979 and served in a lot of areas — from the youth to transient services — which gave me a lot of helpful experience over the years! From there, I led youth at Atlantic City Rescue Mission and at Union Mission in Charleston, West Virginia. I began to lead missions as an Associate Director at Huntington City Mission in West Virginia and then served as Executive Director at Great Falls Rescue Mission in Montana and Hiway 80 Rescue Mission in Longview Texas before coming here to Shelter KC.

### Q. What got you into rescue mission work?

My parents were in rescue mission work. As a child, we lived in an apartment in a mission. I grew up around men in recovery programs (many who were like uncles to me) and attended the mission's urban youth camps. As a high school and college student, I worked with children's camps and homeless emergency shelters. During this time, I felt led to give my life to homeless ministry. I love seeing the transformation of hurting people as they discover a new life with Jesus.

### Q. What are your plans for Shelter KC?

I am committed to lead Shelter KC to reach out to the homeless in the name of Jesus, to help build a bridge between hurting people and area churches, and encourage our community to support this vital work with their time and funds.

I hope to continue the legacy this ministry has forged over the last 70 years, and help Shelter KC stay strong and effective for many years to come.

## Remember Shelter KC at Work!



You can support Shelter KC with your Donor Choice payroll deduction through your workplace's United Way campaign, now through December 15th by using our **EIN 43-1287029**, or if a Federal employee your donor choice contribution can be made through your Combined Federal Campaign from now through January 15th by using our **CFC agency # 90936**. Thank you for supporting Shelter KC and your workplace charity campaigns.



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