

GOOD NEIGHBORS

Restoring Lives Together in Western New York

20th ANNIVERSARY
Cornerstone Manor

CORNERSTONE MANOR TURNS 20

Celebrating two decades of providing hope and help to women and families.

Maria is one of countless women Cornerstone Manor has welcomed in 20 years. "This shelter is a blessing," she says. Her story inside.

Buffalo City Mission
Restoring Lives Since 1917

FALL 2026

A Message from Mark Jentsch

20 Years of Cornerstone

Twenty years ago, our women's shelter was small. But the need in Western New York was not.

This year, we are celebrating Cornerstone Manor's 20th anniversary — and the thousands of lives that have been touched because of the support of our community and the continued generosity of faithful friends like you.

In this issue of *Good Neighbors,* you will read about Cornerstone resident Maria, who is grateful to have safety and peace after being homeless for many years. You will also learn about the history of Cornerstone and why its place in our community is just as vital today as it was when we opened our doors 20 years ago.

Ephesians 2:19–20 says: *"You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of His household … with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone."*

That is what Cornerstone Manor was built to be: a household, a home, with Christ at its center. Thank you for being a part of this place.

Thank you. God bless you.



Mark Jentsch
Chief Executive Officer

"You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of His household … with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone."
- Ephesians 2:19-20

Celebrating two decades of giving hope and help to women and children in our community

20th ANNIVERSARY Cornerstone Manor

In 2006, Cornerstone Manor was opened to accommodate a growing number of homeless women and families in Western New York. 20 years later, countless women and children have been blessed by their time here.

The goal has always been the same: to address the deep-rooted issues that cause homelessness and help women achieve lasting life transformation.



Cornerstone: By the Numbers

- 20 years
- 46 transitional single rooms
- 12 transitional family units
- 16 emergency beds
- 3 emergency family units
- Thousands of women and children helped here!

Looking Back and Looking Ahead

In honor of Cornerstone's 20th anniversary, case manager Jan Mansfield shares her memories of how Cornerstone started and why it still matters so much today.



Finding the Peace of God

After a lifetime of hardship, Maria has found peace, stability, and a way forward at Cornerstone Manor.

When you meet Maria, the first word that comes to mind is *"sunshine."* Her smile lights up the room, and she radiates warmth and cheer. What is extraordinary is that Maria's life has been anything but sunny.

When she arrived in Buffalo by bus, the person who was supposed to meet her at the station never showed. Maria had already spent much of her life trying to find a place to land — Georgia, Florida, Las Vegas, Chicago. "All those places, I had been in the street," she says. Now she was in Buffalo, and after being homeless more than four times already, Maria found herself sleeping outside on the street again.

"It is scary," she says quietly. She was afraid someone would hurt her.

Maria has carried more than most of us could imagine. Her father was shot and killed in their native Puerto Rico. Her twin sister died as a baby. Her son was just 16 when a stray bullet hit his spine and left him paralyzed — he is 25 now. Through it all, Maria, a mother of five, has held on to a quiet, unshakable faith.

When Maria came to the Mission she remembers that it was raining and she was in tears. *"I went inside and I [said], 'Look, I am homeless. It is raining.' And I started crying because I do not want to stay in the street because somebody could hurt me."*

They had one bed left.



"I said, 'Oh, Jesus. That one is special for me.'"

Maria is thriving at Cornerstone. She goes to chapel every morning at 7:15, encouraging other women who are in the program and waiting patiently for her own apartment to open up.

Maria has become one of Cornerstone's most enthusiastic cheerleaders. She tells women she meets on the bus, people on the street, and anyone who asks where she has been and how she is doing.

"I can tell how wonderful this place is!" **she smiles.** ***"This shelter is a blessing. This place has the peace of God."***

Maria's gratitude for Cornerstone and neighbors like you who support this work is almost overwhelming. With tears in her eyes, she says, *"Thank you, Lord."* For Cornerstone. For this community. For hope.



"I've worked full-time at Cornerstone since 2006, assessing women's needs and connecting them with resources and services."

"The need has evolved gradually. We house single women, families, and much to our surprise, an increasing number of elderly — as old as 81. ***In the last year, 25 women have come to our shelter who are 65 and over."***

"When I came to work for the Mission, the women's shelter was small and had limited capacity. Our director at the time, Dr. Lora Warkentin, went to the board and spoke about how the need was growing for shelter for homeless families. ***She was turning away 100 women a month."***

"She worked with the Buffalo City Mission Executive Director, Tom McLaughlin and came up with a plan to build Cornerstone. Their goal was to Restore Hearts & Rebuild Lives. ***The pillars of this work were to be hope, empowerment, trust and respect — with Christ as the "cornerstone."***

Julia & Bruce: Where are they now?

An update on a special family whose life you helped change!

When we last shared Julia's story, she and her young son, Bruce, were residents of Cornerstone Manor, Buffalo City Mission's shelter for women and children. Today — two years sober and living in an apartment they can finally call their own — they are both thriving.

"I love the apartment," she says. *"He loves the apartment! Since we have this space, he can just play anywhere!"*

The stability has been life-changing. *"To be somewhere that is permanent ... that is the stability part. Now, I can just breathe,"* Julia says. ***"Cornerstone was in preparation. I am thankful for Cornerstone. You guys gave me a sense of what home felt like."***

During her time at the Mission, Julia earned her GED, completed a finance class, gained certifications that helped her build a resume, and was baptized. Today, she is a certified Recovery Peer Advocate leading her second semester of a women's recovery support group. She is working with a life coach and a career coach, developing an addiction-recovery podcast, and preparing to work from home while homeschooling Bruce.

"I used to think, 'I am never going to do anything good. Nobody is ever going to see the positive in me," Julia remembers. Today,



she says, ***"I am proud of myself. I matured in a way that I needed to. You guys gave me enough freedom, but you gave me structure."***

"I am literally walking by faith and not by sight anymore," she says.

Because of you, Julia and Bruce have a home, a future, and hope. In her words: *"This is our world."*

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Mark, here's my fall gift to help our hungry and hurting neighbors:

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Buffalo City Mission
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