



From devastating injuries and homelessness, Jason was offered hope, healing, and much more at Pacific Garden Mission

From a Bridge to New Life: Jason's Story of Healing and Hope

One unexpected moment can change a life forever. When Jason Huizenga fell from a bridge in downtown Chicago, he suffered catastrophic injuries that left him unable to walk and with nowhere to turn. After months of surgeries, setbacks, and even time on the street, he arrived at Pacific Garden Mission in desperate need of help. Because of your faithful support, Jason found medical care, physical rehabilitation, shelter, and most importantly, the life-changing hope of the Gospel. Below, he shares his story in his own words.

JASON

"My name is Jason. I grew up in the Lansing and Calumet City area in the south suburbs of

Chicago. I had a pretty good upbringing in a Christian family. I was always taught to work hard and not ask for help unless I absolutely had to. I've always been independent and worked for everything I've gotten.

The Day Everything Changed

"In May of 2025, my life changed overnight. I had just moved back to the Chicago area after living in Portland, Oregon. I was walking across a pedestrian bridge over Lake Shore Drive on my way to a job in Indiana. The next thing I remember, I woke up in the hospital. I either fell or something hit me and knocked me off the bridge. To this day, I honestly do not know.

"When I came to, there were nurses and doctors all around me. The injuries were severe. I broke

both femurs, shattered my left tibia, broke my wrists, dislocated my elbow, fractured ribs, cracked my sternum, broke my jaw, and cracked my skull. I lost most of my teeth. The doctors told me I probably should not have survived, and the chances of me walking again were very slim.

Complications and Setbacks

"I spent over three months in the hospital and was later placed in a skilled nursing facility. While there, I developed a serious infection in my leg due to improper care. It became so severe that doctors discussed possible amputation. I was placed on IV antibiotics for months. The level of care I needed simply was not there.

"After finally receiving treatment, I had nowhere to go. I



“I was literally on the street in a wheelchair, unable to stand on my own.”

A Changed Heart

“This experience has changed me. I used to focus only on my own life. Now I want to help others who are struggling. What happened to me nearly took my life, but God has used it to transform my heart for His glory.”

Jason’s physical recovery is still ongoing, but the Lord has already accomplished something even greater. During his time at Pacific Garden Mission, he placed his faith in Jesus Christ. Thank you for making stories like his possible. Your generosity provides not only shelter and medical help, but also the transforming power of the Gospel. Lives are being restored, bodies are healing, and hearts are being saved because you care.

was in a wheelchair and could not walk. Caring for someone in that condition is a major responsibility, and I had very few options. I was literally on the street, unable to stand on my own.

God Provided a Place of Hope

“Pacific Garden Mission was a last resort for me. If it was not for this place, I truly do not know where I would be. This goes far beyond just meeting physical needs. The people here genuinely care. I owe this place and the people here a debt of gratitude I could never repay.

“Although I grew up in a Christian home, I had become a devout atheist. But through this accident and coming here, something changed in my heart. I realized that God was speaking to me. Here at the Mission, I gave my life to Christ.

“My recovery is still ongoing. I have another surgery coming up, and there are days when I feel discouraged. But the Gospel messages lift me up. That has been an unexpected blessing in the middle of all of this.

“Physically, I am making progress. I was told I might never walk again, yet today I am able to take steps with a walker. They are small steps, but they are real. Every day I get a little closer. With God’s grace, I believe I will walk again.



Jason talks with Chris Ridgeway, manager of program services, in the men’s locker room.



THE FULL STORY



Scan this QR code with your phone’s camera, and it will direct you to a live YouTube video as Jason reveals his experiences at PGM in more depth..

“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit” —Psalm 34:18 KJV

Photo above: Jason is taking steps forward, one day at a time. With the help of caring staff and the grace of God, healing is happening, both physically and spiritually.

The Difference You Made—And Are Still Making

Lives are still being changed long after a guest first walks through our doors. You may remember Nagwa, Nick, and Yazmin from past issues of *PGM News*. Each came to Pacific Garden Mission in a time of deep need, and today, by God's grace and your faithful support, their stories

continue to unfold in powerful ways. From growth in faith to new opportunities in work, ministry, and family life, these updates are reminders that the transformation you help make possible does not end at graduation—it continues for a lifetime.



NAGWA
“My name is Nagwa Tong, a proud graduate of the New Life and New Day programs at Pacific Garden Mission. Today, I am a full-time student

studying the remarkable ways God created the brain and mind to function. I never imagined that this would be the path I'd walk, especially coming from a past filled with rebellion.

I've been blessed with a stable home, reliable transportation, and a job

that supports my life and education. I also serve as a Sunday School teacher, ministering weekly to 25–30 children and youth, all while staying active in campus clubs and fully embracing my greatest gift—being a mother.”



NICK
“My name is Nick Bustillo. I now have the opportunity to share my story of the God who rescued me.

I let my past remind me that God never fails. I arrived here on June 26, 2024, suicidal and feeling beyond help. I was so broken. I went through the New Day and New Life Bible programs, and graduated on January 22, 2026. I now

serve and work here in the Hospitality department, where I have the opportunity to share the secret to a new life in Christ. I am now a member of West Lawn Baptist Church on the South Side of Chicago.”



YAZMIN
“I came to Pacific Garden Mission in March 2023. I got saved here and this March marks three years of my sobriety. I graduated from

the New Day program in June 2023 and the New Life Bible Discipleship Program in September 2024. I've been on staff here since November 2024 (Volunteer Service Assistant). God has made me more teachable, less of me and more of Him. I attend Uptown Church of Christ. I so love how they give back and help the community I live in using the Gospel.”

GIVE NOW pgm.org/donate



Please donate using your phone. Just scan this QR code with your phone's camera, and it will direct you to the PGM Donate page. *Thank you!*

FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP: *Faithful Stewards in the Kitchen*

Peter Leavitt
Assistant Treasurer,
PGM Board of Trustees

Each day at Pacific Garden Mission, hundreds of meals are prepared and served—not simply as an act of nourishment, but as an expression of Christ's love in action. PGM's Food Services team faithfully provides three meals a day, seven days a week, serving guests and staff with diligence, creativity, and care.

Behind every meal is thoughtful stewardship. Planning weekly menus, managing inventory, and

building grocery lists require wisdom, discipline, and a deep respect for the resources God has entrusted to us. Team members carefully compare prices, seek cost efficiencies, and steward funds responsibly. This quiet faithfulness reflects the biblical call to be good stewards of God's provision.

Equally important is the daily maintenance of the department's equipment—ovens, coolers, freezers, and warmers—ensuring food is stored safely and prepared to industry standards. These tasks, often unseen, are acts of service

that protect both the food and the people who receive it. Daily food donations from generous dining and grocery partners add another layer of responsibility.

Through budgeting, procurement, maintenance, and preparation, the men and women of PGM Food Services humbly serve as the hands and feet of Christ. In every meal offered, they reflect a heart of gratitude, obedience, and love—faithfully feeding bodies while pointing hearts toward the ultimate Provider, our Lord.

Visit our website at pgm.org to learn more about PGM's multiple ministries to the needy.



A Word from Philip Kwiatkowski
President, Pacific Garden Mission

MY HALLWAY ENCOUNTER

The story about Jason is truly heartbreaking. I want to share my interaction with him.

As I walked down the hallway, I witnessed Jason standing up and taking a few steps aided by a nurse and afterwards he was visibly moved. I stopped to ask his story, and after hearing it, I was moved.

In his own words, he says, "Pacific Garden Respite ministry means the world to me. I was in an accident that left me immobilized. I was in the hospital and have had over 20 surgeries to fix my leg. I couldn't walk and was in a wheelchair last year. I was told I may never walk again and here I am doing physical therapy and most likely will be able to walk in the next six months. If it were not for PGM, I most likely would

be dead. I was on the verge of giving up and I didn't know what else to do. The Respite Program, the people here, all you guys have been a massive huge lift to my heart. Thank you so much."

The Respite Program provides a safe place for men who are recovering from illness, injury, or surgery but have nowhere else to heal. Through this ministry, guests receive rest, stability, and access to ongoing medical care while they regain their strength.

He also mentioned that Jesus means everything in the world and he has been saved. When I walked away, I said to myself, "This is why we do what we do." The fact that he could say thank you while living in a wheelchair, that he could say thank you while staying in a rescue

mission, that he could say thank you while needing help just to stand, WOW. Where would Jason be if we were not here?

For many with medical needs the Respite Program and the medical services provided are a Godsend. Nonetheless, we receive no government help, but rely solely on the kind gifts of those who support the amazing work here. **Thank you for your kind love, prayer, and support.**

GLIMPSES INSIDE PGM



PGM'S RESPITE PROGRAM: A Safe Place to Recover

This image captures a reality we see far too often. A man arrives at Pacific Garden Mission directly from the hospital, still wearing his hospital ID bracelet and carrying everything he owns. For many people facing serious health challenges, discharge does not mean going home. It means being released *with nowhere to go.*

When options run out, they find their way here. Through the Respite Program, they are met with care, safety, and dignity, along with the hope of the Gospel. Your support helps ensure that no one recovering from illness or crisis has to face the streets alone.

THE IMPACT WE MAKE TOGETHER: Your gifts at work

Pacific Garden Mission's budget is completely donor-funded.

We receive no government funding. We are eternally grateful for the individuals, businesses, churches, and foundations that make it possible for PGM to serve thousands of homeless men, women, and children each year. When you support us financially, you're not only giving to the Mission, but *through* the Mission to people who need your help the most.

In **April** your support made a true difference:



16,350 total nights of sleep provided to our destitute homeless guests



37 men and women enrolled in Bible study programs and provided room and board



545 average number of homeless people who received aid and Gospel services each day



10 mothers with **18** children were sheltered at PGM



12,800 clothing items were distributed to the needy at PGM (est.)



3,137 media outlets around the world broadcast **UNSHACKLED!**



33,462 plates of nourishing food were served (est.)



22 people professed saving faith in Christ and became new believers at PGM

PGMNews JUNE 2026 • Vol. 91, No. 6
Published monthly by Pacific Garden Mission

1458 South Canal Street
Chicago, IL 60607-5201
P: (312) 492-9410 F: (312) 492-9414
Email: info@pgm.org
Websites: www.pgm.org www.unshackled.org

Philip Kwiatkowski, President
Daniel Woolman, Editor
Paul Higdon, Design

With your encouragement and support, we minister hope to the homeless, addicted, and brokenhearted.