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## (SAVANNAH, GA) Old Savannah City Mission aspires to be "Savannah's Five Star Gospel Rescue Mission"

[www.oscm.org](http://www.oscm.org)

Timothy Ferrell is living the American Dream. He wakes up every morning and heads to work. He is climbing the corporate ladder. His life is everything he dreamed it would be. However, there was a time when he lived a nightmare. That was only three years ago.

"I was addicted to crack-cocaine. I was a criminal. I was on the run. I was hiding out in a local hotel, hoping my probation officer wouldn't find me," Timothy says.

He had warrants out for his arrest for selling drugs, robbery, and many other offenses. But to him, that wasn't the problem. The problem was that he had no more money. So, he made the agonizing decision to turn himself in.

He trekked on foot straight up Bay Street, looking for a police officer.

"On any other day, the officers on Bay seemed countless. Now, when I needed one most, a cop was nowhere to be found."

He eventually found himself at a supermarket on Bull Street, unaware that there was a police precinct just blocks away where he could have turned himself in.

"I ended up running into a guy I used to get high with," Timothy explains.

"He was now clean, and he told me about the Urban Training Institute and Clean Start program at the Old Savannah City Mission. So, I decided to give it a try. Not because I wanted to get clean, but because I thought it would be a good place to hide out."

Gone were the plans of turning himself in. Off he went to the Mission to buy himself some more time as a free man. Little did he know, change was about to come, and it was a change he couldn't help but make.

"I went in under the name Thomas Jenkins, or TJ."

Then, he met Reggie Lee, the "Clean Start" program manager.

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"One of the pre-requisites for Clean Start is that the candidate must be very mature in his misery," he explains.

"It sounds harsh, but if you're not sick and tired of being sick and tired, it too easy to slip back into old ways. TJ was beyond ready for a change."

In about a week, it happened. Something deep inside TJ changed. He no longer wanted to be a criminal. He saw doing drugs as a dead end street. He was ready to embrace a new life through his faith in Christ. He was ready to work on his issues. He was a perfect candidate for the Clean Start program.

Lee explains, "A student must be willing to live in and relate to a community of Christians. They must be teachable, willing to study, to learn and to change. They must also agree to community service without compensation and work as permitted with required tithing, savings and restitution. Plus, they must develop a vibrant connection with other believers in an approved church."

TJ accepted the disciplines and direction of UTI with all the consequences. He would soon become one of the Mission's biggest success stories.

"On March 15th, 2005 I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I was no longer scared. I no longer wanted to hide," Timothy says.

"I told everyone my real name, and that day healing started."

Also on that day, he sought out his probation officer.

"I told him that I was a changed man for good. And I know he had heard that a million times before, but I truly believe to this day that the Holy Spirit touched him, because I was facing 6 years in jail for my offenses and he gave me another chance."

Timothy went on to complete the Urban Training Institute's Clean Start division with its high standards, strong boundaries and clear direction. The program included a 12 month residence at the Mission, plus an extra two months he chose to stay voluntarily. After graduation, he went into transitional housing, which means living off campus for one year, but still under the Clean Start guidelines.

During that time, Timothy found a job making biscuits at Bojangles in Savannah. After he mastered making biscuits, he was promoted to shift leader. From there, he says, his progress seemed like a whirlwind. He was soon promoted to assistant manager and eventually became a unit director in Statesboro. Now, less than two years after being a biscuit maker, Timothy is now being groomed to become a district manager in Jacksonville.

"My life was changed at Old Savannah City Mission. I'm not the man I was when I first walked through the Mission's doors." Timothy says.

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"I'd definitely be in jail if I hadn't enrolled, and if I ever got out of jail, I'm sure I'd still be a criminal."

But thanks to the Mission, his life is quite the contrary. The criminal life is a thing of the past, and he is well on his way to success in the business world.

Since the Urban Training Institute was implemented in Savannah in January, 2004, there have been over 40 graduates. Compliance with UTI's "High Standards, Strong Boundaries, Clear Direction" is required of all. Students understand that it costs a man nothing to enroll; it costs him everything to graduate.

The Urban Training Institute has two divisions. "Clean Start" is a year-long residential recovery program which is based upon an adult education paradigm with curricula for character development, academic achievement and vocational skills.

The second division of UTI is "Fresh Start" which builds a bridge from incarceration to incorporation back into the community. Enrollment is limited to those who while incarcerated come to faith in Christ and demonstrate a genuine desire for a fresh start in life. In this program, participants reside in the Mission facilities for a minimum of one year. Every student is matched with a mature Christian as their mentor. Primary emphasis is placed on spiritual growth; however the common sense goal is the prevention of a return to crime and re-incarceration. In April 2008, Fresh Start expanded to include women.

Old Savannah City Mission aspires to be "Savannah's Five Star Gospel Rescue Mission." Its mission is to change lives through proclaiming the Gospel, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, rehabilitating the addict, and restoring the ex-offender.

In 2007 the mission provided 122,074 meals and more than 27,000 shelter beds.

The Mission, a Savannah-based 501(c)(3) charity functions with a staff of just seven employees; however, hundreds of volunteers deliver services to the community's most vulnerable and needy citizens in a highly cost effective way. During business hours visitors are invited to take a tour of the Mission's facilities. To learn more, log on to [www.oscm.org](http://www.oscm.org) or call Jim Lewis or Connell Stiles at 912-232-1979.