

## Jump on the Bus

Coming  
in June!



*How you help  
children get the  
school supplies  
they need.*

For students, the list of needed school supplies seems to get longer — and more expensive — every year.

For struggling families, especially those with several children, the expense can be quite a burden.

That's why MorningStar holds its annual Jump on the Bus event every summer. This year, registration is Tuesday, June 7, and the event will be held Tuesday, August 9.

Jump on the Bus ensures that hundreds of local children will have every school supply they need — from pencils to tennis shoes.

You can support Jump on the Bus by donating backpacks, school supplies and clothing before Friday, July 22. Simply drop items off at our receiving center at 350 East Washington Street, Joliet, IL.



*William is grateful for your support!*

## Relief at Last

*Undiagnosed for decades, William finally found the help he needed*

William had just finished playing golf when it happened.

He walked up to a brand-new Audi SUV (retail price up to \$70,000), popped the trunk and tossed his clubs in.

Just one problem: the car wasn't his.

"I thought somebody had bought the car just for me," he says now, looking back. "Then I looked up at the sky and saw some stars, and I thought they were my mom and God talking to each other."

Somebody called the police, and they could tell William wasn't a criminal. Instead of taking him to jail, they took him to the hospital, where he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

He was 60 years old and had never been

diagnosed. Finally, an explanation for decades of strange behavior, which had cost him jobs and relationships.

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**"I would have been sleeping  
outside, absolutely homeless."**

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William's bouts with depression were relatively short periods of typical sadness. But during his manic episodes, which sometimes lasted for weeks, he often lost touch with reality. Worse, he was self-medicating with alcohol abuse.

Once diagnosed, William was put on meds to stabilize his moods. But he needed a place to stay, since he'd just become homeless after a job loss.

*continued inside*



## A Note From Sandi

Several years ago, a study estimated that 45 percent of America's homeless are mentally ill, and about 25 percent of the homeless have a serious mental illness.

The stats in Greater Will County are likely similar. We see it daily in our community and at the Mission.

Since our launch in 1909, MorningStar's main goal has remain unchanged: Help people in need. And that certainly includes those with mental illness ... people like William.

William was 60 years old before he learned that a lifetime of depression and extreme behavior had an underlying reason: He had bipolar disorder. Finding out was a huge relief to William who was put on meds to stabilize his moods.

He's just one of many with mental illness who have found solace at MorningStar. If you haven't already, read his story on the cover of this newsletter.

I'm so grateful for friends like you who concur with our mission to help people in need. Your kindness and support make that obvious. And I can't thank you enough!

Sincerely,

Sandi Perzee  
Executive Director

## Relief at Last, *continued from cover*

He came to MorningStar and joined the 180 Recovery program. After a few months, he was a new man — sober and, thanks to his new meds, his bipolar was under control. MorningStar also helped him obtain disability insurance due to his bipolar. And now he looks forward to living independently again.

"I have no idea where I would have gone without MorningStar," William says. "I would have been sleeping outside, absolutely homeless."

***Thank you for helping men like William get the help they need.***



## Pull Up, Hop On and Eat Out

*Annual progressive dinner raises funds for MorningStar.*

Come join us for our Hop on the Bus progressive dinner, to be held Wednesday, July 27.

You will be escorted onto buses that will take you to four local restaurants — Heroes West, Cemen's Pizza, Merichka's and the Mansion. Guests will be served signature food items, beer, wine, water or soda at each location and the circuit will conclude back at the Mansion for dessert, coffee and a cash bar.

Local celebrities will serve as hosts and hostesses aboard the buses. There will also be a silent auction, a 50/50 Split the Pot Raffle and more. All proceeds will support the programs and services at the Mission.

**For more details about Jump on the Bus or Hop on the Bus, please contact Kelsey Teegen at 815-722-5780 ext. 226.**



# Stress Buster

*How you helped this young single mom find relief for her family*

**C**arena's life was already stressful enough as a single mother of two young children, a 3-year-old boy and a 2-year-old girl.

Her son has autism, which made parenting even more challenging. Then she learned that their musty, moldy old apartment was contaminated with lead, and that her son had a potentially serious case of lead poisoning.

Carena immediately picked up her kids and packed up her stuff. She couldn't get out of there fast enough.

Unfortunately, she had no place to go. And a limited income left her with few options.

So she came to MorningStar Mission for help.

Carena knew she'd find help here because of some family history — her mother had stayed with us when young Carena was placed in foster care.

"My parents were going through a divorce at the time," Carena says. "My dad had done something, and DCFS (child and family services) didn't think my mom was keeping us safe."

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**"I don't know what would have happened without MorningStar."**

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Carena didn't want to say much more about that. But knowing that her mom got help at MorningStar made it easier for Carena to know where to turn.

At MorningStar, Carena and her kids are living in the Women & Family Center, which provides shelter, food, clothing, case management, classes and support groups, while fostering a safe, productive environment. They also have provided diapers and wipes for her children — a huge relief for Carena's tight budget.

Carena's case manager is also helping her find financial assistance, including the possibility of disability income for her autistic son.

## **"Makes Me Happy"**

Before MorningStar, Carena's son often repeatedly banged his head against the wall or the floor — not uncommon for autistic kids. But in their time at the Mission, he has not banged his head even once.



*You helped this young single mom find relief for her family.*

Carena chalks that up to the peaceful environment here ... and her own peace of mind.

"Before we were here, I was under a lot of stress, and I think my son could sense that," she says. "But now that he sees I'm not under as much stress, he's also not stressed."

"That makes me really happy because I was really concerned when I'd see him bang his head, even when I picked him up. He's not doing that anymore."

MorningStar has also helped to get her son placed in a day care facility that specializes in working with kids who have autism.

Carena is preparing for next steps, which include returning to aesthetician school to get her degree. Once she has steady work again, she'll start looking for her own place.

In the meantime, she's grateful for the help she's found at the Mission ... and for supporters like you who make it possible.

"I don't know what would have happened without MorningStar," Carena says. "I'm just thankful I had this place to go to."

***Thank you for your love and compassion for young single moms like Carena!***

# Please join us in thanking our generous tribute gift donors

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☐ \$32.24 to provide 13 meals and other care.  
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