

A Day in the Life at  
**UGM**

**H**is name is Russell MacKenzie. He is the director of Food Services at Union Gospel Mission, a homeless shelter here in Spokane, whose purpose is to reach the lost and the hurting. His job title may put the focus on food, but a day in his life proves that the main ingredient in helping people doesn't grow in the ground, and can't be harvested from a field.

MacKenzie has food service background, having worked at the Washington State Convention and Trade Center in Seattle, and then for Hilton Worldwide. His team in Seattle won the Best Catered Event in the United States from NACE, the National Association of Catering Executives.

"I spent much of my life serving the rich," he says. "Later, I learned this trained me for my real vocation which I'm doing now: serving the poor with excellence. I have been a Christian for forty-four years. I go to Christ the King Anglican Church and love God with all my heart. It is His will to help the poor, so inwardly I am trying to serve Him as I work here. I am convinced that in work, a person exercises and fulfills the potential that God inscribed in his nature. Being created in the image of God, man is called to prolong God's work of creation by subduing the earth in all forms of labor. People know that praying for someone is a spiritual act of mercy, but physical work in the material world is also a vocation from God, such as a mother caring for her child. My job is like that; feeding the hungry is a corporal work of mercy."

It's not just the daily meals that he is responsible for, but he also produces special events for UGM, and oversees warehouse operations that receive, store, rotate and distribute bulk food to many organizations in the community. Last year he and UGM made 448,000 meals, plus gave away bulk food to organizations which distribute it to needy families, accounting for another 275,000 meals. MacKenzie is making a difference in the lives of people in our community. Here, in his own words, this is how that happens, one day at a time.



Tuesday, March 10, 2015

**6:00 a.m.**

My day starts at 6:00 a.m., when I get up. I am a creature of habit. A "best practices" guy. I thrive when processes themselves (the individual work steps) are correct, not just achieving good outcomes. So I've developed routines at home, at work and internally inside my heart, spiritually.

**6:30 a.m.**

I start a load of laundry, empty the dishwasher from last night, and then get our ten-year-old, Katie, out of bed. Katie has to rise early to get to school on time at the Oaks Academy in Spokane Valley because class starts at 8:00 a.m. Katie makes her own school lunch the night before, so I check it and touch it up as needed.

**7:00 a.m.**

My wife, Candy, is a dental hygienist. She and I pray before leaving for work. She makes her own breakfast and I make Katie's and mine. We read Scripture during breakfast, and talk about the day. Sometimes I quiz Katie on her spelling words or other lessons if she has a test that day

**RESULT: Christian growth and advice for the day**

**7:55 a.m.**

I park in the back lot at UGM and head inside. Every day in the UGM kitchen is busy. I have worked here five years now and have tracked kitchen activity. Literally, someone appears for some sort of transaction every ten minutes or less. People enter the kitchen, drive up to the back door or go to the front desk receptionist and ask for us. They're donating, picking up food from us, volunteering to work or asking if they can work off their community service hours for the Department of Corrections, here. It could be the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council dropping off a moose carcass, which we'll butcher and grind the meat; the Red Cross picking up coffee we brewed for the firemen and victims of a big fire in town. **RESULT: People and organizations helped every single day.**

**8:00 a.m.**

Today is extra busy because in addition to our regular meal production, we will produce

three special events, all here at UGM on Trent. The other events are a luncheon for the ACE Seminar on Adverse Childhood Experiences; making a dinner to be delivered offsite and served to 60 street kids by Doug Porter and Cup of Cool Water Ministry; and hosting an orientation class for people who want to volunteer at UGM. We were scheduled to host one of the City of Spokane's committee for a business lunch in our boardroom, but that canceled. In addition, we will wash food bins for Second Harvest. It is common for UGM to help other charitable organizations. **RESULT: Four agencies served.**

Last month we did 51 events in addition to making meals for the poor (an average of two events per day.)

Warehouse Manager Tod Randall has been running the food warehouse, freezers and coolers for an hour already, since 7:00 a.m. His crew of unpaid resident workers will receive about fifteen pallets of food today. Tod is a great success story. After a year and a half here, things are going really well for him. You would love

Tod immediately if you met him, for his big smile, high energy and positive attitude. I love Tod's dependability and skill. Tod has cute kids and he loves them so much. **RESULT: One God-dependent contributing member of society, a UGM success.**

UGM will give away bulk food to five organizations today who come here to pick it up. These small church ministries, food pantries and food banks hand out food to needy families. This is one more way UGM helps the community where we do business. **RESULT: Needy families fed.-**

**8:15 a.m.**

The biggie today is a luncheon for 100 guests attending the ACE Seminar. The challenge is how to feed 100 extra people quickly enough so it doesn't disturb our regular meal period for the homeless. I love the challenge and have full confidence.

I draw our plan on a chart that depicts the details of three days' worth of work. I review the chart with our paid cooks, Derek Mobley and Ernie Anderson,



7:00 a.m.



8:00 a.m.



8:30 a.m.

who will make the food, and with unpaid resident workers Keith Shiflett and Reese Issel who will help me set the dining room for the event **RESULT: Derek and Ernie (both were UGM residents) have productive paid jobs that enable them to help other guys get well. Keith and Reese give back to the charity that helped them.**

**8:30 a.m.**  
The UGM kitchen opened at 4:00 a.m. to brew coffee and begin breakfast. When you are driving to work at 8:00 a.m., our first shift has already worked four hours. The kitchen has been humming along for hours already. Over the next three hours, Derek and Ernie will make Chicken Alfredo with garlic bread for everyone eating lunch today at UGM, including the homeless and the outside guests. They'll prep salad greens tossed with chopped celery, sliced carrot and shredded cabbage. Derek makes 30 gallons of Chicken Alfredo with 40 percent heavy cream, butter and parmesan cheese. Wow!  
**RESULT: Excellent food coming out of this kitchen.**

**9:00 a.m.**  
Retired Texas Instruments guy Jerry Coatney, a volunteer at

UGM, arrives to take a UGM resident with him to pick up surplus Starbucks pastries in a UGM minivan. Jerry has learned that his real job is ministering to the guy who rides with him, more than picking up food products to feed our residents.  
**RESULT: Jerry served the poor. His assistant felt better after somebody truly listened. Residents get Starbucks pastries.**

**10:30 a.m.**  
A homeless guy drops by and we stop to give him a sack lunch and talk to him for a minute because lunch is not open yet. Our highest purpose is to help people, not just make food, so we always make time for individuals in need. UGM makes 50 sack lunches every morning for residents who miss a meal period because they go to work, school or an appointment. Also, if a man walks in late at night for the first time seeking shelter, he may not have eaten for several days, so we have food available 24-7.  
**RESULT: One hungry man fed.**

**11:00 a.m.**  
We open our regular hot and cold food lines for the residents who are in our Life Recovery Program and our Employment

Ready Program, as well as UGM staff and any visitors. They eat over the next thirty minutes and make use of our regular soup and salad bar that has twenty four toppings and a tasty soup. At 11:10 a.m. we put out the food on the ACE food stations so they will be ready to open at 11:30 a.m.  
**RESULT: 57 homeless and UGM staff fed.**

**11:30 a.m.**  
We quickly close our cafeteria style serving windows over the hot food and salad bar and open the food stations for the ACE guests. The doors open and I time the ACE guests in six food lines. The last guest walks away with a full plate after just twelve minutes. This is a big success for my department enabling the guests to resume class at 12 noon.  
**RESULT: 100 outside guests fed. Great PR for UGM. Visitors from other Missions learn by watching what we do.**

**12:00 p.m.**  
We quickly pull all the food off the special buffet stations and roll it back into the coolers. We open the regular hot food and cold food serving windows again at 12:05 p.m. and the next batch of homeless people come through for a beautiful Chicken Alfredo lunch. So the poor and

homeless got the same food as the ACE guests.  
**RESULT: 100 more homeless and poor fed.**  
Today we served 257 for lunch, including the homeless and poor and the seminar guests.

**1:15 p.m.**  
I go out to my minivan to run an errand for UGM and find a flat tire! I borrow a jack and lug wrench from Maintenance, remove the tire, borrow a UGM van and drop the tire off at Costco for repair. I pick up uniform shirts for a new employee then go back to work.  
**RESULT: Russell challenged to stay calm while crazy busy, keep head down and get it done. Uniforms supplied.**

**2:00 p.m.**  
We recently agreed to a three month stint washing grocery rescue food bins for Second Harvest during construction of their new demonstration kitchen. Every few days they send us a pallet of 24 inch by 24 inch bins which their crew uses to collect surplus food from grocery stores. We wash, rinse and sanitize the bins, then palletize them, and Second Harvest forklifts the pallet back home. They lost their washing station during construction,

so Drew Meuer called on us to help them because we are good friends. We thank God for enabling us to run a strong, organized operation capable of taking on a new initiative like this and assist Second Harvest.  
**RESULT: Another agency served by UGM.**

**2:30 p.m.**  
On the second Tuesday every month, Doug Porter comes to UGM and uses our kitchen to make a dinner for 60 street kids as part of a ministry called Cup of Cool Water. UGM forms coalitions, works with many other organizations, and helps groups that are not part of UGM to serve the poor like we do. Doug makes the meal here at UGM then transports it across the city and serves it to the kids. Doug says many of the kids are regulars who look forward to his dinners as their best meal of the month.  
**RESULT: Street kids get great meal. UGM forms stronger tie to Cup of Cool Water.**

**2:45 p.m.**  
Dick stopped by and donated three cases of Mother's Cookies. Dick is 92 years old and a generous guy. I mean, you have no idea. He basically donated an entire summer camp to our

ministry. He spends his whole life praying for others.  
**RESULT: Dick rewarded in Heaven, again.**

**4:00 p.m.**  
The dining room crew has set up for dinner which begins at 5:00 p.m. UGM is the only charity in town that is open to the public and serves free lunch and dinner seven days a week. Second Harvest holds meetings called Spokane Table where all the charities in town that serve meals can come together to discuss best practices. We have a chart that shows 109 free meal periods in Spokane every week produced by various churches and ministries like ours. There is no reason for anyone to go hungry in Spokane.  
**RESULT: Our relationship with Second Harvest is strengthened. The poor are fed by 109 charity breakfasts, lunches and dinners in Spokane this week.**

**4:15 p.m.**  
I use the borrowed van to pick up my tire at Costco. I install the tire, and return the jack, lug wrench and vehicle to our maintenance department.  
**RESULT: UGM serves me today by loaning me tools and a van.**

**5:00 p.m.**  
Dinner opens and we serve

pasta and marinara. Barry works off his community service hours for the Department of Corrections by serving pasta on our hot line at dinner.  
**RESULT: Barry earns a letter on our letterhead confirming he completed required hours. Homeless families with kids get fed.**

Volunteers like Dinah and Woody Widmer and Larry and Mary Kay Kauffman come to UGM and serve meals all the time.  
**RESULT: Volunteers are energized and fulfilled.**

**5:15 p.m.**  
I jump off the speeding freight train and walk out the door with a sense of accomplishment. I see the underprivileged families every day who bring their children here for dinner. I'm proud that we're working hard to not just feed them but make really great food for them.

The work of setting up for the ACE conference helped some guys here learn a good work ethic today, and if they paid attention, how to set a room for a banquet event. This is a marketable job skill. I reminded the guys of that as we were working together. The basic job skills we teach every day include coming to work on time, wearing your uniform, telling

the truth and owning a task until it's finished.  
**RESULT: Job skills taught and discussed.**

**5:30 p.m.**  
I get home and begin making chicken stir fry for dinner, but I reward myself with a great plate of crab cakes, fruit and celery stuffed with crunchy peanut butter. Nobody else at home likes crab cakes, or I'd make them some. Imagine that!  
**RESULT: Great food at home, too. My cup runneth over.**

**6:00 p.m.**  
To relax, I turn on the Gonzaga basketball game. Tonight is the WCC tournament final. I run between the kitchen and living room, trying to cook and watch the first half at the same time.  
**RESULT: Gonzaga wins!**

**9:00 p.m.**  
I sit down and correct Katie's math homework before going to bed.  
**RESULT: My own family helped, too.**

**RESULT: God and I worked together today to help people. It is more blessed to give than to receive.** 🙏



9:00 a.m.



11:00 a.m.



2:00 p.m.



2:45 p.m.



5:00 p.m.



9:00 p.m.