Dr Chad Audi
President & CEO of Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries

Dr. Chad Audi is an experienced senior executive with over 23 years of executive management experience and recognition as a visionary and dynamic leader in non-profit and for-profit sectors.

For nearly 2 decades, he has served as an accomplished President and Chief Executive Officer of Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries (DRMM), a not-for-profit organization cited by the U.S. News and World Report as the 13th largest substance abuse treatment center in the U.S, and reputed as one of the largest Rescue Missions in the world.

A sought-after high impact trainer and consultant in effective leadership, marketing, communications, corporate governance, conflict resolution and negotiation, Dr. Chad Audi has delivered well received lectures and trainings at universities, professional associations, top businesses and nonprofits in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and other countries.
Tell us a little bit about the Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries.

Founded in 1909 as a Christian nonprofit soup kitchen for the homeless, the Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries has grown to become one of the largest rescue missions in the US, providing daily wrap-around services to over 22,000 domestic violence victims, homeless veterans, at-risk youth, returning citizens, and substance use disorder clients at its various locations in five Michigan counties. Each day, with the help of about 400 (full and part-time) staff members, over 13,000 volunteers, and many young and elderly donors, we bring thousands of women, children and men closer to the stability and self-reliance they so desperately need.

In what ways does the Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries improve the life of the vulnerable people of Detroit?

We have many 24/7 services aimed at helping them gain stability, sobriety and self-reliance. The ground zero is our emergency shelter services for men and women who are homeless, providing them decent clothing, soothing beds, nutritious meals and bespoke life-enrichment services aimed at helping them stand on their feet again.

Such services become more pronounced in the very cold winter months. With our services, no homeless person should have frostbite or die in the cold streets of the Detroit area. People come to our doors for help or we pick them from the streets, if alerted about their situation, and they agree to come with us. On some days in the winter season, our street outreach team get as many as 300 calls to pick up homeless persons and bring them to our emergency shelters.

There are two sacrosanct aspects of our corporate culture here at the Detroit Rescue Mission. The first is that our staff members do not turn away anybody that comes to us for help. After all, we exist as an organization to help those in need, the “least of these” in our community. The second is that everyone under our care must be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. Yes, everyone - young or old, rich or poor - deserves dignity and respect.

And for many of our clients, that’s so important because their difficult circumstances have dealt a heavy blow to their self-esteem. So, imagine how good they feel when they are treated well. Besides, as the Holy Book says, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you!” If I were homeless, I would certainly want to be treated well. I believe the same expectation applies to everybody else.

Almost 24 years later, I am glad I made that decision. You can’t put a price tag on changing lives for the better, can you?

In what ways has the Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries helped people during the current global pandemic?

In this pandemic, the need has become even greater in our target population. Thus, apart from the daily wrap-around services we provide to at-risk children, homeless veterans, domestic violence victims, returning citizens and substance use disorder clients, we’ve had to open new sites for over-flow and quarantine, serve more hot meals, sanitize common areas more frequently, and promote handwashing and social distancing, among others.

All that, as you can imagine, tripled our operational costs. But we keep doing the needful.

What motivated you about the amazing work you do with the organisation?

We are motivated by the love we have for people and the desire to help them turn their lives around. And the more lives we touch and transform, the more motivated we are to do more.

What does this award mean to you?

Obviously, we don’t do what we do for any accolade but it’s good once in a while to be appreciated for our ceaseless efforts in touching and transforming precious lives around us.

So, the award is a pat on the back for our deep-seated empathy and compassion that have brought positive change to tens of thousands. And though we’ve won many awards over the years, this one is special because, apart from coming from one of my favourite cities in the world, it feels like an honour bestowed by unfettered peers who are also making a difference in their own areas. I can’t wait to place the plaque on my office wall.

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