

FROM THE CEO'S DESK:
HAPPY SECOND ANNIVERSARY!



Bruce W. Spangler, CEO

The Foyer celebrates its second anniversary this month.

As a low-barrier, housing-focused shelter, it is designed to provide a service to those who do not access a traditional shelter, like Lisa in the cover story. The smaller space is more conducive for individuals who have difficulty with large groups and live with post-traumatic stress disorder. For those with companion pets, crates are available as an incentive to seek indoor shelter. We also know that some "pair-up" on the streets for safety reasons. The Foyer is small enough for partners to always be within sight. Apart from the shelter, permanent housing is the long-term goal for each participant and a housing case manager is assigned to help navigate the process.

The ribbon-cutting for the opening in December 2019 concluded with the following blessing.

We ask blessings on this safe place that we name, The Foyer.

May this building be a tool to continue the excellent work of helping hands, loving hearts, and open minds.

May this building be a safe harbor for all who need a place to be warm, secure, and empowered.

May those who find evening and nightly rest know that they are loved and are respected.

May this building be the starting point to the journey of home.

And once home, may each find a community where they are loved and can love.

Also, we give thanks to the generous people who made this place possible.

And we are grateful for the continued benevolence and kindness of a community that commits to end and prevent homelessness.

We ask for a blessing on this place, The Foyer.

The Foyer is a place where dreams of a prime rib meal can become a reality!

Happy Holidays,

Bruce W. Spangler
Bruce

VOLUNTEER MINISTRY CENTER
VMC
Opening Doors for a Better Tomorrow

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ANGEL ORNAMENTS

The traditional VMC Angel ornament is once again available this holiday season. This small foil Angel is a lovely symbol which indicates that you have given a gift to VMC in honor of the recipient. The Angel is appropriate for use as an ornament or a gift enclosure and will provide a lasting remembrance of your thoughtfulness. This year's quote is:

"Angels live among us. Sometimes they hide their wings but there is no disguising the peace and hope they bring."

— Unknown



Angels are the perfect gift for family and friends, as well as neighbors, service people and anyone whom you would like to recognize in a special way. Angels are also a touching way to honor the memory of a loved one. Angels are available for any donation amount of \$5.00 or more and can be ordered by calling 865-524-3926 or by stopping by the VMC offices at 511 North Broadway, Knoxville, TN 37917.

THE FOYER CELEBRATES ITS 2ND ANNIVERSARY ON DECEMBER 19TH!

The Foyer is the only housing-focused low-barrier overnight emergency shelter in our community. Since its official opening on December 19, 2019, 235 of our most vulnerable homeless neighbors have received overnight shelter with housing focused case management services. Of those, 29 achieved permanent housing, 2 went to a transitional housing program, 4 went to live with family or friends, and 3 went to substance abuse treatment.



In addition, for those living in camps and who are extremely ambivalent about staying inside, 50% of those remained in shelter for a month or longer. The Foyer is definitely a success in ending the experience of homelessness for the most vulnerable and hard to reach of our community's homeless neighbors.



Sponsor a Bed at The Foyer for \$250.00 and be a part of the vision to provide safety and shelter to the most vulnerable of our homeless neighbors.

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December 2021

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The *Journey*
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THE TASTE OF HOME

"Once you get your place, what will be the first meal that you will prepare?" Lisa had an answer ready with no need to think about it. She had already been thinking about it.

Lisa retells a conversation she had with several other participants in our low-barrier, housing-focused emergency shelter, The Foyer, as they sat around the table sharing, dreaming about a meal of their choosing and making.

Lisa spent nearly a year at The Foyer while working with her case manager Stephanie. But her experience of homelessness stretches over the previous four years.

After her marriage of 20 years ended, she moved into a rental townhouse which the

owner later sold. She then began a three-year journey living in motels and hotels until her money was exhausted.

With her possessions in storage, she found her only alternative was to live in her car. "I tried to find the spaces and places where I felt safe to spend the night. I remember that first night. I cried and probably cried many times. I made sure I had my pepper spray at hand." Thrust in total uncertainty by living in her car, she became leary of anyone. "I just don't know who to trust."

She expressed thankfulness for a stranger who let her take a once-a-week shower at a local gym. When the acquaintance moved, losing access to the gym, Lisa recalls with a sense of initiative and assertiveness, "I would scrape together enough money to pay for a shower at a truck stop."

She admitted that the shadow of depression was always a step ahead or behind her. "Some days, I just did not know what to do next. I did tell myself that I needed to get out of bed (the seat of her car) to feed my cat."

For many living amid poverty and homelessness, simple stumbles in life can snowball into catastrophes. Lisa revisited a time she left her car in the post office parking lot to check her mail. When she returned, someone had smashed her passenger side front window and taken her purse with all her identifications, driver's license, and credit cards.

"I was devastated. Someone helped me patch up the window. But that night was cold and rainy, and I knew that the temperatures would continue to drop. I did not want to subject my cat to the freezing environment, so I surrendered her to Young-Williams. I had her for 13 to 14 years, and it was hard to give her up. I was relieved to learn that she was quickly adopted."

There is an irony to this part of Lisa's

continued inside...



A TIME TO GIVE THANKS

Throughout 2021 VMC has continued to assist those experiencing homelessness into housing and provide much needed assistance for those in crisis to maintain their housing. Our dedicated staff are a team of fearless warriors who have doubled their duties during the pandemic in order to help the most vulnerable of our community. Despite the constant changes and what 2021 has thrown at us, our blessings have been many and for that, we give THANKS!!

THANK YOU - WE NOW HAVE A HOME



Michael, Janelle, and their emotional support dog, Ms. Piggy, are thrilled to celebrate the holidays in their new apartment. They are thankful for the housing support services VMC provided to assist them in achieving housing and in navigating the disability process for Michael and his declining health. They now have health insurance and income to sustain their housing for the long-term.



Albert (aka Mississippi) eagerly opens the door to his new apartment after living on the streets on and off for almost 20 years. VMC's street outreach staff worked with Albert for several years and are excited to say: Welcome Home Albert!!



William now has his own apartment thanks to the assistance he received from Street Outreach Case Worker Sabrina Greene and the housing support services staff of the VMC Resource Center. He is very grateful to the staff at VMC who helped him on his Journey Home!

HELP SOMEONE HOME WITH A YEAR END GIFT!

THOUGHTFUL GIVING BENEFITS EVERYONE and provides a future for the programs and services offered at the Volunteer Ministry Center. As we approach the end of 2021, we hope you will consider making a year-end gift to VMC. Whether your gift is made through a bank account, stock, a will, trust, or IRA, you can be assured that your gift will have an impact on the lives of the poor and homeless of our community. Your faithful support is vital to the continuation and success of our programs, and we sincerely appreciate your thoughtful consideration of a year-end gift to VMC.



Jimmy recently celebrated Two Years in housing after many years of homelessness and living on the streets. He is grateful to VMC for the assistance provided for him to achieve housing. The artwork he holds shares his sentiment that Home is Where the Heart Is!



William lost his long-term housing when rents escalated and he could no longer pay the rent. William lived in his truck for a significant period of time before entering VMC's housing program. He now has an apartment and is thankful to have a home for the holidays.

THE TASTE OF HOME CONT.

story: her companion pet has a home; she does not.

After a series of leg infections, possibly due to extended periods of sitting in her car, she found herself at UT Medical Center. While at the hospital and sharing her experience of homelessness in a car, a social worker reached out to Dylr, one of VMC's Street Outreach workers. Dylr responded to the referral, connecting Lisa with The Foyer and the Resource Center to secure permanent housing. It is at the Resource Center that Stephanie was assigned to assist her.

"Stephanie and I worked hard to find a place." After five failed attempts to secure a lease due to affordability, she finally secured an apartment at Flenniken Landing, signing her lease on September 22, 2021.

From the onset of living in weekly rentals to a car to The Foyer to Flenniken Landing was a journey of five years in the making.

The days of feeling "watched" but not seen due to her experience of

homelessness are now over. The long journey home can leave its scars, but even so, there is a reason to celebrate.

"Many nights, we would sit around the table and share our dreams of that first meal," Lisa said, pausing with a touch of melancholy as she recalls her time at The Foyer. "Let me tell you about the menu of my first meal at Flenniken."

"Flenniken Landing has outside grills. I bought some charcoal briquettes, and I grilled a prime-rib steak. I could not believe how expensive the steak is now versus five years ago. But I forced myself to buy it," she says with a grin.

"To complement the steak, I prepared a baked potato and poured myself a glass of Merlot wine. No, make that two – I had two glasses of wine!"

Welcome home, Lisa.

By: Bruce W. Spangler

ENHANCED STREET OUTREACH SERVICES



VMC is expanding its Street Outreach services through the addition of shower trailers to provide hygiene services to individuals experiencing homelessness. The City of Knoxville provided funding for the shower trailers which will serve neighbors who have connected with a Street Outreach Case Manager and are most in need of housing services. VMC is excited to not only meet a critical need but also to provide another way to connect and build relationships that lead to housing.

THANK YOU - FOR CARING AND SHARING



Every month, Remote Area Medical comes to VMC to do eye exams and provide glasses for our homeless neighbors. What better gift to receive than the gift of sight!



This artwork was displayed at the First Annual VMC Art Show coordinated by VMC Board Chair Nancy Friedrich. For several months, Nancy has been conducting art classes for neighbors who are members of the VMC Resource Center. The creativity has been astounding and our neighbors were excited to have their artwork displayed.



Minvilla Manor residents were provided Thanksgiving Baskets from Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church. Pictured here are T and Dustin, both of whom cooked up a fantastic meal on Thanksgiving Day!

BANK OF AMERICA NAMES VOLUNTEER MINISTRY CENTER A NEIGHBORHOOD CHAMPION

Volunteer Ministry Center (VMC) has been named as the 2021 Bank of America Neighborhood Champion for its work in ending homelessness and addressing the affordable housing crisis in Knoxville. Its latest project, Caswell Manor, will increase the number of permanent supportive housing units in the city, giving residents the opportunity to climb the economic ladder, many for the first time in their lives.

As part of the program, VMC will receive \$50,000 in grant support and an opportunity for engagement in virtual leadership training delivered by experts in the nonprofit sector on topics like human capital management, increasing financial sustainability and storytelling.

"Volunteer Ministry Center is not only serving the immediate needs of our neighbors experiencing homelessness, but also working to help provide a path forward to economic mobility," said Terry Cline, President, Bank of America Knoxville. "The expansion of its permanent, affordable housing model is a game changer in our community."

The grant will enable VMC to continue the design, planning, and development of 48 one-bedroom apartments at Caswell Manor, currently under construction at the intersection of East Fifth Avenue and Winona Street.

Alongside Knoxville, Bank of America will bring the program to over 42 additional communities across the U.S. this fall as part of its commitment to investing in the long-term health of communities. The Neighborhood Champions program is invitation-only for nonprofits who are poised to take their work to the next level. Leading members of the community participated in a collaborative selection process to identify this year's awardee.

