

FROM THE CEO'S DESK:
"YOU CAN'T PUSH A STRING"



Bruce W. Spangler, CEO

I trust you have taken the time to read Peter Keese's address that was given during our Annual Dinner this past March. Peter reminds us that the Volunteer Ministry Center defines "success" in the offering, recognition, and respect given to every individual that starts by hearing their story. Peter gave us a glimpse into the stories of Nakesha and Trudy. Trudy may not be the most pleasant, affable, and agreeable person. She might be on some days, but not most. I cringe at the thought of the torment that I perceive Trudy experiences. I want to know more about her story, or so I think. Knowing or not knowing her story, however, as Peter insists, Trudy deserves respect.

Let me now introduce you to Heather and George.

Their story of the experience of homelessness is unique because it is their story. Living in a car has its challenges. Yet their story is so similar to the 998 others who preceded them. In his address, Peter anticipated the 1,000th person to achieve housing through our Resource Center. Heather and George are the 999th and 1000th persons who achieved permanent housing through the Resource Center.



There seems to be quite a contrast between Trudy's experience and Heather and George's. We desire something much better for Trudy. We celebrate Heather and George's "something" better – housing! Yet, they are respected for their choices. As a former colleague of mine, Stan Frazier, often reminded me, "you can't push a string." This was his way of saying that you can't make decisions for others, no matter how well intended. However, one must respect the "string."

Echoing Peter's thanks, "your dollars have done—and do—wonders," respectfully!

Peace,

Bruce W. Spangler

Rev. Bruce W. Spangler
Chief Executive Officer

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"YOU HAVE GIVEN GENEROUSLY"

THIS ADDRESS WAS GIVEN BY REVEREND PETER KEESE,
VMC BOARD CHAIR, AT THE ANNUAL THANK YOU DINNER IN MARCH 2018



At the base of the Helmsley Building in Midtown Manhattan, a woman passing by, named Pamela J. Dearden (PJ), noticed a woman, seemingly oblivious to the rain and her surroundings, standing on a 36-square-foot sidewalk grate she had chosen as her home.

In time PJ found out that the woman's name was Nakesha. PJ gave her an umbrella that day and that was the start of a sort of friendship. After that, PJ would stop and talk with her from time to time, and sometimes give her a sandwich or coffee. Their relationship developed.

Nakesha was both very intelligent and highly educated; she and PJ would sometimes have lively discussions about books they had both read. PJ would regularly urge Nakesha to leave that place to seek help, to seek the safety of a shelter. Nakesha always refused.

There was a long and very touching story about Nakesha in the New York Times a couple of weeks ago about how this vivacious dancer and leader in high school and college had over time descended into some kind of madness and now lived on that grate on a sidewalk in mid-town Manhattan.

Over the years there developed a small group of people who would offer kindnesses as PJ did; and they would try to cajole Nakesha to seek help. 'Go to a shelter', they said. She always refused.

When I read that story, I thought of Trudy (not her real name) who stays on the streets of Knoxville—our downtown streets—right now. Trudy is a tiny little lady, very thin, very few teeth in her head. She talks a lot and very fast; she chatters, and I can't understand a thing she says. She can be real sweet sometimes; and wildly angry sometimes. She panhandles. She'll sometimes stand in the middle of an intersection with traffic going by (or stopping for fear of hitting her). She might be fully clothed, or not. The police will come and take her away. But soon she's back where she lives—on the streets.

This may seem an odd way to begin this talk meant to be a thank you, but I'll get to that directly.

I begin this way, because it occurs to me that if you drive from town past the Knox Area Rescue Ministry and look under the bridge you'll see lots of people like Nakesha and Trudy. And you might say to yourself, 'I've given generously to the Volunteer Ministry Center to help get folks who are without a home into a home; why are all these people here?'

And you have given generously. So don't worry, the bottom line of my talk is not going to be that you need to give more.

No, in fact, I'm about to recount the many wonders your dollars perform.

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... CONTINUED FROM FRONT

I begin with this story about some who refuse to go into a shelter. Those of you who read Bruce's introductory piece in our latest newsletter know that a shelter is quite definitely not a safe place for those who can't tolerate being in a crowd of people. For many folks, such a situation as a crowded shelter is not safe, perhaps because of the external realities of the dangers of so many people crowded together or because of the internal demons, or both. In an odd way, then, Nakesha's choice to live on that grate made sense.

So what I mean to tell you is how your dollars do such wonderful things, even for the Nakesha's and the Trudy's.

Not everybody will agree that it was right not to force Nakesha into a shelter or that it is right not to force Trudy.

But the first principle of the work that you support at the Volunteer Ministry Center is respect—respect for the individual, as an individual.

Nakesha couldn't tolerate shelter life; Trudy can't. We respect that and we respect Trudy—as she is.

Trudy comes to the Refuge regularly. Your dollars created and now support the Refuge, the place where she can come; where we give her clothes and a place to be for a while. And listen to her, and pay attention to her, and talk to her. On my Thursday volunteer day two or three weeks ago, Trudy came in; as usual she was chattering away, and, as usual, I couldn't understand anything she said. There were several people in our lobby—other people currently without a home—who obviously knew Trudy. I don't know if they could make any better sense of her rapid chatter, but, in a way, they seemed to understand her, and they responded with warmth and affirmation and a 'God Bless you' as she walked out the door.

Your dollars provide a space and a community that accepts Trudy as she is and respects her as she is—a place and a community that both says and is a blessing. Your dollars make that happen.

Your dollars do lots of good things. You know that sometime this year we expect to achieve helping our 1,000th person in to permanent supportive housing. Your dollars have created Minvilla; more importantly now your dollars pay our case managers who have the know-how to get people—when they decide they are ready—(respect)—into

Minvilla or other permanent home situations. That's the work of our Resource Center. Your dollars built and now support the Resource Center.

I work in the Refuge. Your dollars provide a staff person to coordinate us volunteers; your dollars provide a welcoming lobby—a safe place for people to be for a while—your dollars provide private office spaces where volunteers can have a private conversation with each person. Respect.

But in addition to a bit of safe shelter for people we call homeless, your dollars provide funds to help us volunteers pay the last bit of a light bill or rent—so as to prevent people losing their homes. Or we help folks get an ID, without which they can't work, or a birth certificate, so they can get into housing or their kids into school.

BUT, we don't give one piece of clothing, or one voucher for rent or utilities or ID's, we don't give any kind of material assistance without having a conversation. It's all about respect: we take each and every person seriously—as deserving of respect as a fellow human. The conversation is at least as important as the material aid. It says, you are a person—currently homeless—but homeless is not your name or your definition; you have a name and a story all your own.

We say to Joe or Sam or Sarah, "tell me your story; I'm interested in you". I think people hear their own story in a new way—as meaning something—when they experience somebody else really listening. Each person has a story to tell. And we volunteers are grateful for the dollars you provide for the place and the opportunity you give them to tell, and us to hear, the stories.

Back to Nakesha and Trudy. We might wish, for their sake as well as for ours, that they wouldn't sleep on the streets. But, in addition to supporting the good work of our case managers in the Resource Center, and the good work of the volunteers in the Refuge, your dollars also do good work—they are not wasted—if they allow us to honor and respect Nakesha and Trudy in perhaps the only way they can receive that honor and respect.

Your dollars have done—and do—wonders. And we're here tonight to say a heartfelt thank you for your remarkable generosity.

Thank you.

WE HAVE A HOME NOW!



Sarah and Vincent, pictured with their case manager, Daryl Higdon, are happy to have a home for themselves and their children.



It's a special day for Tanka as she opens the door to her apartment.



With the help she received in the VMC Resource Center, Mellownice signs the lease to her apartment.



After a long time on the streets, William moved into his own apartment with the assistance provided by VMC case managers Opal Bryant and Katlyn Gass.



Martha worked hard to achieve housing and signs the lease to her very own apartment.

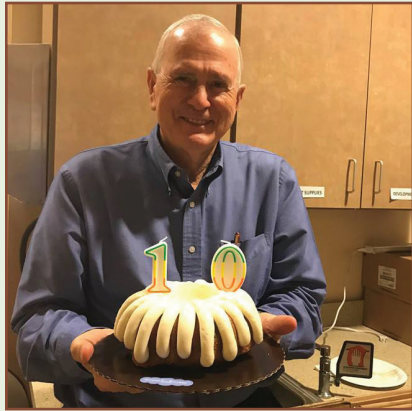


Chris proudly shows off the key to his apartment presented to him by VMC case manager Katlyn Gass.

1,000 HOUSING PLACEMENTS SINCE 2007!

Gregory	David	Zhane	Larry	George	Derek	Teresa	James	Michael	Glen	Billy
Ronald	Jeffrey	Christopher	Jerri	Charles	Sherry	Denise	Micha	Lonette	Christi	George
Brandon	Latoya	Erica	Mae	Donnie	Darrell	Robert	Steven	Jason	Ernest	Danny
James	Ricky	Timmy	Robert	Donald	Jacob	Josua	David	Randall	Randy	Diane
Gary	Milton	Steven	James	Walter	Barbara	Gary	Karen	Ronald	Michael	John
Rolando	Joseph	Richard	Dennis	Mary	Earl	Joseph	Carol	Charles	Frank	Stephen
Diana	Gregg	Analicia	Caitlin	Larry	Ray	Florence	Tina	Robert	Lajania	Andrew
Gregory	Eric	Martha	Kristen	Kim	Brett	Magdaleno	Helen	John	Leonard	Christopher
Charles	William	Bettina	Roger	Kenneth	Warren	Betty	Deborah	Willie	Joanne	James
Joshua	Michael	Connie	John	Daniel	Kesha	Nathaniel	Charles	Michelle	Walter	Wesley
Gerald	Christopher	Summer-Lee	Patricia	Joshua	Ken	Charles	James	Steven	Carlton	Katherine
Joseph	Marvin	Mellownice	Valerie	Chauncey	Susan	Richard	Kyle	Bruce	Ronnie	Charles
Aimee	Christopher	Robert	Andre	Michael	Duane	Michael	Brett	Raymond	Julia	Jerry
Jerry	William	Edward	Katy	Lawrence	Jimmy	David	William	Archie	Leslie	John
Sean	Robert	Tanka	Stevella	Jackie	Robert	John	William	Timothy	Corlisa	Stacy
Sandra	Tara	Teresa	Jimmy	David	Shannon	David	Naomi	Ronnie	Todd	Eacie
Julian	Brittany	Deborah	Donna	Earl	Tammy	James	James	Sharon	Mandie	Lisa
Jeanne	Farley	Donald	John	James	Jamesena	Gracie	Gary	Thadis	Ernest	John
Amy	Thomas	William	Joyce	Cynthia	Margaret	Alexander	Maurice	John	David	Sarah
Michael	DeAngelo	Alfonse	Rick	Gerald	Michael	Matthew	Latandra	Clarence	Julie	Vicki
Jennifer	Charles	Vincent	Carl	Guy	Randy	David	Sharon	Walton	Whitney	John
Mugabe	Mark	Frank	William	Melvin	Jackie	Joseph	Thomas	Lynne	Calvin	Thurman
Joshua	Billy	Linda	Carolyn	Pernell	John	Aaron	Harry	Nicolas	Nathan	Kristie
Debbie	Carl	Vincent	Stanley	Rodney	Lisa	Thomas	William	Joseph	Jeremy	Barry
Danny	Timothy	Gordon	Lori	Bose	Thomas	Geneva	Tricia	James	John	Christopher
Jonathan	Ramatu	Melissa	James	Martha	Ingred	Tammy	David	Elbert	Anthony	Candace
Wayne	Kyle	George	Vivian	Charles	Jeff	Richard	Edward	Carol	Thomas	Tapessa
Matthew	Vernon	Heather	Ronald	Tyson	Wayne	Cordia	David	Charles	Anthony	Dale
Ronald	Deane	Phillip	Willie	Tammy	Roger	Rebecca	Gary	Rebecca	Gary	Brinsfield
Marzena	Michell	Gail	Wayne	Norman	William	John	Arnold	Teresa	Gregg	Posetta
Denise	Alan	Doctor	Charles	Eric	Glenda	Mark	Randy	Donna	Juanita	Andrew
Michael	Richard	Kevin	Jackie	Kenneth	Joseph	Anthony	Ricky	Sasha	James	Patrick
Belinda	Joseph	Timothy	Richard	Robert	David	Karl	Jamar	John	Jennifer	Charles
Timothy	George	Frederick	Shaun	Robert	Vincent	Tyrone	Lara	John	Jennifer	Jeffery
Nokoma	John	Kathleen	Sue	Robert	Phillip	Tiffany	Terry	Craig	Annette	Kathy
Oscar	Alisha	Robert	Sentron	Susan	Johnny	John	Malik	John	Annie	Michael
Lula	Ricterio	Jeffrey Brian	Troy	Jenaya	Alvaro	Phillip	John	Kelly	Johanna	Harold
Rickshauna	Kenneth	Mark	Barbara	Dorothy	Marquitta	Don	Darrell	William	Dawn	Antonetta
Anthony	Kevin	Shavar	Edward	Mary	Thurman	Debra	Debra	Cameron	Leslie	Abdul
Deirda	Cathy	Philip	Beverly	Sheila	John	Brenda	John	Johnny	Darryl	Larry
Michael	Elizabeth	Jimmy	Dewayne	Melvin	David	David	David	Holly	Misty	Conley
Sean	Carmen	Brenda	Ronald	Marilyn	John	Thomas	Steve	Danny	Missisa	Michael
Bernice	Kevin	Clayton	Frank	Nancy	David	Sarah	Jerry	Robert	Dennis	Shianne
Joseph	William	James	Teresa	Lonzetta	Linda	Melody	Norma	Richard	Kenneth	Mark
Sheila	James	Warren	Duffiny	Jon	Lloyd	Joshua	Sammy	Carrie	Jeffery	Kathy
Larry	Patricia	Tommy	Tommy	Cynthia	Brandy	Sumner-Lee	Sumner-Lee	Ronnie	Kimberly	Charles
Dennis	Rosevelt	Archie	Michael	Daniel	Douglas	Paul	Clark	Charles	Kenneth	Josh
Robert	Frederick	Dan	Geraldine	Donald	Paul	Steven	Charles	Brenda	Michael	David
Barbara	William	Mary Ann	Lavana	Sandra	Cassie	Mamie	Heath	Jeffery	Richard	Leo
Eddie	Pamela	Rick	Jeff	Lawrence	David	Angela	Thomas	Jessica	Kris	Terry
Connie	Donald	Tazzie	Louis	Michael	William	Cecil	Charles	Earl	Kenneth	Julie
Danny	Doyle	Barbara	James	Tracey	James	Issac	Noah	Michael	Henry	John
Wanda	Arnold	William	Jeff	Johnny	James	James	Carol	Tracey	Elaina	Steven
Elizabeth	Donnie	Kim	Ray	Christopher	Sherrie	Joshua	Edith	David	Gregory	John
Willie	James	Thomas	Willetta	Gail	Dianne	Gloria	Raymond	Donivalde	Dannie	Benjamin
Stephen	Alvin	Felix	Michael	Cheryl	Tracey	Jeffrey	Willie	Anson	Lisa	Sabrina
Thomas	Cory	Kellye	William	Stephen	Teddy	Ellen	Belinda	Johnny	Isaac	Troy
Charles	Joe	Linda	Craig	Demetrius	Charles	Kelvin	Judy	Steven	Steven	Alicia
Robert	Steven	Peter	Michael	Mark	Brian	Douglas	Rocky	Jane	John	Joshua
Joe	Jamie	Breina	Anthony	Sum	Cornellia	David	Mae	Garry	Earlene	Richard
Lowery	Gustav	Tommy	John	Emmitt	Ginger	Robert	William	Evan	Anthony	Jerry
Bishop	Scottie	Nancy	Johnnie	Richard	Jennifer	Preston	Virginia	Robert	Eddie	Elton
Heather	Steven	Nancy	Johnnie	Anthony	Matthew	Cynthia	Daniel	Kevin	Kevin	Pamela
Andra	William	Rick	Alexander	James	Ricky	Robert	Eric	Patricia	Bill	Marnie
Chelsea	Tommy	Kendall	Eric	Jerome	Harold	Nancy	Elmo	Theresa	Anthony	Kenneth
Christopher	Lewis	Debra	James	Wesley	Jeremy	Christis	Michael	Thaddeus	John	Raymond
Morgan	Nathaniel	David	James	Willie	Regina	Chris	James	Michael	Charles	Pamela
William	Dorothy	Debra	Jeannine	Wesley	Eric	John	James	Debra	William	Kenneth
Brian	Stooksbury	Debbie	Raquel	William	Willie	Rebecca	Patricia	Ralph	Raymond	Christopher
Jeffrey	Charles	Frank	Dennis	Lonzeeta	Fred	Jerry	Hoyt	Anthony	Nicholas	Christina
Leon	Glennis	Robert	Vincent	Robert	Robert	Damon	Mark	Richard	David	Timothy
Jean	George	Joseph	Randy	Joseph	Vicki	Lola	Lynn	Randy	David	Darrel
Lowery	Regina	John	Kenneth	Annie	Ken	James	Glesha	James	William	Larry
Janice	Edward	Joanne	Marilyn	Robert	Gary	Joshua	Sonya	Johnny	Perry	Irvin
Curtis	Arthur	Ronald	Samantha	Pandora	Larry	Dylan	Charles	Susanah	Henry	Brandon
Wayne	Nicholas	Glenn	Kenneth	Glenn	Gary	Robert	Gregory	Steven	Gregory	Jeffery
Jennifer	Robbin	James	Glenda	Phillip	Linda	Candance	Diane	Barney	Kevin	Laura
Pauline	Terry	Paula	Jackie	Chupong	Kathleen	Michael	Robert	Tonya	James	Nathan
Charles	Georgeann	Marjorie	Joseph	Steve	Eugene	Teresa	Eugene	James	Kevin	Guerry
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Shaun	Arvin	Paul	Edmond	Tracie	Nancy	Child	Robert	JoBeth	John	Chris
Billy	Scott	Billy	Lillian	Ken	Jeffrey	Child	Greg	Robert	Claude	Robert
William	Racheal	Tracy	John	James	Edward	Child	Harvey	Raymond	Eleanor	David
Richard	Shirley	Krystal	Barbara	Ted	Jessica	Child	Heaverly	Randy	Randy	Don
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Robert	William	Kem	Danny	Elizabeth	Glenda	Lynn	Michael	John	Gerald	
Lisa	Sasha	Heather	Judith	David	Keisha	Deanna	Kerby	Jimmie	Julie	

VMC HAPPENINGS



Dr. Carter Davis retires following 10 years of dedicated volunteer service in the VMC Dental Clinic.



Beacon Insurance is one of the many meal groups providing a delicious meal for our Resource Center members.



Kathy Izard shared her inspiring story at the 2018 Carry the Torch Knoxville event.



VMC staff celebrate the 1000th person achieving housing and moving from the streets to a home of their own.



Lula gets a new hairstyle during Spa Night hosted by the Women's Mentoring Group from Church of the Good Samaritan.



Melissa Gill assists Sheri Pender in picking out a piece of jewelry at her jewelry show to benefit VMC.

IMMEDIATE NEEDS

- Deodorant
- Toothpaste
- Toothbrushes
- Shampoo
- Socks
- Boxers for men - all sizes

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