

VOLUNTEER MINISTRY CENTER

VMC

Opening Doors for a Better Tomorrow

The Journey Home

www.vmcinc.org

THE CORNER OF HOPE

Over a decade ago and if heading south on N. Broadway at the intersection of Fifth Avenue, it was virtually impossible not to notice the deteriorating and vacant building at the time known as the "Fifth Avenue Motel."



The Old Fifth Avenue Motel

The structure, originally constructed in 1913 as town houses, was previously called Minvilla Manor. However, during the 1960s it had been converted to a motel. Through the decades it became infamously known for illicit activity and cited for numerous building code violations. Despite the public perception of a "crime spot" and deteriorating condition, the building retained its significant historic value as a local landmark. Though condemned in 2002 because of failure to meet required repairs, the intent was to preserve its architecture and historic value.



Minvilla Manor November 2010

During the lengthy vacancy after condemnation and the challenges that impeded redevelopment, the building became a structural eyesore with squatters filling the empty rooms. Small fires were started by some squatters further accelerating the crumbling of a once admired building. The building appeared to be doomed to crumble. Once known for its prominence, the intersection of N. Broadway and Fifth Avenue became a corner of despair.

Manor and George were both "hopeless cases." However, despair would not have the last word for Minvilla Manor nor George.

Minvilla Manor is now celebrating its ten-year anniversary.

For those of our citizens who experience homelessness, George's life (not his real name) seemed to have met the same fate as the former Minvilla Manor - cornered by despair. Due to mental health challenges and the absence of family support, George wandered the streets during the day and either slept at the local mission or became a squatter for the night at the entrance of a downtown business. Though never a nuisance to others, life on the streets stressed his body and his unchecked mental health became complicit in extending his experience of homelessness.

Conceived and nurtured by a dedicated vision, a circuitous route of hard work, and bold decisions backed by donor support and community effort, the Volunteer Ministry Center purchased the Fifth Avenue Motel believing just as when it comes to people, there should not be any "hopeless cases." The building was acquired and repurposed, providing a permanent supportive housing opportunity for local citizens with a long history of homelessness and a presenting disability. Furthermore, the building was preserved thus retaining its value to the community.

It would be easy to conclude that Minvilla

Informed by the Housing First approach that housing is the primary basis of life

continued inside...

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:

"If we could perceive our angels for just a single day, this world would never be the same again, nor would it ever wish to be" - Author Unknown

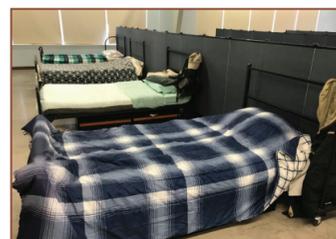
Angels are the perfect gift for family and friends, as well as neighbors, service people and anyone whom you would like to recognize in a special way. Angels are also a touching way to honor the memory of a loved one. Angels are available for any donation amount of \$5.00 or more and can be ordered by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



Non-Profit Org. U.S. POSTAGE PAID Knoxville, TN Permit No. 981

THE FOYER CELEBRATES ITS FIRST ANNIVERSARY ON DECEMBER 19TH!

The Foyer is the only housing focused emergency overnight low-barrier shelter in our community. Since its official opening on December 19, 2019, 133 of our most vulnerable homeless neighbors have received overnight shelter with housing focused case management services. Of those, 8 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. 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.



P.O. Box 27406 Knoxville, TN 37927-7406 865-524-3926

VOLUNTEER MINISTRY CENTER VMC Opening Doors for a Better Tomorrow



FROM THE CEO'S DESK: I AM ABOUT TO EITHER SHOW MY AGE OR A LITTLE OF MY MUSICAL INTERESTS, OR BOTH.



Bruce W. Spangler, CEO

My father loved country music and so the sound of it echoed throughout the house in the mornings when we were getting ready for school or in the car going to McDonald's. When I delivered the Sunday morning edition of the local newspaper, my father would slowly drive the car with the extra papers because my pull wagon could not hold every copy. In retrieving a new stack of papers, the sound of the Chuckwagon Gang or Merle Haggard would greet me in surround sound that only an AM radio could manufacture.

One of the country songs that still lingers in that cadenced time of my childhood was the classic "You Can't Roller Skate in a Buffalo Herd," by the legendary Roger Miller. Nothing but pure class, if not high class for sure.

In trying to put a "bow on the year of 2020" is indeed like trying to "roller skate in a buffalo herd." Despite a world spinning on a different axis because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Volunteer Ministry Center has been front and center in making sure that our neighbors continue to receive services to alleviate and overcome the experience of homelessness or near homelessness.

The extra demands and stressors on staff ensuring safety and health of those served is not taken for granted. The generosity and continuous support of our supporters and donors during this time has been tremendous. "We are in this together" is more than just a slogan. It has become a lived reality on the corner of E. Fifth Avenue and N. Broadway. Though challenging but more so now, the mission of VMC continues to be fulfilled.

In case you are not familiar with Miller's song, he had additional ways to express doing the seemingly impossible.

You can't take a shower in a parakeet cage. You can't go a-swimmin' in a baseball pool. You can't change film with a kid on your back. You can't drive around with a tiger in your car. You can't go fishin' in a watermelon patch.

Miller concluded each stanza with the refrain,

All you gotta do is put your mind to it Knuckle down, buckle down do it.

That is a perfect way of describing the accomplishments of the staff and volunteers of Volunteer Ministry Center during this time. Each knuckled and buckled down and made it happen. I am ready to put a bow on the year 2020 and each of us probably put our mind to it a few months ago!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2020

- David Arning, Linda V. Bailey, Jimmy Cheek, Susan Conway, Robert DeNovo, III, Charlie Daniel, Nancy Friedrich, Phillip M. Furlong, Carney Ivy, Rick Jenkins, Cara Knapp, Ken Knight, Adam T. Luttrell, Todd Mason, Hunter Purnell, Laura Seymour, Karen Sproles, JD Sullivan, Beth Townsend, Carl Van Hoozier, Jr., Mark Walker

Stay well,

Bruce W. Spangler

Rev. Bruce W. Spangler Chief Executive Officer

SPONSOR A BED AT THE FOYER. 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.

A TIME TO GIVE THANKS

Throughout 2020 VMC has continued to assist those experiencing homelessness into 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 what 2020 has thrown at us, our blessings have been many and for that, we give THANKS!!

THANK YOU - WE NOW HAVE A HOME



Larry and his dog Jack will celebrate the holidays in their new apartment. They are thankful that the Foyer provided temporary shelter for both of them during the time Larry was working through the

VMC Resource Center to achieve housing. The Foyer has accommodations for pets so our homeless neighbors and their companion pets can remain together.



Amber's journey home culminates with the signing of a lease to a new apartment. Welcome Home Amber!!



Debra eagerly opens the door to her apartment. She too is thankful to now have a home of her own.



For the first time in his life, Michael has a home to call his own. He is very grateful to the staff at VMC who helped him on his Journey Home!

THANK YOU - FOR CARING AND SHARING



A HUGE THANK YOU to BANK OF AMERICA for the donation of 10,000 masks to keep our neighbors and staff safe during the pandemic.



The Knoxville Advantage Waypoint Culinary Team is just one of many groups who cooked and dropped off meals at the VMC Resource Center giving VMC staff a much-needed break from cooking meals for our neighbors. With the suspension of volunteer meal groups during the pandemic, VMC staff took on the added responsibility of cooking and serving meals.



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!

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 2020, 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



Kristie had stable housing until her apartment unit was condemned and she had to leave. With VMC's partnership with the United Way of Greater Knoxville's HouseKnox Program, Kristie was able to get another apartment. She is thankful to have a home for the holidays.

SAVE THE DATE - CARRY THE TORCH KNOXVILLE 2021

VMC is excited to announced that Father Gregory Boyle, Founder and Executive Director of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, California, will be the featured speaker for the 2021 Carry the Torch Knoxville event on May 5, 2021 at the Knoxville Convention Center.



THE CORNER OF HOPE CONTINUED

necessary and essential for improved health outcomes, Minvilla Manor reclaimed its original name and has been home for many Georges through the decade. Resurrected from a crumbling pile of charred wood and scattered cylinder block, again the sound of life returned to the corner and this time for 57 single women and men.

Over the past ten years, nine of ten residents established residency for at least one year and 60% of the present residents have tenancy of four years or longer.

George was one of the original lease signers with the reopening. With access to support services, referrals to health care providers and a willingness to experience community within and outside of Minvilla Manor, George's physical and mental health improved through the years. He was befriended by a group of men from a local church and became

involved in the community life of the congregation, and by extension became a part of the lives of his newfound friends' families. After many years, however, George died of natural causes where his remains are entombed at his home church's columbarium. Once considered a "lost cause" George found hope on the corner of N. Broadway and Fifth Avenue.

As Volunteer Ministry Center continues its efforts to meet the housing and supportive needs of other Georges, the next project will be a on the corner of E. Fifth Avenue and Winnoa. It will be named Caswell Manor. With plans of completion by the end of 2022, forty-eight more men and women will call the place home where hope resides, and new dreams are dreamed.

When cornered by despair, Volunteer Ministry Center finds a way to corner hope!

By: Bruce W. Spangler

CONGRATULATIONS!

The Ginny Weatherstone Service Award recipients were announced at the virtual Carry the Torch Knoxville event on October 1st. The Staff Award was presented to Christy Smith, Director of the Refuge Program, and the Volunteer Award was presented to long-time volunteer Linda Van Beke. Both of these ladies are most deserving for their service to VMC. They carry out their duties with grace and love for the homeless and impoverished of our community.

