

FROM THE CEO'S DESK:



Bruce W. Spangler, CEO

My interview with Megan was uncomfortable yet celebratory. Megan has been with VMC for a long time. Her opportunity to write another chapter in her professional career must be exciting. So, I celebrate that for her on top of acknowledging and commending her tenure with VMC. She has made an impact for sure!

However, the story of the campsite was uncomfortable. When I think that my years have created an emotional barrier during this work, that scene evokes a visceral response that winds me. It reminds me of a former Minvilla Manor resident's outburst upon receiving her apartment key, "I am not sure that I can handle this much freedom."

Lisa (not her real name) had been homeless for about three years. Her outburst reveals the hidden luggage that she carries.

The "luggage" of trauma is the first item that Lisa would carry across the threshold of her apartment. The occurrence of trauma may occur in childhood or adulthood. The loss of stable shelter, family connections, access to food, and simple social roles and routines also have an impact. Trauma will reshape the brain and body in ways where the assumed pleasures of life, relationships, the control of emotions and actions, and the ability to trust are all compromised.

The luggage of trauma is not unpacked all at once. Trained staff and an intentional environment are crucial to tailoring care and interventions for those like the Lisas of the community. In each of VMC's programs and supportive housing opportunities, attention to safety, supportive and therapeutic connections, participant/resident choice and autonomy, and integrated care are necessary practices to promote peace of mind, joy, and hope.

"I am not sure that I can handle this much freedom," Lisa said somewhat anxiously. "But I do know that I want to be home."

My greatest hope is that whoever laid their head on that mattress has or will be given a chance to experience some overwhelming freedom and find a home.

"Home remains the primary basis of life. It is where meals are shared quiet habits formed, dreams confessed, traditions created."

Matthew Desmond, Eviction: Poverty and Profit in the American City

Bruce W. Spangler

Rev. Bruce W. Spangler
Chief Executive Officer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022

David Arning	Adam T. Luttrell
Linda V. Bailey	Todd Mason
Brittany Bonner	Darrell Murrell
Dr. Jimmy Cheek	Hunter Purnell
Susan Conway	Ragan Schriver
Charlie Daniel	Laura Seymour
Nancy Friedrich	Karen Sproles
Phillip M. Furlong	JD Sullivan
Felix Harris	Beth Townsend
Rick Jenkins	Mark Walker
Cara Knapp	Eboni Winford

VOLUNTEER MINISTRY CENTER



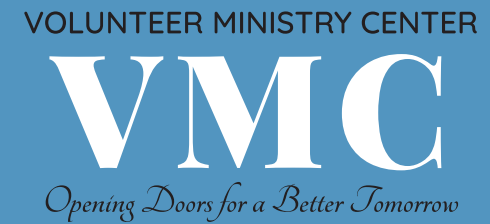
CASWELL MANOR – COMING SOON

VMC's newest permanent supportive housing development is under construction and on target to open this fall. Caswell Manor will provide 48 apartment homes for our chronically homeless neighbors with supportive services to ensure stability and success. Permanent Supportive Housing works, as is evident by the long-term success of Minvilla Manor, which opened in November 2010.



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

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



The Journey Home

www.vmcinc.org

A PROFILE IN COMPASSION



"Megan was here!"

As a VMC employee since 2003, Megan Lappas is more than a familiar face to our neighbors who experience homelessness. She is a kind and compassionate advocate giving voice to the plight of many whose voices and stories are muffled and distorted by assumptions and misinformation.

The drive to "set the record straight" about the experience of homelessness intensifies because she has been working as a Street Outreach Social Worker for the past four years. Megan's visits to side streets, the Market Square, and other sites have given her more insight into the depth of pain, suffering, and despair hiding from most of us.

"It starts with building trust," she insists. "I admit that I didn't know the extent of sickness and the number of people residing in camps. It almost feels overwhelming, somewhat like a third-world country out there." Megan pauses for a reflective moment then recalls a campsite she had once visited. "I remember the visual sadness of the camp."

She shows me a campsite picture revealing a stained, dirty mattress surrounded by debris and litter lying on

the ground. The image is heartbreaking, and I am disturbed by what I see. I also feel that I am intruding, invading a space of private pain and despair.



"I will never forget the sadness that overcame me, but the irony still haunts me." She points to the bottom right corner of the picture. "Do you see that? It is 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs!'"



Maslow's classic work suggests that life is not lived at its fullest unless built upon a framework of basic to advanced needs. Without a foundation of the fundamental conditions of food and shelter, other

continued inside...

A PROFILE IN COMPASSION CONTINUED



Street Outreach includes all areas of our community, including railroad tracks.

needs such as safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization have no standing.

Megan continues to talk about the picture before us. "My work through the years suggests that Maslow's Hierarchy needs some adjusting. Most people feel invisible, ignored, overlooked, and seldom seen for who they are really. I work very hard with my words and actions to show that I do care and that I do indeed see them - individually. I am a firm believer that love and belonging are just as valuable as food and shelter. I have seen total strangers recreate a new family with mother, father, and siblings while on the streets desperately trying to be part of something. That is why I believe love and belonging are just as basic."

One of her favorite quotes comes from the sainted Mother Teresa that further demonstrates Megan's passion and the power of presence among those who feel distant and separated from the larger

community, "We sometimes think that poverty is only being hungry, naked, and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty."

Megan works hard to reach the person's yearning for a simple gesture that someone cares. She does so creatively. Megan will fashion and give a bracelet



Megan and Dyrll walk down Broadway to engage our neighbors experiencing homelessness.

of colorful lettered and numbered beads with a person's name/street name on it or contact info/ other helpful hints for someone who might need that something extra. Over time, Megan has made hundreds of these bracelets. She believes in taking the extra effort during clothing hour to find the shirt that our neighbor needs and gives the neighbor some selection choices. She

knows these small gestures are essential relationship-building tools that can eventually lead to a better quality of life.

Megan has been in different roles at VMC through the years, but she suggests that the work as a Street Outreach Social Worker has raised her awareness the most. "The pain, sadness, sorrow, and sickness are right in front of you, and I just want to communicate that someone cares."

And care she does. She is a profile in compassion.

She laughs as she recalls her interest in coming to VMC. "I was working in social services before, but I saw an ad for the position of the Refuge Director. What caught my eye was the job description. It had the usual requirements and expectations, but I knew that job was for me when I read, 'requires a sense of humor.' Humor certainly helps!"

As the most tenured staff member with 19 years of service, Megan has had plenty of time to develop relationships among the community she serves. She reflects on the many faces and stories that have come her way. With sadness, she says, "In early March, I will be taking on a new role beyond VMC. I love what I have been able to do through the years at VMC. I truly love this organization and the people we serve."



Megan and Dyrll engaged Charles through Street Outreach and Charles now has a home at Minvilla Manor.

The greatest reward during my work is having earned the trust and built relationships with people who struggle with trust and relationships. That is the greatest compliment I could receive. It is the core to leading someone to eventual housing and a better life."

Megan will leave a lasting impact.

A few years ago, a neighbor memorialized her presence in concrete in the Safe Space under the 1-40 overpass.

That concrete is just as solid as her compassion.

By: Bruce W. Spangler



Megan obtains information from a homeless neighbor sleeping under the bridge.



A neighbor under the bridge shows Megan a cross he made.

STREET OUTREACH

VMC's Street Outreach program has expanded. With funding from the City of Knoxville, street outreach now has six street outreach social workers, with additional staffing and vehicles for a mobile shower unit. Outreach services are critical in connecting the most vulnerable of our homeless neighbors to shelter and mental and physical health services. As depicted in the pictures below, life on the streets is unhealthy, unsafe, and sometimes subject to predatory actions. However, our street outreach team works to restore the dignity and hope for each neighbor they engage with a goal of housing for all.



VMC's Street Outreach Social Workers.



When you don't have a home, the value of a shower and being clean is unmeasurable!



Our neighbors experiencing homelessness deserve housing rather than living in these conditions.



2021 YEAR IN REVIEW



1,294 individuals received services through the Bush Family Refuge

207

individuals experiencing homelessness received services in the Resource Center

51

individuals achieved housing; of those 38 were chronically homeless



227 households received utility and/or rent assistance



602 individuals were engaged through Street Outreach

134

vulnerable individuals experiencing homelessness received overnight shelter at the Foyer



1,129 dental procedures were performed in the VMC Dental Clinic



8,268 meals served in the Resource Center



64 residents lived at Minvilla Manor

Carry the Torch
KNOXVILLE

**The Volunteer Ministry Center
Presents
Carry the Torch Knoxville**



Featuring President/Founder
of Thistle Farms and
Author of Practically Divine

Becca Stevens

Wednesday October 19, 2022
10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Knoxville Convention Center
Mission Fair 10:00 am-11:30 am
Lunch and Program 11:45 am-1:00 pm
Book Signing 1:00 pm-2:00 pm

For additional information contact Mary Beth Ramey at 524-3926 x 229 or visit carrythetorchknoxville.com

**"WINE AND SHINE" PRESENTED BY:
SUGARLANDS DISTILLING COMPANY
& THE CROWNE PLAZA KNOXVILLE**

Tastings begin at 7:00 pm

Moonshine &
Wine
Food & Music

Live & Silent Auction

Emcee
Sam Venable



10th Annual
Don Sproles
Memorial
Evening

Auctioneer
Bear Stephenson

Live Music

July 29, 2022—6:00 pm at the Crowne Plaza



**SAVE THE
DATE**