

An End to Pain, A Beginning of Hope

By Ginny Weatherstone



Sharon Jordan

May 16 was a big day for Sharon Jordan. As she and I sipped coffee in the living room of her Minvilla Manor apartment that morning, she shared with me that this was the day she would receive her first chemotherapy treatment. She wasn't nervous. She was grateful.

"I've had so many health problems. It was so hard when I was homeless. I had hepatitis C and it affected my liver. I've got arthritis and Marfan Syndrome, and I was in pain all the time.

Now I have a place of my own and it seems like I can finally get things organized. I can get the medical help I need."

Sharon was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan, one of three daughters of a mother who passed away when the girls were young. "I won't lie. My father didn't give a damn," says Sharon. The girls raised themselves and grew up fast, starting work as early as possible. Sharon obtained a GED and became a Teacher's Aid. She was a hard worker, but that came to an abrupt halt when she fell out of a third floor window and injured her hip at age 25. Perhaps it was poor medical care that caused her hip to heal incorrectly. She had to learn to walk all over again and even then her gait was awkward. Arthritis set in and she was always in pain. Having trouble finding employment, Sharon decided to look for new opportunities with family members in Nashville. There was a small amount of money from her deceased mother and she drew on that as long as she could. Finally, in chronic pain and with few job possibilities, Sharon began to draw disability.

Sharon moved to Knoxville a number of years ago, looking for work, hope, and opportunity. She lived in subsidized housing for several years until she allowed a person to stay with her who was on the "No Trespassing List" for the public

housing authority. "I really messed up," acknowledges Sharon.

She ended up on the streets. Her medical problems accumulated; pain was her constant companion. Sharon learned that she had Hepatitis C. Her hands grew twisted and deformed due to Marfan Syndrome, a disease that affects the connective tissue. Her mental health suffered. It was Case Manager Caroline Smith who realized that Sharon's situation was dire; she needed housing and assistance in addressing her medical issues. But first they had a lot of talking to do. Sharon had reached a point of discouragement and wasn't sure she could go on. Ultimately, though, she decided that she did want to live. "I would be dead now if it weren't for the help I've gotten," shares Sharon. In January of this year, just as Caroline was helping Sharon move into a one bedroom apartment at Minvilla Manor, Sharon was diagnosed with cancer of the liver. The proposed treatment involves a combination of chemotherapy and surgery. It is a course of treatment that would be impossible without housing stability. Sharon says that one of the most valuable things about housing is that "I can lay down when I don't feel well."

"VMC has helped me in so many ways. You have helped me get my identification, helped with my housing application. You've gotten me mental health care at Helen Ross McNabb and taken me to doctor appointments. I can never give enough thanks to VMC." Sharon's case Manger at Minvilla Manor is Megan Lappas who is clearly Sharon's biggest fan. "Sharon is so appreciative. Little by little, we will work to get her healthy. She has so much sweetness to offer this world." Both Megan and Sharon know that the time ahead will not be easy; there are just so many medical problems to address. "But this is my chance," says Sharon. "This is my hope – to finally get better."

So now, as Sharon begins a long and difficult time of treatment, she allows herself the luxury of looking ahead. "Someday," says Sharon, "I'd like to share a little house with my sister. There's just the two of us left now. She has congestive heart failure and vertebrae problems. I think that the two of us could take care of each other."

And that is not too grand a hope for one very grand lady indeed.



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Ginny Weatherstone
Chief Executive Officer



Participating Agency

June, 2013

Dear Friend of VMC,

There are so many wonderful people in this world! Pardon me for enthusing so, but I'm still a bit high from spending time with Wally Lamb, this year's Carry the Torch Knoxville speaker. Not only was time with Wally lovely, but I am also mindful of the time spent with the Committee which put this event on. I'm so aware of the hours donated each week by a cadre of dedicated volunteers who virtually run the Bush Family Refuge. And I'm grateful beyond words to the many meal groups who bring the food to be enjoyed by those we serve. The list goes on and on.

It's the truth. As I often say, "volunteer" is NOT our middle name. It is our first name.

And yet, volunteers and dedicated staff alone cannot not make VMC the life changing agency that it is. It takes other resources as well.

Last year, over \$67,000 was spent in the Refuge, helping people retain their housing, assisting with rent, purchasing eyeglasses and helping to buy medications. We bought bus tickets for people who were starting new jobs, purchased identification for folks who were applying for work. The list goes on. And every bit of financial expenditure was matched by the volunteer time of those who sat and visited with our guests, making sure that there was a sustainable plan in place to help them become more independent.

So both are necessary. The volunteer time is supported by the funds we raise to meet expenses we incur in fulfilling our mission. Some people can give time and some people can help with the funding.

My hope is that you will be one of the people who becomes involved with the incredible and life changing work of VMC. Perhaps you volunteer. Or perhaps your resources are such that you can contribute to our work. Your gift, cheerfully given, means that people will be heard, their needs addressed, and their lives improved. And all this will happen because you invested in their future. This will happen because you care. Please give as generously as you can.



Thank you,

Ginny Weatherstone
Chief Executive Officer

From the Director's Desk

By Ginny Weatherstone

I spent a glorious Saturday planting blooming things in my garden last week-end. It is the season of growing and coming to life. I love that.

Yesterday when I arrived at work, I saw one of our Resource Center clients outside weeding the shrubbery around VMC. I stopped to thank him for his efforts. He replied that he was happy to help out and that he felt useful when he was asked to do a chore. "I've not been useful to anyone for a long time, so this is a good thing," he said. "And I think it's a good thing when you get your hands in the dirt. Sorta reminds you where you came from."

I pondered his words later when I learned more of his story. Indeed, it seemed as though so much of his life had been made of dirt. It seemed as though an impossible childhood had resulted in an individual unable to make wise choices. It seemed as though he could not get ahead. If ever I could understand why someone had become homeless and hopeless, it was he.

And yet, here he was, saying thank you and digging in the dirt. He seemed to almost understand this metaphor himself. For it was the very dirt in which he dug that would sustain and cause new growth in the bushes this gentleman tended. And it was the confrontation with the unpleasant and dirty details of his past that would allow him to grow and progress beyond the constraints of unhappiness that had held him in bondage for far too long. And so he dug.

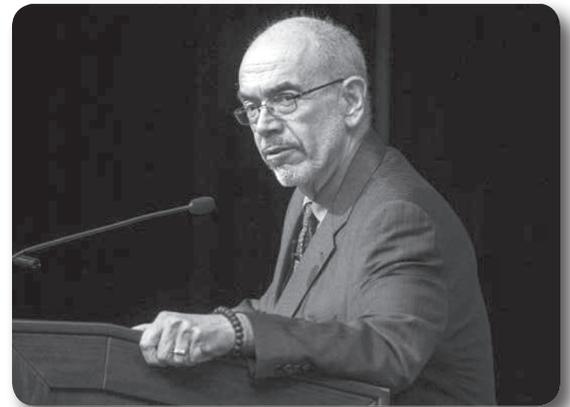
Everyone at VMC is expected to do a chore every day. It always surprises me at how eagerly these chores are assumed and how well they are performed. At its heart, the chore assignment tells our members that they have a role here and are needed here. It reinforces their buy-in. But beyond that, cleaning and sweeping and digging are the common tasks of life, and performing these duties reinforces one's buy-in to life as well. Digging in the dirt will, in a very subtle way, change a person's outlook. All kinds of possibilities hide in that cool and lively soil, possibilities that lie fallow until they are disturbed by the trowel, the hands, the hope of new growth. Until we dig them up.

Carry the Torch Wrap Up

May 8, 2013 marked the 5th annual Carry the Torch fundraising event. Each year, VMC brings in a nationally known author to help raise funds and awareness for its programs as well as to help educate the public that homelessness is a community problem. This year, New York Times best-selling author Wally Lamb was the featured speaker. Tennessee Supreme Court Justice Sharon G. Lee served as Honorary Chair and joined VMC Chairman of the Board Mack Gentry in welcoming close to 900 people in support of the fight to end homelessness.

The day began with a writers' workshop at VMC where Mr. Lamb answered questions from fellow writers and fans alike. After a tour of the VMC facilities, Mr. Lamb headed to the Knoxville Convention Center where a mission fair showcased volunteer opportunities at VMC as well as other social service agencies from the community. Sunshine Studios was on hand selling beautiful fashion scarves and earrings handmade by our neighbors in the Resource Center.

Mr. Lamb gave a wonderful presentation that focused on his journey as teacher, story-teller, and fellow humanitarian. He spoke of his creative process, the inspiration for his numerous fictional characters, and of his time spent with the female inmate students of his writing workshops at the York Correctional Institute in Connecticut. These workshops were the genesis of two books Mr. Lamb edited featuring the inmates' personal stories. His message during the presentation was one of creating hope out of despair, a message passionately shared by VMC. Following a book signing, Mr. Lamb returned to VMC for an ice-cream social where he met some of the VMC neighbors.



Wally Lamb

Home Federal's 2013 Hometown Hero



Home Federal Bank Executive Vice President Debra Smith, President Dale Keasling, Dr. D. Carter Davis, and VMC CEO Ginny Weatherstone.

VMC was honored to announce Dr. D. Carter Davis as one of Home Federal Bank's 2013 Hometown Heroes. Dr. Davis volunteers his services in the Dental Clinic every Tuesday morning, free of charge, and was kind enough to choose VMC to receive the award's \$2500.00 accompanying donation. Dr. Davis has spent more than 31 years performing overseas dental missionary work and also teaches Sunday School at Wallace Memorial Baptist Church with his wife of more than 50 years.

Located within VMS's facility, the VMC Dental Clinic uses professional dental clinicians to provide dental care and treatment to the indigent. In 2012, 769 patients were seen and 1,202 procedures were performed, including 29 sets of dentures. When asked about his award, Dr. Davis says, "It's humbling, it's a surprise, and the opportunity to serve the community through the Volunteer Ministry Center has been one of the highlights of my life."

Dale Keasling of Home Federal Bank states, "People like Dr. Davis, who selflessly care for the physical and spiritual needs of others every day, exemplify what it means to be a Hometown Hero."

Did You Know?

- 15 people moved into housing in March and 6 in April.
- 49 families were assisted with homeless prevention in March and 56 in April.
- 1342 volunteer hours were reported in March and 1139 in April.

2nd Annual Don Sproles Memorial Dinner



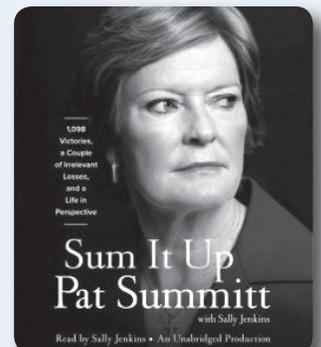
Sally Jenkins

Nine-time author and sports columnist Sally Jenkins will be the keynote speaker at the Second Annual Don Sproles Memorial Dinner, September 5, 2013, at Knoxville's Crowne Plaza hotel.

Ms. Jenkins has written for numerous publications including Sports Illustrated, Vanity Fair, and GQ. Her work has been showcased on NPR and NBC, and she is currently a feature writer for The Washington Post. Three of her books have been on the *New York Times* Best Seller list and her latest, *Sum it Up: 1098 Victories, a Couple of Irrelevant Losses, and a Life in Perspective*, has just been published. The book is a collaboration with long-time friend Pat Summitt, referred to as "the all-time winningest coach in NCAA basketball history." The

book regales Summitt's "remarkable life story of victory and resilience as well as facing down her greatest challenge: early onset Alzheimer's disease."

Tickets for the 7:00pm dinner will go on sale August 1, 2013 and will be \$75.00 per person. Sponsorship opportunities are available. For more information, please contact Lee Turner at (865) 524-3926 ext. 223 or via email at lturner@vmcinc.org.



Rachel Margulies: A Role Model for All



In the Jewish faith, the term “Bat Mitzvah” means “Daughter of the Commandment” and represents a young lady’s formal acceptance of her spiritual responsibilities as a member of her temple and the nation of Israel. As part of a Bat Mitzvah, there is a tradition of performing acts of kindness, or a “Mitzvah Project.” This spring, Rachel Margulies, of Temple Beth El, selected VMC as part of hers.

For her Mitzvah Project, Rachel served the homeless and fed the hungry at VMC through the Second Harvest Food Bank. She then created thirteen centerpieces for the tables at her Bat Mitzvah, each containing enough food items to feed a family of four for a full day. These centerpieces were donated to VMC after the services for distribution to its clients.

Rachel is an impressive seventh grade honors student at Farragut Middle School who carries a 4.0 GPA, while balancing extra-curricular activities such as playing the clarinet, drawing, and studying Tae Kwon Do. At the young age of 9, Rachel had already earned her Black Belt. In addition to her many interests and hobbies, Rachel will soon be traveling to the Outer Banks of North Carolina for an honors trip, preparing and delivering a lesson plan to a third grade class.

Rachel had this to say about her experience, “There are so many people who are in need. It’s an amazing feeling that I can help and make a difference in people’s lives. It was so much fun and rewarding. I really wanted to come back and do it again.”

VMC extends a huge thank you to Rachel for her thoughtfulness, kindness, and selflessness, and wishes her the very best for a bright future. She truly exemplifies the spirit of Volunteer Ministry Center.

Thanks to the UT College of Social Work

Each year as part of their coursework, University of Tennessee College of Social Work students are required to complete a field practice portion of the program where they work with social services professionals to complement classroom theory and research. The opportunity allows students to master and synthesize real-world social work knowledge, values, and skills. This year, VMC was lucky enough to have been chosen by two students, Sarah Wise and Jasmine Brown.

Sarah Wise completed her first year Master’s placement at VMC, under the supervision of Gabe Cline, working with clients at Minvilla Manor, The Bush Family Refuge, and The Resource Center. Sarah’s goal is to work in the area of forensic social work and had this to say about her experience, “The Volunteer Ministry Center is a unique atmosphere for learning, in and of itself, with a challenging and endearing client population. For me, this fostered an unprecedented sense of confidence and with that, a new found bravery to explore.”

Jasmine Brown, a varsity volleyball player who completed the social work honors program, received two awards this semester. The first for being a “Scholar Athlete,” and the other for having one of the university’s top research projects at its exhibition of undergraduate research. Titled “Effects of Rental Assistance on Recipient’s Living Situations,” the project’s purpose was to find out whether or not VMC’s rental assistance program helped low-income individuals/families keep their housing. Both to Jasmine’s and VMC’s reassurance, the findings indicated that there is a significant correlation between the two. Jasmine has been admitted to an advanced standing program and will begin work on her Master’s Degree this summer.

Dr. Karen Sowers, Professor and Dean of the college, says, “VMC has provided excellent mentors for our students who are committed to the values of the profession, and to providing outstanding learning opportunities for our students. The College of Social Work is extremely grateful for this partnership.”

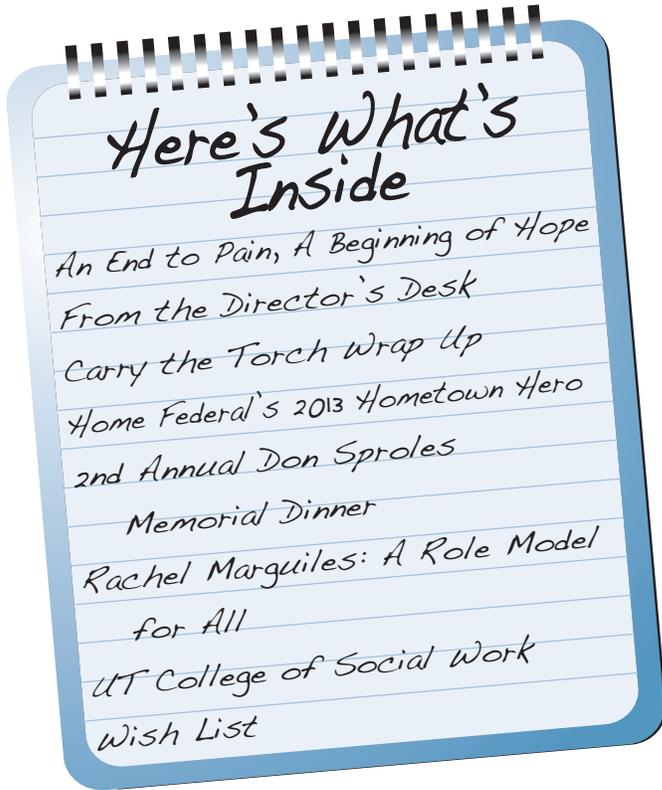


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VMC's Wish List

- **Mulch**
- **“Take a Number” Ticket System**
- **Can Openers**
- **Men’s and Women’s Undergarments**
- **Men’s Clothing and Shoes**
- **Toilet Paper**
- **Adult Diapers**
- **Large Ziplock Bags**
- **Ear Plugs**
- **Cough Drops**
- **Toiletries (Kleenex, Toothbrushes and Toothpaste, Disposable Razors, Toilet Paper)**
- **Folders**
- **Games (dominoes, cards, board games, horseshoes, bean bags)**
- **Arts/Crafts Supplies (pot holder looms, markers, drawing pens/paper)**