

HARVEY AND IRMA—UNWELCOMED VISITORS

Most of America has been mesmerized and heart-broken with the scenes that are coming out of the coastal areas of Texas due to hurricane Harvey and the devastation left behind by Irma in the Southeast. The loss of life, damage to property and the displacement of thousands is unimaginable. Such disruption to life can never be anticipated nor planned. Harvey and Irma quickly became unwelcomed visitors.

It is most likely that the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) will retire the names of Harvey and Irma from the future list of names for hurricanes and cyclones.

The WMO states that “[t]he only time that there is a change in the list is if a storm is so deadly or costly that the future use of its name on a different storm would be inappropriate for reasons of sensitivity. If that occurs, then at an annual meeting by the WMO Tropical Cyclone Committees the offending name is stricken from the list and another name is selected to replace it. Infamous storm names such as Haiyan (Philippines, 2013), Sandy (USA, 2012), Katrina (USA, 2005), Mitch (Honduras, 1998) and Tracy (Darwin, 1974) are examples for this.”

Much like the names of Harvey and Irma that will probably be retired, Volunteer Ministry Center works daily in the attempt to “retire” the word “homelessness”. Homelessness is both deadly and costly. According to the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, individuals experiencing homelessness are three times more likely to die prematurely than the general population. On average, the age of death in homelessness is 50 compared to 78 years. Moreover, the rate of illness (HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, influenza, cancer, heart disease, diabetes and hypertension, e.g.) is three to six times higher.

The impact on the individual in homelessness is costly beyond the health issues. The cost of a life-lived fully is impaired, if not lost. The cost to the community is financially draining while creating public health and safety concerns as well.

However, and due to our collective efforts and your support, VMC is retiring the word homelessness. Since 2007, over 920 individuals had their “homelessness” retired! And countless others have been able to avoid the experience.

On behalf of those who are served by VMC, many, many thanks!

By Bruce W. Spangler

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A TRIBUTE TO BETSEY BUSH



Betsey Bush

My heart was saddened when I heard the news that Betsey Bush was no longer with us. I lost a friend and things just won't be the same here at VMC. Betsey was a treasure and she will be missed. She had been a part of the Volunteer Ministry Center for a very long time. Betsey's involvement with the VMC began several years ago when her younger son, Ben, was a volunteer in the Refuge. It was evident to Betsey that VMC was doing good work to help the homeless and those in our community who were experiencing extreme difficulty. Being a woman of strong faith, she saw a need to serve “the least of these.” And, that she did. At the onset of VMC's Capital Campaign for the new building on Broadway, Betsey generously gave the lead gift.

But her involvement didn't stop there. She was always available to offer advice and share her thoughts. Although she did not like the spotlight, she appeared in a VMC video to share her sincere thoughts as a VMC donor. For several years, she was an integral member of the Carry the Torch event committee; and in 2014, she served as Honorary Chair of the event when author Pat Conroy was the featured speaker.

Betsey was a strong and wise woman, and I will remember her that way. She knew that her financial support of VMC was used frugally. But, more importantly, she saw the difference VMC was making in our community. She saw how the Volunteer Ministry Center programs were changing lives and she was a champion of VMC's efforts.



Betsey as Honorary Chair of the 2014 Carry the Torch event with author Pat Conroy.

Betsey once said, “I know my money is wisely spent when I give to the VMC because they are keenly aware of what they have to spend, and spend it to the best of their ability.”

So, what will I remember Betsey for? Her beautiful smile, her generous heart, her strength and wisdom, and her friendship. Betsey truly was a “good and faithful servant.” Her legacy will always be a part of the Volunteer Ministry Center.

By Mary Beth Ramey

WE HAVE A HOME NOW!



George proudly shows off his key to his new apartment presented to him by case manager Katlyn Gass.



Frederick is excited to have a place of his own after many years on the streets.



Elizabeth is excited to now call Minvilla Manor her home!

Please Join Us!
Volunteer Ministry Center
*30th Anniversary
Celebration*

November 12, 2017
2-4 pm



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FROM THE CEO'S DESK



Bruce W. Spangler, CEO

I was only trying to help.

I had overheard my father say that the push lawn mower engine was in need of a good cleaning. It was summer and I was in between third and fourth grades. With time on my hands and a pocket full of good intentions, I thought I would surprise him by cleaning the engine.

Sitting on the back porch, I began to disassemble the carburetor as I had observed and admired him do before. I placed each part into an old coffee can just like Dad. After completing the disassembly and with the coffee can full of miscellaneous and now unidentifiable parts—at least from my perspective—I poured tap water and dish soap into the can. Meticulously, I scrubbed each piece with a toothbrush. My heart swelled with pride as I thought of the surprise look that would be on

my Dad's face upon his return from work that evening. I attempted to re-assemble the carburetor parts but I could not remember how the pieces fit back together, so, I just left them soaking in the water all day long, emptying my pocket of good intentions.

Upon my father's arrival from work, I imagined my mother's greeting to him. "Can you guess what your (underscoring YOUR) son has been up today? I am sure he has intended on surprising you."

And I did surprise him.

I had returned to my work station on the back porch when my father greeted me with his disapproving yet loving words as he perused the sight of parts in the water-filled coffee can. "Thank you, son, but you never wash steel parts in water as they will rust." He didn't say anything else about the scattering of parts but I am pretty sure Dad got a new lawn mower out of my desire to assist.

I was only trying to help.

The experience of homelessness elicits a variety of responses from the community. Responses and concerns have increased of late as the larger than usual collection of individuals now visible under the bridge on Broadway. In many ways, the scene "under the bridge" has "unveiled the ugliness" of a world without a place to call home. Many want to help. The traditional response has been acts of "mercy" with the distribution of food, clothing, personal hygiene items, and blankets, etc. One winter I knew someone who

distributed fire wood for the make shift camps. On another occasion, someone drove by in their car slowing down just enough to toss out loose change and then speeding away.

They were only trying to help, but, it does not.

The perceived acts of mercy of passing out food, clothing, etc. do nothing to relieve the experience of homelessness, unfortunately. True, it responds to a humanitarian need of hunger and the bodily exposure to the harsh elements of weather, but it is not part of the solution for the prevention and ending of homelessness. To end homelessness there must be a community commitment to designated functions among agencies. This insures that all agencies are not doing the same. Each agency has an important necessary role in the continuum to insure there is a way out of the homeless experience. To end homelessness there must be a community commitment to focus on the solutions, not the problems. Affordable housing, supportive services, access to employment opportunities and mainstream services, and coordination of services are among the various required resources to end the experience of homelessness.

Volunteer Ministry Center is committed to being part of the solution through its "housing first" approach while being a collaborative community partner.

The "housing first" approach involves assisting individuals (the majority of whom are living with mental illness, substance abuse disorders and other serious health problems) directly into subsidized housing along with a link to supportive services, either on-site or in the community. The combination of housing and services makes a large impact on the individual's ability to sustain housing along with improved health outcomes. Such an approach is far less costly than emergency and institutional care, such as shelters, hospitals and correctional facilities. It is also effective—the individual is no longer homeless—no longer under the bridge!

VMC remains committed to the Knoxville City's Plan to Address Homelessness and working with other agencies that offer permanent solutions and best-practice based services.

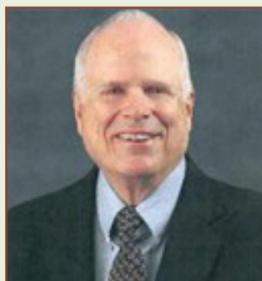
When you support the Volunteer Ministry Center, you are helping! It is more than trying to help, it is truly helping!

Peace,

Rev. Bruce W. Spangler
Chief Executive Officer

IN MEMORIAM

On August 9, 2017, Volunteer Ministry Center lost a true and faithful friend in Tom Hodge. Tom was serving as the Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors before his death. Tom was known for his smile, sense of humor and insights into life. Deeply respected by his legal colleagues and his church family, Volunteer Ministry Center is indebted to him and his surviving wife, Judy, for their loving and caring support of ending and preventing homelessness in our community.



Tom Hodge

VMC HAPPENINGS



The WOW Youth Urban Ministry participated in a variety of activities at VMC over the course of the summer.

Fun, fellowship, and games were a part of Ladies Night hosted by the Church of the Good Samaritan Women's Mentoring Group



VMC volunteer Linda Eberle hosts a regular Coffee Chat activity for the residents of Minvilla Manor.

Guests at the Don Sproles Memorial Evening: Wine and Shine enjoyed the music by the Eli Fox Band.



Members of Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church participating in Come Serve With Us enjoyed visiting with Minvilla Manor residents.



Greg Ward and a great group of folks participating in the Ameriprise Day of Service worked on landscaping projects at Minvilla Manor.

Resource Center members Phyllis and Robin proudly display their class completion certificates.

MEAL GROUP SPOTLIGHT



A great group from First United Methodist Church served a delicious meal to the members of the VMC Resource Center.

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