

WHEN TWO ROADS DIVERGE CON'T...

However and within months, Victor's issues became so abundant and destructive that he required hospitalization after hospitalization. It became evident that Minvilla Manor was no longer an appropriate housing option for him. His life, again, seemed destined to the streets.

In a follow-up call to the hospital by the VMC staff member, a more intensive and supportive housing opportunity was available for Victor but the opportunity would only be a small window, immediate action was required. Through the efforts of many, Victor moved into his new home and has been there now for a few months.

There is no resemblance between his appearance today and when he arrived a few years ago on the front stoop of the Volunteer Ministry Center. He is neatly groomed, dressed in new and fashionable clothes. He goes out to eat like most of us Knoxvilleans and some evenings he takes in a movie as well. I do not think that I am being melodramatic in suggesting that Victor would have died on the streets if not finding his path to the Volunteer Ministry Center and the extra mile of many VMC staff members and other agency providers.

There are many Victors. This Victor story can only be repeated if there are appropriate and accessible resources and housing available. In a line taken from Robert Frost's poem, Two Roads Diverge, VMC became a "way leading to a way." For VMC, that way leads home.

Today, Victor stands at the front stoop of his new home. He no longer stands abandoned. He stands tall in a community that loves and cares for him. Welcome home, Victor.

By Bruce W. Spangler

MEAL GROUP SPOTLIGHT



The Staff from The Coal Creek Company prepared and served a great meal in the VMC Resource Center. They also provided music and entertainment for our neighbors.

WE HAVE A HOME NOW!



After 5 years of being homeless, Lavon signs the lease to his apartment thanks to the help from his case manager Jamie Brown.

Latoya shows off the VMC key chain to her new apartment presented by Resource Center Director Vanessa Hensley.

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VMC HAPPENINGS



Alan Williams with WVLT-TV interviews Minvilla Manor residents Jonathan and Darrell for his "Keeping the Faith" segment.



The Holiday Store had 140 shoppers providing gifts for 588 persons.



The ladies enjoyed wreath making hosted by the Women's Mentoring group from the Episcopal Church of the Good Samaritan.



Ken Miller with Miller and Drozdowski provided a Christmas Dinner and party for the residents at Minvilla Manor



P.O. Box 325
Knoxville, TN 37901-0325
865-524-3926



February 2017



The Journey Home

www.vmcinc.org

WHEN TWO ROADS DIVERGE



Victor: Now

I am not sure how Victor (not his real name) arrived at our front door but there he stood. He says that he was "dropped" off by another person. The identity or description of that person remains unknown; the driver is somewhat of a mystery or a "phantom" to this day.

Victor was the embodiment of what we would rather not see in any living human. He was disheveled, uncombed, wearing days old clothes with a putrid smell to go along with it. He would occasionally look at you with his sad and untrusting eyes that peered out of the darkened and sunken pockets that rested

just above his hollow cheeks. He would speak only when spoken to and even then requiring patient and creative coaxing before he would utter a word. Victor's voice sounded tired and weak. Giving voice required every available ounce of energy he could muster. His energy, however, could only be measured in ounces because of the frailty of his bony and sinewy body.

There he stood.

There he stood, abandoned by a phantom.

There he stood, abandoned by a phantom and in front of strangers he did not know and therefore could not trust.

His road, wherever he may have been going, diverged to the front door of the Volunteer Ministry Center.

Like many of Victor's type, he spent many a night at the mission or on the streets. Yet, day after day, he would reappear at the front stoop of the Bush Family Refuge. Each time that he appeared, a staff member would attempt to talk with him. Through a period of months, trust was built and slowly his story began to unfold. However, those nights on the streets heavily taxed Victor as he slept under the less than forgiving winter nights compounded with ravenous pangs of hunger. Staff members tried to get him to eat, enticing him with "home cooking" from the Resource Center. A turning point came one day when Victor declared that he was "tired of being cold."

This became a significant moment, or turn for Victor, as it was a two fold declaration. "I am cold" also translated to "I feel I can trust you now." Thus began a trusting relationship with a staff member. For months, there were "negotiations" between the two that eventually led to Victor's finding a home at Minvilla Manor.

continued inside...

FROM THE CEO'S DESK



Bruce W. Spangler, CEO

Victor's story is sad, touching and intriguing in so many ways. The emotional and physical taxation upon his body, mind, and soul was devastating if not destructive. His experience of appearing before strangers, fending against the elements of cold, snow, rain, and the lack of nourishment must have been simply exhausting. It touches me that he survived!

Reflecting on his exhausting journey from homelessness to housing is an intriguing one at that. The countless steps along the way—the required paperwork, endless interviews, insurance reviews—all were so that Victor would have a place to live.

Among those myriad requirements is an essential one—human contact. Overcoming homelessness has its process. It, however, cannot be challenged or overcome without the relationships of human contact.

I used to proclaim that the formula to overcoming homelessness was a simple equation: support services plus housing. There is another factor, on the other hand, that I failed to acknowledge or took for granted—human contact. Without one person befriending another person, homelessness wins the day.

Victor's story is one step after another of one person befriending or helping another.

Your financial contribution ensures that folks like Victor receive more than services. One of our long term volunteers, Sally, reminds us we are to greet the person first. We are not greeting a request, i.e., "I need a pair of socks", but we are greeting another fellow human being.

Sally is right.

Sally is right in insisting that we not forget that.

So as the year 2017 progresses, there are some landmarks along the way that we will be working on and celebrating, insuring that VMC is befriending and helping another person.

2016 IMPACT

VMC is thrilled to share the work that was done in 2016. The generosity of our donors and supporters contributed to a year of success. Here is what you helped us to do:

82 individuals experiencing homelessness moved into a permanent residence

678 individuals received services in the Resource Center

1,777 procedures were performed in the Dental Clinic

801 homeless prevention services provided in the Bush Family Refuge

2,406 people received services in the Bush Family Refuge

879 housing placements since 2007 with a housing retention rate of 94.9%

Thank you for being a part of changing lives and ending and preventing homelessness in our community!

We are studying the feasibility of establishing a satellite office of the Bush Family Refuge in another part of the city to make accessibility easier for families to access homeless prevention services. In addition, and in order to meet the needs of individuals like Victor, we hope to create a housing opportunity for 12-14 people in a supportive environment. Finally in early to mid fall, VMC will celebrate its 30th anniversary. We will inform you of the details as they unfold.

In conclusion and for a rather camera shy guy like me, we have launched a video blog entitled "The Corner Perspective." This is a biweekly short video about the work of our philosophies and strategies behind our service programs, and VMC's efforts towards ending and preventing homelessness in our community. Join us at the corner of homelessness and hope. You can view and even subscribed to it on You Tube. (See our website or Facebook Page for details.)

Again, thanks for being part of that human chain of one person befriending and helping another.

Peace,

Rev. Bruce W. Spangler
Chief Executive Officer

2016 REFLECTIONS

As Chairman of the Board of the Volunteer Ministry Center for 2016, I reflect on 2016 as a year of excitement, growth, stability and success. Under the leadership of CEO Bruce Spangler with support from the competent and experienced staff and volunteers, VMC surpassed its goals in all program areas. Most importantly, 82 individuals experiencing homelessness moved from the streets to a home of their own. 801 families received the needed assistance to remain in their homes and not fall into homelessness. Services at the Dental Clinic were expanded due to additional funding enabling 1,777 procedures to be performed, the highest number in the history of the Dental Clinic. And, Minvilla Manor for its sixth year provided housing with permanent supportive case management assistance to 57 formerly chronically homeless individuals.



John T. Buckingham

All of this is due to the tremendous support VMC receives for its programs and services from our generous donors and supporters. I like to think of the journey as a trip in a car driven by competent and experienced drivers with the Board of Directors providing the GPS guidance to keep us on course and our generous supporters providing the fuel for the journey ahead.

I am honored and grateful to have been a part of the amazing work done by the Volunteer Ministry Center in 2016.

John T. Buckingham



The Corner Perspective is a video blog featuring VMC's CEO Bruce Spangler. In this series of blogs, you will be introduced to truths, myths, ideas, and images of homelessness. Each video is a few minutes long, but the information contained in that short amount of time is provocative, captivating, and informative. Won't you join us in our journey to prevent and end homelessness in our community by tuning in every other Thursday to The Corner Perspective? You can access these videos through our website at www.vmcinc.org and our Facebook Page.

Keepin' the Lights On Helps keep them in their homes

The Volunteer Ministry Center works with individuals and families in crisis who are at risk of losing their housing due to financial difficulty in meeting their utility and/or rental obligations. VMC works with these individuals and families to help them develop a plan to pay their bill and maintain their housing over the long term. Your gift will help someone keep their lights on and prevent them from becoming homeless.

Please mail your tax-deductible gift of \$50, \$75, \$100 or more to:
Volunteer Ministry Center
P.O. Box 325
Knoxville, TN 37901



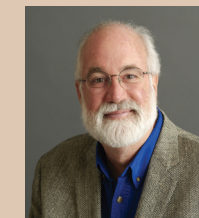
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Carry the Torch
APRIL 12, 2017 KNOXVILLE

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Father Gregory J. Boyle



Honorary Chair
Knoxville Chief of Police
David Rausch

Father Gregory J. Boyle

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Knoxville Convention Center

Mission Fair 10:00 am - 11:45 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.**

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