

FROM THE CEO'S DESK: THANKFUL FOR A BOLOGNA SANDWICH



Bruce W. Spangler, CEO

Many years ago I had the opportunity to work with an insightful, practical, and effective clinician who was an alcohol and drug counselor in a recovery program. Out of respect for his professional identity and clients, I will call him Jim.

In a transitional living environment, participants in this recovery program meet almost daily with Jim as part of a group or individually. Everyone was dealing with an addiction disorder along with the experience of homelessness. Jim, acknowledging that both were extreme challenges, was always present, yet firm and stingingly insightful.

When one participant complained about the restrictive nature in the first couple weeks of the program, Jim saw right through the complaint.

The participant, only a couple of days in the program, was adamant that the program should be understanding that it was the holidays and that he should be able to leave to see his child. Insisting that staff was being punitive and lacking in empathy by insisting that he stay, the participant was being rather belligerent with a vocal protest that began to rise in temperature.

Trying to explore the roots of the outburst, Jim inquired, “When was the last time you saw your child?”

“It has been a while. A couple of years, maybe.”

“I see, a couple of years, maybe. Were you upset last holiday, or the holiday before? Were you upset then because you did not see your child?”

No answer.

“I asked you a question. Were you upset last holiday, or the holiday before?”

No answer.

“I am glad you are upset. It seems it didn’t matter last year, nor the year before. But now it does? If you leave, you leave the program. But what if we work together on making sure you miss no more holidays after this one?”

Jim was a true practitioner and I learned a lot just by observing him. However, the most vivid lesson learned plays daily for me here at VMC.

Jim challenged his clients with a daily quest. It is rather simple. He challenged everyone, including himself, to find at least one thing for which to be thankful every day.

The holidays evoke such reflection. What am I thankful for?

Jim always said, just one thing, one simple thing for which to be thankful. Jim suggested that if it was hard to do, then at least you can be thankful for that bologna sandwich which you just ate.

To which I would add, and the white bread, too.

I am thankful for folks like you who make possible a daily opportunity where “doors open for a better tomorrow.”

Peace,

Rev. Bruce W. Spangler
Chief Executive Officer

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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:

*“Sometimes angels sing to you in the wind...
All you have to do is listen.”*

— 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 Lisa Hutton at 865-524-3926 or by stopping by the VMC offices at 511 North Broadway, Knoxville, TN 37917



THE 2019 HOLIDAY STORE – 23 YEARS OF GIVING

For the 23rd year, the Volunteer Ministry Center will host the Annual Holiday Store program. It is a remarkable effort to enable those without Christmas and holiday shopping money to “earn” gifts for their loved ones by using their time and muscle to complete community service work which pays them in points, redeemable at the Holiday Store.

Every year, VMC relies upon the community to “stock” the store with all new merchandise suitable for gift giving. Many young parents shop the store, delighted to have the opportunity to select a Barbie doll or a train set for their child. And, while toys are certainly the most requested items, many shoppers are also interested in procuring gifts for adults as well. Community service work to earn shopping points is completed at a number of sites.

The Holiday Store is always in need of donations of new items for stock. In particular demand are baby dolls, new sports balls and equipment, craft sets, and other toys. Adult items include fragrance sets, small kitchen appliances and tool sets. Any new item appropriate for gift giving will be gladly accepted at the VMC office at 511 North Broadway.



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



VOLUNTEER MINISTRY CENTER

VMC

Opening Doors for a Better Tomorrow

The *Journey*
Home

www.vmcinc.org

November 2019

ENTERTAIN SOMEONE WITH A HAPPY DANCE

Every journey needs and requires a place to rest, to rejuvenate along the way to the desired destination. Our Resource Center is one such place for those on the journey to home, to escape the experience of homelessness.

Jimmy needed such a place.

The Resource Center provides a respite from the experience of homelessness with a variety of amenities. Most importantly, it is here that the plan towards permanent housing is judiciously and wisely orchestrated that promotes success, if followed, with the aid of a Housing Case Manager. Along the way, encouragement and support comes from other staff members and volunteers.

Jimmy worked on a plan and received such support.

Every person who enters the Resource Center has their own story.

Jimmy had been homeless for over four years. His struggles are for his own telling but he admitted that he needed help and it could not wait any longer.

Over 1,070 individuals have overcome their experience by moving to a place of their own through the Resource Center.

That number is astounding. And Jimmy is now counted in that number as he now calls Cagle Terrace home. Behind Jimmy’s story and so many others, is the support staff who make the Resource Center a place of welcome, hospitality and hope. It is a place that makes home possible.

Sometime ago, an anonymous staff member posted a flyer called “The Great Kindness Challenge” on the bulletin board in the Resource Center. The challenge is to create a “kinder world” by completing as “many acts of kindness as you can” over a week, a month or even a year. The anonymity of the staff probably reflects their intent for a world, in this case the Resource Center, to be a place of increased and abundant kindness.

The list includes those that you would expect, “smile at 25 people; hold the door open for someone; and learn to say, ‘thank you,’ in a new language”. (You can see the list for yourself at www.greatkindnesschallenge.org.)

However, there are a couple of suggestions that catch my eye: “go a full day without complaining;” and “entertain someone with a happy dance.”

One, not so easily done but worth attempting.

Two, what happens when one is dance challenged?

I am delighted that Jimmy will be observing the holidays in his own place this year. And that is worth an entertaining happy dance!

By: Bruce W. Spangler



Jimmy receives a key to his apartment from case managers, Stephanie Mayes, Opal Bryant, and Sarah Bradsher along with Resource Center Director, Vanessa Hensley.

A TIME TO GIVE THANKS

The Season of Thanksgiving is a time to reflect on our many blessings. Those blessings come in a variety of ways; some large, some small, some expected and others unexpected. With grateful hearts, we share just a few of the abundant blessings you have given to the Volunteer Ministry Center.

FOR MEALS SERVED



Members of Networking Today International regularly provide lunch at VMC.



The Little Caesar's Love Kitchen serves pizza to VMC program members.



VMC Board members Karen Sproles and Sheri Pender along with Jenny Eversole from First Presbyterian Church host one of the Minvilla Manor monthly Birthday luncheons.



Members of the Equality Coalition for Housing Opportunities (ECHO) provided a fabulous breakfast for VMC Resource Center members.

FOR ENCOURAGEMENT



Clinical Psychologist, Dr. Karen Toman, teaches classes to Resource Center members working to achieving housing.

FOR CARING AND SHARING



Nancy and Jim Friedrich share a game of Yatzee with Minvilla Manor residents.



The Knoxville Track Club Socialites and RunKNOX collected and donated gently used running shoes for VMC neighbors.



The Church of the Good Samaritan Women's Mentoring Group hosts a monthly ladies' night for the women in VMC's programs.

FOR THE GIFT OF SIGHT



Dr. Wenke with Remote Area Medical provides vision exams and glasses on a monthly basis at VMC.

FOR HELP IN A TIME OF CRISIS



Bush Family Refuge volunteer, Rick Jenkins, counsels with a client seeking assistance from the Refuge.

FOR DENTAL CARE

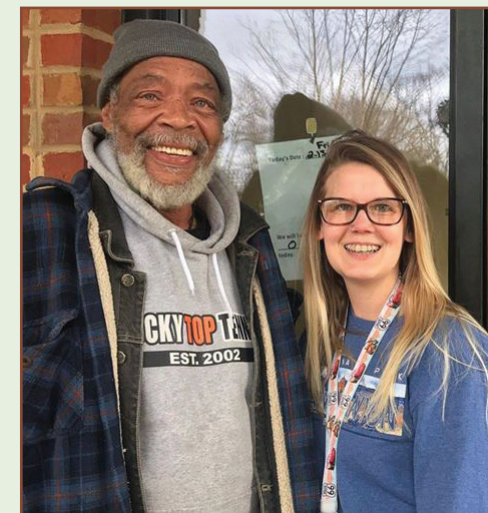


Dr. Andrew Osborn, DDS, is one of the many dental professionals providing dental services in the VMC Dental Clinic.



Kevin wears a big smile after receiving his new dentures from the VMC Dental Clinic.

FOR A HOME



Lee worked with his case manager Opal Bryant to overcome the experience of homelessness. He now has a home of his own.



Valeria was homeless for two years and earlier this year achieved housing thanks to the support from case manager Stephanie Mayes and Resource Center Director Vanessa Hensley.



Danny proudly signs the lease for his apartment. He now has a home of his own.

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 2019, 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.

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