

SPIRIT

The Magazine of Volunteers of America® • Winter 2005



*IN THIS ISSUE: Hope House provides help for homeless women
Seniors feel more secure with new technology • Ex-offenders get an opportunity for a new life
Project YES gives second chances to kids*



SPIRIT

Volunteers of America—There are no limits to caring.®



WHERE THERE'S HOPE

*The brilliant smiles of Teresa Clause (left) and Sharlene Jay at
Volunteers of America Hope House in Spokane, Wash.
demonstrate that it is a place that provides the opportunity for
homeless women to begin rebuilding their lives.*

WINTER 2005

Features

5

THE HOUSE WHERE HOPE LIVES
Volunteers of America's Hope House
provides shelter for homeless
women in Spokane, Wash.

10

PROJECT YES:
SECOND CHANCES
FOR AT-RISK YOUTH
Project YES is a program in New York
that gives kids a second chance in life.

17

SAFETY AND SECURITY:
A VIRTUAL REALITY
FOR SENIORS
A pilot system using a state-of-the-art
monitoring program is helping to
provide even better care to seniors.

21

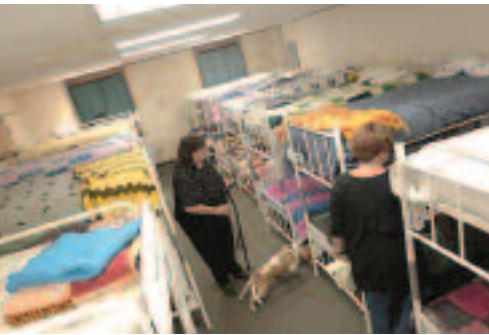
OPPORTUNITY
FOR A NEW LIFE
Life Connections is a new
Volunteers of America program
helping ex-offenders successfully
transition back into the community.

Departments

IN BRIEF 3

GIVING 15

AMERICAN SPIRIT 24



VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA
1660 DUKE STREET
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314-3427
T (800) 899-0089
www.VolunteersofAmerica.org

Board Chairman
FRANCES HESSELBEIN

President
CHARLES W. GOULD

Executive Vice President, External Affairs
JIMMIE PASCHALL

Editor
CARL ERICSON

Design
NANCI DIAMOND DAVIS,
JANE GILLETTE

Cover Photo
AMANDA SMITH

SPIRIT is published three times a year by
Volunteers of America, a national, nonprofit,
spiritually based organization providing local
human service programs, and opportunities
for individual and community involvement.
©2005 Volunteers of America, Inc.



1660 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3427

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
P A I D
Alexandria, VA
Permit No 6065

SPIRIT

The Magazine of Volunteers of America® • Winter 2005



*IN THIS ISSUE: Hope House provides help for homeless women
Seniors feel more secure with new technology • Ex-offenders get an opportunity for a new life
Project YES gives second chances to kids*



SPIRIT

Volunteers of America—There are no limits to caring.®



WHERE THERE'S HOPE

*The brilliant smiles of Teresa Clause (left) and Sharlene Jay at
Volunteers of America Hope House in Spokane, Wash.
demonstrate that it is a place that provides the opportunity for
homeless women to begin rebuilding their lives.*

Volunteers of America is a national, nonprofit, spiritually based organization providing local human service programs and opportunities for individual and community involvement. Founded in 1896, Volunteers of America focuses on caring for the elderly and disabled and fostering their independence, promoting self-sufficiency for the homeless and for others overcoming personal crisis, and supporting troubled and at-risk children, with the goal of helping people become as self-reliant as possible.

Every year, nearly 1.8 million people feel the helping hand and compassion of Volunteers of America.

Volunteers of America is one of the nation's largest nonprofit providers of quality affordable housing for families, the elderly and people with disabilities, and is a major provider of skilled long-term nursing care and health services.

If you would like more information, please contact your local Volunteers of America organization, or call national headquarters at 1-800-899-0089 or visit www.VolunteersofAmerica.org.



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Providing Hope, Opportunity and Second Chances



Charles W. Gould, National President of Volunteers of America

In 1896, Volunteers of America was founded to provide hope and opportunity to all Americans. Maud and Ballington Booth responded to the calls of those who were living with little hope of a better future. Over a century later, we are still in the business of hope.

Sometimes, problems seem so complex and overwhelming that we do not know where to begin. We wonder if we can really make a difference. The truth is, together we are making a difference. Everyone at Volunteers of America: donors, staff, volunteers, people in the field and people behind the scenes; we all have a part to play.

The Winter 2005 issue of *SPIRIT* features four stories about hope and second chances. I am again inspired by the work, the sacrifice and commitment of Maud Booth. She saw a need, and she found a way to meet that need. When she founded the Volunteer Prison League, the motto became "Look up and Hope."

In this issue, you'll read about Hope House in Spokane, Wash.—a place founded as a refuge for women who are vulnerable to the vagaries of the streets and the dangers around them...women who suffer from mental illness, homelessness, chemical

dependency and domestic violence.

I was so moved by the story of Debbie Prue, whose life has been turned around through Hope House. She is headed in a hopeful direction to recovery and a wholesome life.

You will read many stories about people whose lives have been transformed, who have been restored to the dignity that is their birthright, people who once had no hope, but now live lives of great hope, strength and encouragement.

People like Matthew, who participated in Volunteers of America's Project YES: a program designed to place and nurture troubled youth. Matthew was 14 years old when he was transferred from an emergency shelter to a Project Yes Teaching Family Home. Matthew, at the time, did not appear to be a young man with any hope. And yet today, at the age of 20, he is an honor student and a good citizen, with a bright future.

Matthew reminds me of what it is we are all working for: the transformation of individual lives, the promise of second chances.

Second chances are, perhaps, never so dramatic as when experienced by those who have just left the confines of prison. In the final feature story you will read about Volunteers of

America's Life Connections program, which helps ex-offenders succeed in the world outside prison. You will read about Sharon Burke, released from prison at the age of 60, who faced some seemingly overwhelming obstacles. She was, however, part of the Life Connections program, which has helped make her transition back into society a successful one. Sharon faces the future with a hope and confidence she never dreamed could be hers.

The Life Connections program also is about hope and new opportunity. This program was the dream of Sister Susan Van Baalan, who was inspired by the prison reform work spearheaded by Maud Booth more than a century ago.

Many of the social problems the Booth's faced and fought remain with us today. The impoverished, the troubled, the homeless, the prisoner, the forgotten...they will always be with us. And as long as they still need our help, we will continue to serve them.

Thank you for the role you play in our mission of hope.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Charles W. Gould". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles W. Gould
National President

IN BRIEF

Baseball Grants Help Kids Win in the Game of Life

Major league baseball players care about kids.

During the past two years, 16 Volunteers of America youth programs have received grants of up to \$10,000 from the Major League Baseball Players Trust.

The grants are used to help fund a wide range of activities including after-school programs for children from low-income families, arts and educational programs for children in transitional housing, fitness and recreational programs for at-risk children, better medical care for disadvantaged children, renovation of a kitchen in a children's center, day care for homeless children, and health care services for newborns and their mothers.

The latest round of grants was announced by Philadelphia Phillies short-stop Jimmy Rollins at Volunteers of America's national conference in

Philadelphia last year. "Major League Baseball players care about the communities where they live and play, and the partnership between Volunteers of America and the Major League Baseball Players Trust allows us another way to really make a difference in the lives of children and to encourage others to do the same," Rollins said.



PLAYERS TRUST

Philadelphia last year.

"Major League Baseball players care about the communities where they live and play, and the partnership between Volunteers of America and the Major League Baseball

Players Trust allows us another way to really make a difference in the lives of children and to encourage others to do the same," Rollins said.

the lives of at-risk and disadvantaged children and youth around the country. We are fortunate to have Major League Baseball players on the Volunteers of America team that is helping kids."

Major League Baseball players and Volunteers of America's partnership is called Share with a Child and was formed in 2002. It's dedicated to promoting the nurturing and well-being of America's children.

The 2004 grants were awarded to Volunteers of

America youth programs in Minneapolis, Minn.; Sandusky, Ohio; Spokane, Wash.; Lafayette, La. and Hayward, Calif.

More grants are planned for youth programs in 2005.

DONATE your CAR

800-948-1414

www.carshelpingpeople.org



There are no limits to caring.®

IN BRIEF

Providing More Affordable Housing in America

Volunteers of America's housing program focuses on the preservation of existing and the construction of new affordable housing.

"The decline in availability of affordable housing has created a serious problem in many of the nation's communities. Volunteers of America is dedicated to working to provide more affordable housing to low-income seniors, families and people with disabilities," Charles Gould, Volunteers of America president, said.

That vision of better affordable housing took another important step forward with the latest award of monies from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for construction of 291 units of housing in 10 new housing programs.

Seven of the 10 grants to Volunteers of America announced in the late fall

of 2004, will be used to provide housing for low-income seniors in six states. The facilities will be located in Selma, Ala.; Butner, N.C.; St. Louis, Mo.; Loudon, N.H.; Redford, Mich.; and Corozal, Puerto Rico. Three grants were awarded to provide housing for low-income people with disabilities. These facilities will be located in Tulsa, Okla.; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Tusculumbia, Ala.

These grants make it possible for Volunteers of America to expand its national program of providing high quality, professionally managed, safe, affordable housing.

"Volunteers of America is working with other groups nationally and with lawmakers in the nation's capital to call attention to and create public policy that aggressively addresses

the issue of affordable housing," Gould said.


Volunteers of America affordable housing communities are home to about 20,000 people in 200 facilities in 31 states.

During the past three years, Volunteers of America has received more than \$90 million in HUD section 202 and 811 program grants to help build 727 affordable housing units. The HUD section 202 housing program is designed to provide grants to build housing for low-income seniors and the frail elderly. The HUD section 811 program provides grants for housing for low-income people with physical, developmental and mental disabilities.



"The decline in availability of affordable housing has created a serious problem in many of the nation's communities. Volunteers of America is dedicated to working to provide more affordable housing to low-income seniors, families and people with disabilities."





Colorful quilts brighten-up the sleeping area at Volunteers of America's Hope House in Spokane, Wash. Working together residents like Cathy Darnold help keep it neat, clean and attractive.

THE HOUSE WHERE HOPE LIVES

BY JIM KERSHNER ✱ PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMANDA SMITH

Hope House, a Volunteers of America shelter for single homeless women in Spokane, Wash., began in a time of little hope.

In the late 1990s, a serial killer was stalking the streets of Spokane, murdering women. A band of concerned citizens raised money, converted a downtown building into a shelter and created a place for women to escape from the dangerous streets.

Today, the killer is off the streets and in prison for life, yet the shelter is busier than ever, because the people who ran it discovered something important: Single, homeless women were victimized not just by one killer, but by an array of dangers.



Volunteers of America Assistant Case Worker Brandy Tierney talks with resident Debbie Prue in one of the facilities apartments about the day's activities.



“These women often have layers of problems—homelessness, mental illness, chemical dependency, domestic violence—it’s not just one thing,” said Marilee Roloff, president and CEO of Volunteers of America in Spokane. “That’s the beauty of a place like this. We can provide support for all of those things, all in one place.”



“LIKE THE NAME SAYS,
HOPE HOUSE...
THIS PLACE
GIVES YOU
HOPE.”



Hope House consists of two distinct sections: an emergency shelter with 34 beds for women to spend a warm night; and a permanent hous-

ing facility with 25 apartments for women to live in as long as necessary. In-house case managers provide support for women in both areas.

Debbie Prue, 23, has been in and out of Hope House for three years and now lives in one of the apartments.

“My case manager here started getting me into treatment for drug use and I graduated from that successfully, all while living here,” said Prue, originally from Utah. “I got into therapy and back into school. I’ve found a lot of encouragement here to keep me doing what I’m doing. Even when I don’t want to.”

“Like the name says, Hope House,” said another resident, Barbara Tomlinson, 50. “This place gives you hope.”

Hope House has two key distinctions from most other shelters in Spokane—and from many other



shelters around the nation. For one thing, it accepts only single women, age 18 or older. Most shelters are for families or women with children. Second, Hope House doesn't screen its clients.

"We take women regardless of their lifestyle or chemical dependency issues or mental health," said Brenda Hunter, development director for Volunteers of America in Spokane. "That's unusual. Other facilities often require you to have a child, and be sober. A lot of these women just don't fit into that kind of environment."

Prue was homeless for more than a year and was never comfortable with other area shelters.

"Like, you have to attend chapel, said Prue. "You have to fill out questionnaires. You can't have any kind of criminal background, and I have a criminal background. And at that time, I was still in my addiction. Here, you could come to the shelter if you were under the influence. So, if I was using, I still had a safe place to go."

To understand why Hope House has no restrictions, it helps to understand its origins.

"Back in 1997, a serial killer was out on the street killing women," said Lynn Everson, of the Spokane Regional Health District. "We knew women had no place to stay. Other shelters required women to be clean and sober. That's a pretty tough call for many of these women."

So she and other social workers and community activists started holding meetings about how to provide a safe haven. Other key figures included Sgt. Mike Yates of the Spokane Police Department and a volunteer, Diane Leigland. They formed a nonprofit board and started raising money and

awareness.



Hope House resident Cathy Darnold gets help folding laundry from her dog Beans.





“We started getting checks in the mail from all sorts of people,” Everson said.

In 1999, the board rented an old three-story apartment building in downtown Spokane next to a free-way on-ramp. They named it the Downtown Women’s Shelter, with Leigland as its executive director. When the doors opened for the first time, women were lined up outside.

“One woman said, ‘I’ve been waiting for you to open,’ and I said, ‘Sorry it took so long,’” Everson said. “We thought it would be a lot of women who were addicts and prostitutes, but it turned out to also be all of these women we never saw before, women who were mentally ill, women who were escaping domestic violence. It was astonishing.”

The shelter had its share of donors, volunteers and government grants. Still, the shelter operated on a financial shoestring. After about a year, the shelter was about to go under.

“We were, to say the least, impoverished,” said Everson. “We needed to have somebody save us.”

Some of the shelter’s strongest advocates, Spokane’s Sacred Heart Medical Center and the Associated Sisters of Providence, approached Volunteers of

“They said, ‘You know about shelters. You run a kids’ shelter. Would you be interested in talking about how we can save the women’s shelter?’” Roloff said.

Roloff said she was immediately interested, because the shelter fit perfectly into the Volunteers of America mission.

“Our mission is to build healthier and more compassionate communi-

*
“IF WOMEN HAVE
HOUSING AND FOOD,
THE FIGHT FOR
SURVIVAL IS
MORE OR LESS
DONE”
*

ties, so it makes perfect sense for us,” she said. “The same kinds of social problems that lead women to the women’s shelter are the same things that lead kids to Crosswalk. These are people whose needs are unmet. Volunteers of America has always been proud to work with the most vulnerable populations and this is a very vulnerable population.”

Volunteers of America took over the shelter in April 2001 and changed the name to Hope House, a name suggested by the people being helped by the program.



Homeless women are always welcomed at Hope House where they find food, shelter and help in rebuilding their lives.



America.



“Sacred Heart bought the building and gave us three or four years to find the funding to buy it from them,” said Roloff. “We did it in two.”

Hunter said Hope House’s funding comes from three equally important sources: city, county and state funds; foundations and corporate grants; and individuals, churches, service organizations and schools.

“If you maintain a healthy balance across all three, you are not in a situation where you have to close your doors if one funding source is reduced,” Hunter said.

Volunteers of America has recently completed a remodeling of the building, including many of its 25 permanent apartments. The rooms have a clean and modern look. The shelter part of the operation, which occupies most of the main floor, has just been expanded from 28 beds to 34.

“We had to turn ladies away,” said Rusty Barnett, Hope House program director. “We had a hard time with that and the staff was extremely upset. That’s why we added more beds. We can’t just send these ladies back out on the street.”

Women usually begin lining up outside the doors one or two hours before the doors open at 8:00 p.m. The women are checked into the shelter by staff and volunteers and given some basic hygiene items that include toothpaste, brush, shampoo and soap. They are also given pajamas and offered a hot shower before being assigned a bunk in one of two communal bunk rooms.

“Some ladies crash right away,” said Barnett. “Others make their bed and are still wide awake.”

They can go into a small kitchen area to talk or watch television. By 11:00 p.m., everyone goes to bed. They have to be up by 7:00 a.m. the



next morning for an 8:00 a.m. checkout.

Some women return night after night and those are the ones who often end up in the residential apartments.

“The apartments are in high demand and we have a waiting list,” said Barnett. “Over 80 percent of the residents are women who came in to the shelter first. Once they have an apartment, they can stay as long as they want.”

Residents have access to an in-house food bank. Meanwhile, they must continue to work on the issues that made them homeless in the first place.

“If women have housing and food, the fight for survival is more or less done,” said Barnett. “They can say, ‘I’ve got the big ones: A roof over my head and food in my belly. Now I can work on my mental illness.’ The staff helps them figure out how to do that.”

For Catherine Darnold, 50, Hope House has been “a godsend.”

“I lived in my car down in



Residents Sharlene Jay, Teresa Clause and Erica Stargell (left to right) talk about how the Volunteers of America Hope House program is making a difference in their lives.





Volunteers of America staff members Alexandros and Bernadette Demitriadis live at the Project YES Teaching Family Home in New Jersey. The husband and wife team help, guide and teach the at-risk young people in their care.

Project YES

Second Chances for At-Risk Youth

By Fred Scaglione • Photography by Rick Kopstein



“This is a house of second chances,” said Joyce Ellis, a Project YES clinical specialist, describing Respite II, a transitional emergency shelter for youth 8 to 18 years old operated by Volunteers of America in Plainfield, N. J.

The shelter takes in boys and girls referred by New Jersey’s Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) who are in need of immediate care and placement. While the home’s primary goal is to accommodate and stabilize children in the midst of sudden and serious family crises, it also serves as the first stop on a youngster’s journey through Volunteers of America’s Project YES.

Begun in the early ’90s, Project YES is a structured series of placements designed to nurture troubled young people—those who cannot or will not live with their own families—through adolescence and into independent adulthood.

The Project YES program allows troubled kids to leave the emergency shelters, join one of Volunteers of America’s four Teaching Family Homes and eventually move on to one of six Synergy Independent Living programs. In all, Project YES can accommodate 72 young people at any one time.

Five years ago, Matthew had been placed in an emergency shelter similar to Respite II just days before his 14th birthday. He, his five brothers and one sister had already been through one stay in foster care several years earlier after his mother left the family. This time, it was Matthew who was removed by the state. “I was running around getting in trouble,” he explained. “They said my father couldn’t take care of me.”

Matthew spent seven months in the shelter before being reassigned to a Volunteers of America Teaching Family Home where he lived and learned for four years. Today, at 20, he shares a Synergy Independent Living garden

apartment and attends college. The self-described “horrible student” has become an honor student.

“We tend to take the children who are most challenging,” said Tantrell McKeiver, assistant service director at Volunteers of America’s Respite II. “We get children here at any time—midnight, three in the morning.”

“We are a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week operation. If we have a space available, we take them,” Ellis said.

Children are referred to Respite II and Respite I in Jersey City, N.J. for many reasons. For some, family problems and their own behavior simply have deteriorated to the point where teens leave home or are told to leave. “My father and I didn’t get along,” said one 15-year-old resident. “I used to run away a lot,” said another girl the same age.

In other cases, tragedy strikes a family just struggling to get by. “We had a set of brothers who were being taken care of by their older sibling after their mom passed away,” McKeiver said. “They had never been in the system before. The mom had tried to take good care of them.” Too often, however, the children have experienced the trauma and heartbreak of abuse and neglect which grows out of urban poverty. “They go through so much before they get here,” he said.

“These kids have had very tough lives,” said David Taylor, program director for Project YES, who points to the fact that each of the youngsters in one of the Teaching Family Homes has had at least four different out of home placements in their lives. “They come from detention facilities, psychiatric hospitals and the homes of relatives,” he said.

The staff works quickly to assess



With the help of Volunteers of America Matthew is building a successful and productive life. He works and attends college while living at a Project Yes apartment.

and care for the children arriving at their door. “The first thing we do is talk to the children to find out what they need and how they feel. We want to make the child feel comfortable. All of our children go through counseling. A lot of times their needs aren’t met before they get here. We run all their appointments—physicals, vision, dental, hearing,” Ellis said.

Even beyond its array of clinical services, Respite II has a warm and caring staff that makes an effort to have the most significant possible impact on a child in crisis. “They are nice,” said another teenager. “They help us a lot.”

“This is a family,” explained Ellis.

“It is safe and it is their home until another home becomes available.”

For some children, that next home may come quickly. For others, it can take a while. Even though Respite II is intended for only relatively short stays—30 to 90 days—many children remain with the program for several months as they address specific personal and family related issues.

When appropriate, staff will refer youngsters to one of Volunteers of America’s four Teaching Family Homes where they will live with four or five other children and a family teaching couple. “We try to send all of our kids to the Teaching Family Homes because they need stability,” McKeiver said.

Volunteers of America’s Teaching Family Homes offer a warm and loving yet highly structured environment led by family teachers—married couples are recruited and carefully trained. Unlike the rotating shift-based and hourly workers common in other group home programs, the Volunteers of America family teachers live in the homes round the clock, sharing all aspects of daily life with the kids in the program.

“These couples give their lives to teach family values and beliefs. We have live-in people who care about the home, care about the kids and care about each other. They model what respect and caring and problem solving are all about,” Taylor said.

“Volunteers of America gave me the opportunity to do what I want to do, change the lives of kids who are lost and help them find the way to success,” said Alexandros Demitriadis, who with his wife Bernadette, joined the Teaching

Family Home in West Patterson, N.J., last year. Prior to that he worked with substance abusers in Florida.

“I believe that kids need structure and leadership, but first they must know that you care. It creates relationships that last forever. I want kids in my home after 20 years to call and tell me what they are doing in their lives,” he said.

“Self-government also helps to teach leadership and responsibility. Family meetings give our kids a chance to be a leader,” said Bernadette Demitriadis. “A child is chosen to conduct the meeting and they run it very professionally.”

“We use a motivation system,” explained Taylor. “Each kid has their own target skills and goals. They earn points for achieving goals. They may earn negative points for not practicing skills or not adhering to what is expected of them. It is a token economy and it is extremely effective when you match caring—a big heart—with this kind of teaching seven days a week.”

As youngsters consistently demonstrate their newly taught skills, they move from a daily point card to a weekly system. Then, at an appropriate time, the point card is dropped completely. At each step, the young people win greater personal freedom. “You can go out more and pretty much do what you want,” Matthew said. “You are a role model. They expect you to act appropriately in front of the other kids.”

Today, it is easy to see that Matthew has learned well. He presents himself as a mature and thoughtful young man, speaking with a quiet confidence about the lessons of his past and the possibilities for his future. Volunteers of America has taught him to think

through the consequences of his actions.

Education is a constant theme throughout Project YES. “The target I have set for our home is success in school,” Demitriadis said. “I want them all to go to college. Some are already turned around and getting good grades. If you succeed in school, if you feel this success, your whole personality changes. You see the world positively.”

Volunteers of America’s family teachers try to find the individual spark within each child that can grow into a personal passion. For Matthew, it was automotive

Bernadette Demitriadis, in the Volunteers of America Teaching Family Homes, meets with a young resident. She believes in teaching leadership skills and building responsibility.





Volunteers of America staff member Alexandros Demitriadis discusses some of the goals and objectives the young people are setting in their lives with two of the residents in the Project YES program. The sessions are designed to help kids find ways to be successful in life.

mechanics. “My father was a diesel mechanic and I was always interested in tinkering and fixing things. My first shelter placement got me a part-time job at a local repair shop. Over the summers, I worked full time. I took four years of auto class in high school. I am serious about it. I really like it. It is what I want to do.”

Next came the previously unthinkable—college. Matthew learned about a community college program in automotive service which offers both an internship at a local dealership and, ultimately, an Associate’s Degree.

If all goes well, a young person’s next step in Project YES will be to one of the six Synergy Independent Living programs. These clusters of three separate apartments, each housing two young adults, are matched with a fourth apartment for a live-in case manager. Once again, this round-the-clock staff support separates the Volunteers of America programs from many other independent living facilities. While the individual apartments offer youngsters

the freedom and independence they need to mature, nearby case managers offer the guidance and structure to keep kids on track. Each Synergy program also has a 40-hour per week teaching assistant.

“I stop by all the time,” said Cathy Comeau, the live-in case manager for Matthew and five other youngsters in Synergy V in Piscataway, N.J. “I go see the kids at least twice a day, check on their apartments or take them shopping.”

While the six teenagers each are involved in their own specific jobs and schooling, they share the basic struggle to find a place in the world all by themselves. “They don’t have the supports and resources which are natural extensions of normal family life,” said Comeau. Volunteers of America tries to fill the gap, helping to line up jobs, health care, training programs and education.

The teens in the Synergy Programs continue to work on their individual skill sets while completing their education and preparing for careers. They can stay in the program up to the age of 21, provided that they stay in school, work and comply with the program’s other rules. Many of the Project YES participants finish high school, go on to college, move to the military or get vocational training.

“Without this program, without this structure and without the opportunities to get into the automotive field, I might have turned out to be a whole different animal. Who knows what would have happened,” Matthew said.

Volunteers of America’s Project YES is all about second chances for kids.

Fred Scaglione is a journalist in New York City.

GIVING

Building a Spirit of Giving

Associates and building partners of U.S. Home are proving that they do more than construct houses. They also know how to help turn a building into a caring and loving home.

For the past three years, the company and its associates have been supporting Volunteers of America by renovating facilities, building additions, conducting holiday parties and providing volunteers to help bring the joy and spirit of the holiday season to each person in Volunteers of America programs in the Sacramento, Calif. area.

U.S. Home Division President Sherman Haggerty credits the spirit of giving to the company's corporate culture and its associates.

It started in 2002, when employees of U.S. Home, Sacramento Division based in Gold River, Calif. adopted Volunteers of

America programs for disadvantaged women and children. Each year the scope of their help, support and spirit of giving has grown.

In 2004, U.S. Home, part of the Lennar Corp., included Volunteers of America in its Lennar Charitable Housing

Sacramento and Northern Nevada, said, "Volunteers of America is amazed at the wonderful help that U.S. Home, its employees and contractors are giving to help people in need in our community. Their generosity is enormous and their caring is exceptional."

wonderful," Holderegger said.

"Our company's giving spirit," Haggerty said, "is part of our corporate culture. Volunteers of America helps point the right direction... revealing the opportunities," Haggerty said.

"The foundation was created to help with the overwhelming need for housing assistance for the transitional homeless—thousands of men, women, and children who are forced out into the streets due to domestic violence, unemployment, crisis pregnancies and catastrophic illness," Haggerty said.

"Seeing the genuine smiles on the faces of the individuals who are helped is an

unforgettable experience," Haggerty said.

U.S. Home is a national home builder operating in 15 states. It has built more than 300,000 homes since its founding in 1954.

Foundation program. The foundation gives a portion of the sales price of each home to a local charity.

Christie Holderegger, vice president of development, Volunteers of America Greater

"Whether it's a new floor in the community room of a facility for people with severe mental health issues, or hosting a holiday party for children with a visit from Santa Claus, the people of U.S. Home are



Associates and building partners of U.S. Home gather at a Volunteers of America program facility while hosting a holiday party for residents. U.S. Home employees support Volunteers of America programs by giving time and money.

WHEN YOU GIVE BACK TO YOUR COMMUNITY...



WE MAKE SURE YOU SEE A RETURN ON YOUR INVESTMENT.

Leave a lasting legacy to the programs that are working
in your community.

When you support programs for children in need, the elderly, the homeless and others less fortunate, you enrich the lives of an entire community.

Volunteers of America is a national organization that is working hard in our community to provide programs and services that allow people to overcome their challenges and reach their full potential.

Find out how you can leave a lasting legacy in your community. Contact Volunteers of America, today.



There are no limits to caring.®

1-800-899-0089

www.VolunteersofAmerica.org

Safety and Security a Virtual Reality for Seniors

By Robbie Snow • Photography by Ben Garvin



Andrea Schumacher, residence director of Volunteers of America Elder Homestead in Minnetonka, Minn., chats with resident, Mary Bunsness in her room.

“I feel safer and more secure,” said Albert Newman, a resident in the memory care unit at Volunteers of America’s Homestead at Maplewood.

“My care here has been even better with the monitoring system in my room. The staff can tell if I’m not moving or if I take a fall they can get to me quicker,” Newman said.

Newman’s praise of Volunteers of America’s new Elder Care Monitoring System pilot program is shared by residents and their families, and by the staff.

The monitoring system pilot program is enhancing the well-being of seniors through the use of state-of-the-art technology to help provide high quality services.



Albert Newman, a resident at Volunteers of America Homestead at Maplewood in St. Paul, Minn., feels safer and more secure with the new monitoring system.

“I told them that they couldn’t have it back,” laughed Sylvia Graham, residence director, The Homestead at Maplewood, a Volunteers of America elder care facility in St. Paul, Minn.

The monitoring system was developed at the Medical Automation Research Center at the University of Virginia (UVA) under the direction of Dr. Robin A. Felder and is designed to assist staff in detecting any deviations in living patterns by residents that

praises of this system enough,” said Graham. “The data we gathered have improved our level of care to such a degree that I won’t let them take it away.”

“This is the best thing that has happened in health care in years,” exclaimed Andrea Schumacher, residence director, Volunteers of America, Elder Homestead, Minnetonka, Minn. The Homestead received 10 monitoring units in the last year.

“Most of the units are in our memory care center. These units

might require action.

“This program fits with the goal of the school’s center to improve the quality and efficiency of medical care through the development of advanced technologies,” explained Dr. Felder. “We felt that the university could make a substantive contribution to the quality of life for elders as well as reduce the financial burden of care for families. The technologies developed by our multi-disciplinary team are already proving themselves quite useful.”

The pilot program using 25 units began in 2003-2004 at Volunteers of America’s Maplewood facility.

give the staff an added tool to increasing care for residents who may not be able to communicate their needs consistently,” Schumacher said.

To Albert Newman, Karel Kamps and Sue Wahlin the elder-care monitoring system has meant more peace of mind and a greater sense of security.

Kamps and Wahlin both have mothers benefiting from the new technology. Kamps’ mother is in the memory care unit at Volunteers of America Elder Homestead. “I really like this system, because it enhances the ability of the staff to provide quality care. I like the idea that my mother is monitored 24 hours a day. That the staff can look at the data and instantly see if something is out of the ordinary. It was because of the system, that they could see that she had a urinary tract infection, and with early intervention cleared it up,” she said.

“With the unit in place we were able to detect a change in Wahlin’s mother’s sleep pattern. And with other data we gathered, we diagnosed possible depression.” said Graham. “With the data, we were able to get her on some medication and she is doing much better.”

“The peace of mind, knowing that mother is watched and monitored all day and all night, is wonderful. There have been other family issues recently, and to know that she is taken care of is wonderful,” Wahlin said.

Barbara Swanson is in the unique position of viewing the monitoring project from both sides. She is the director of nursing at Maplewood, and her father-in-law was one of the first residents to use the system during its pilot run.

“The elder care monitoring project is an excellent concept,” Swanson said.

“It is a much better way of tracking personal hygiene, sleep patterns and movement.”

“Our patients, especially in the memory care units, often are not very verbal, so anything that allows us to identify potential problems helps.”

The monitoring system is made up of a series of wireless sensors placed throughout a living space and in the resident’s bed. The sensors record data as the resident moves about in his or her daily routine. The information is sent to a central computer and can be used to monitor and evaluate a person’s activities.

“This is not a diagnostic tool, but we can infer a great deal from the data with just little changes in activity levels,” Graham explained. “For example, frequent visits to the bathroom may indicate a urinary infection, which the patient may be unable to communicate to us. This way we can see the change and take the appropriate tests to diagnose a problem.”

“We developed the system in an effort to use appropriate low cost technologies to enhance the independence, health outcomes, and quality of life of older individuals,” said Dr. Majd Alwan, assistant professor and director of Robotics and Eldercare Technologies, Medical Automation Research Center, Department of Pathology, UVA.

The sensors are not intrusive. There are no cameras. The units are placed along the floor in the pathways going to and from various rooms. There is a heat sensor in the kitchen area. The sensors in the bed cannot be felt by the resident. Only



Sue Wablin (right) helps her mother Elvera Wickland fix her hair while visiting her at Volunteers of America Homestead at Maplewood. Sue Wablin says the new system enhances the ability of staff to provide quality care.

motion, or lack thereof, is monitored. The bed unit can detect respiratory and heart rate.

Dr. Alwan said that the system was first tested in a home near the university. It was this “Smart House,” that drew the attention of Volunteers of America.

“I had heard about the project from a number of different people,” said Wayne Olson, vice president of Healthcare Operations at Volunteers of America. “But frankly, I was skeptical. I couldn’t see how it would fit.”

“But then I went down and saw the Smart House. I could then see its potential for working in assisted living environments. The university was open to hearing suggestions, and we had numerous brainstorming

sessions to bring the needs of seniors and the technology together. After those initial sessions we all agreed that there needed to be a pilot program run in a controlled environment. We selected two of our well managed assisted living communities located in the St. Paul/Minneapolis area,” Olson said.

Dr. Alwan agreed with the choice of Maplewood, and its sister center, Elder Homestead. “The two facilities (presently using the technology) have all the elements of success. They are well-controlled assisted living environments. Both sites have exemplary service, management and professional caregivers who are embracing the technology and who would do anything to deliver high quality care,” he said.



Steve Kell, lab general manager (left), and Dr. Majd Alwan, assistant professor and director of Robotics and Eldercare Technologies, Medical Automation Research Center, Department of Pathology, UVA, helped develop the monitoring system.

“The system also needed to be user friendly. I can install these units. You don’t have to be a technology wizard to run this system,” Graham said. “The data are easily accessed; any member of the staff can get information at any time. Like any new system, there have been glitches, but the people at the university have been prompt in fixing them.”

The data are also available to families through the Internet. Swanson was able to access the system from home on weekends. But most families have not used this feature. As the system develops and is marketed in different senior living settings through a care provider, the developers feel this aspect of the program will also have increased usage.

“The project was envisioned to start with private homes, but we later found that it makes sense in assisted and independent living senior apartments, where a care/service provider can act upon the information and deliver the needed assistance,” Dr. Alwan said.

Future plans call for the system to be available for use in private homes and senior apartments.

“I would have liked to have put one in my mother’s house, before having to move her into the Volunteers of America facility. I think we could have kept her at home longer, or possibly gotten her into the unit early if we had been able to monitor her more efficiently,” said Kamps.



Wahlin and Swanson echo that sentiment. “I think this type of system can help people stay independent and in their place of choice longer,” said Swanson.

Volunteers of America plans to expand the use of the monitoring system in its residential and health care facilities.

“The Elder Care Monitoring System is an exciting new element we are adding to our efforts to provide excellent care for the elderly. The system makes it possible for Volunteers of America to remain on the cutting edge of technology and its applications to the health care field,” Olson said.

Robbie Snow is a freelance writer in Falls Church, Va.

David Mack, a Ph.D. student in Biomedical Engineering, examines components of the monitoring system in the UVA laboratory.



Sharon Burke, an ex-offender in Volunteers of America's Prison Aftercare Services Program is hugged by her mentor, Judy Kendall.

Opportunity for a New Life

By Mark T. Harris • Photography by Lee Thomas

When Sharon Burke and Phillip Moore were released from prison they were faced with the reality that they would have to change their lives and that they would be confronted with many hard decisions and road blocks to being successful.

But both Burke and Moore had something going for them that could make it possible for them to succeed in their opportunity for new and better lives—they were part of Volunteers of America's Prison Aftercare Services program.

Major transitions in life are by their nature challenging. For individuals being released from prison,

the transition back into the community is almost always very difficult.

Ex-offenders often face the task of rebuilding their lives with limited resources, a frustrating job search, strained or broken family relationships, and fear of rejection everywhere they go in the community.

Making that transition process better and more successful is a

challenge that Volunteers of America has undertaken in its Prison Aftercare Services program, an element of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons Life Connections endeavor.

The partnership between the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons Life Connections program and Volunteers of America began in



"Now, I find myself stopping and thinking about things first, and letting God have his way in whatever I'm faced with."

2003. The Life Connections program is a dream come true for Sister Susan Van Baalen, director of Chaplaincy Services for the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the driving force behind creation of the program. Her vision was to create a program to help prison inmates make a successful transition back into the community.

By working as a part of the Life Connections program, Volunteers of America Prison Aftercare Services program continues its hundred-year tradition of working with prison inmates and helping them as they reenter the community.

The first part of the Life Connections program is conducted in prison where inmates live

together in groups of 20 to 35 persons, while following an intensive daily schedule of self-study, meetings, counseling, and other activities that often run from early morning to late evening.

The second phase of the program consists of transition support services provided by Volunteers of America as inmates re-enter society. Once released the ex-offenders are linked with trained mentors from civic or religious groups affiliated with their faith backgrounds. The mentors meet regularly with the individuals for a period of at least one year.

"Life Connections is a voluntary program that encourages inmates to address major life issues from the perspective of their own faith traditions," explained Rev. Tommy Dillion, Volunteers of America director of Prison Aftercare Services. "The program emphasizes personal reflection through keeping journals, participation in victim impact programs, and weekly meetings with local mentors who are called spiritual guides and share their religious or spiritual background. Our hope is that the program will better prepare individuals for life outside prison."

For Sharon Burke, an ex-offender returning to her Frankfort, Ky., community after five years, it was not an easy adjustment. It seemed her entire world was different and that she faced many new obstacles. At age 60, she had to face fears about eventually finding her own home, as well as a part-time job. But she believes that she returned to the community with a more mature, spiritually centered, perspective.

"Before I went to prison, if I had been backed in a corner, there's no telling what kind of snap decision

or bad choice I might have made," she said. "Now, I find myself stopping and thinking about things first, and letting God have his way in whatever I'm faced with." Burke credits her experience in the Life Connections program with nurturing her new perspective. It's really a belief not that she won't know tough times, but that she can get through tough times.

"The Life Connections program gave me the opportunity to reflect and think about my life in a deeper way. It was something I needed to do, which I'm grateful for," Burke said.

Burke's mentor is Judy Kendall of nearby Paris, Ky. Kendall had been contacted about the mentoring program by a local minister who thought she might make a good mentor.

Burke said her first weeks out of prison were rough. Her supervised release temporarily restricted her her home and she was anxious about make plans for the future. She said she is confident that with the help of Volunteers of America she will be able to "make it."



Sharon Burke (left) says that her mentor Judy Kendall has played an important role in helping her turn her life around.



“The Life Connections program gave me the opportunity to reflect and think about my life in a deeper way...”

Last year Imam Muhaimin began mentoring Phillip Moore, a Muslim and an ex-offender from Chicago. “The Life Connections program helped me to get closer to Allah,” said Moore, who is now employed as a substance abuse technician. “I left prison with just a better sense of the importance of the spiritual part of my life.” Moore also attends college where he is working toward a degree in addictions counseling.

Muhaimin said the program was very important in overcoming the obstacles that ex-offenders must deal with in the community. “If we’re going to salvage our population of ex-offenders it’s vital that the public develop a more sensitive understanding of what a person incarcerated may have to face once they’re released back into society,” he said.

“Whatever an ex-offender may face in the community, Volunteers of America’s Prison Aftercare Services hopes through its mentoring program to be there with spiritual guidance and encouragement.

It is exciting to see this emerging program grow and achieve success in the lives of men and women who need and want another chance in life,” Dillon said.

Mark T. Harris is a freelance writer in Bloomington, Ill.

Maud Booth Provided a Reason to “Look Up and Hope”

Inspiration for a new program called Life Connections launched by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons in 2003 to help prison inmates and ex-offenders came, in part, from the work of Volunteers of America co-founder Maud Booth that started 109 years ago.

An urgent appeal in 1896 from a man in New York’s Sing Sing prison to help his destitute wife was the catalyst that began Volunteers of America’s programs to help prison inmates and their families.

Volunteers of America co-founder Maud Booth answered the man’s plea. She went to the prison and spoke to a group there. The result of that meeting was the founding of the Volunteer Prison League on Christmas Eve 1896.

The Volunteer Prison League made a tremendous difference on both sides of prison walls.

Until her death 52 years later, Maud Booth was the driving force behind a movement to help inmates rebuild their lives in prison and when they were released. By 1923 more than 100,000 men had been enrolled in the Volunteer Prison League in 46 state and federal prisons. The motto of the organization was “Look Up and Hope.”

In the late 1890s Maud Booth opened some of the nation’s first halfway houses called “Hope



Maud Booth often spoke to inmates and prison officials. She was a leader in prison reform and helping ex-offenders.

Halls” as she expanded her work with prison inmates to include programs to help ex-offenders adjust to life in society. She traveled across America calling attention to prison conditions, urging many changes in the nation’s corrections system.

Between 1896 and 1948 her accomplishments also included securing political support for prison reforms, helping establish the parole system, and working to increase public support for programs that deal with the conditions in society that contribute to poverty and crime.

The American Prison Association and other corrections organizations credit Maud Booth with making a tremendous difference in the lives of inmates and ex-offenders.

AMERICAN ★ SPIRIT

MAKING THE MOST OF LIFE AND OPPORTUNITY

Matt Walz will achieve two important goals this year as he launches his career in nonprofit management. In July 2005 he will complete graduate school and celebrate 10 years of being alcohol and drug free.

He credits Volunteers of America for helping him come to grips with his addiction and start a new life, making it possible for him to have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of other young men and women that need a helping hand in rebuilding their lives.

Walz, 24, with deep feeling in his voice, recalls the night 10 years ago when he came home under the influence of alcohol and drugs and was confronted by his younger brother. Walz asked his brother "What's wrong with you?" His brother said "Matt, you're wrong."

The words and strong emotions of his brother had an amazing impact. The next day, Walz went to Volunteers of America and entered a program that changed his life, and the life of his family and friends. "The Volunteers of America program turned my whole life around. It gave me the strength and the desire to have a new direction," Walz said.

"As I took control of my life, Volunteers of America gave me an opportunity to help other young people facing the same demons I had faced and overcome."

"During college, as a youth supervisor in the South Dakota Volunteers of America alcohol and drug addiction program, I found that I was able to help others."

"I knew where kids with problems were coming from because I had walked the same halls, faced the same walls, understood what they were going through and had some ideas of what might help them find new direction and purpose in their lives," Walz said.

By the time he had completed college,

Walz knew he wanted a career in government relations and public policy in the nonprofit world.

"I believe there is a great challenge in creating public policy in government on the local, state and national level that recognizes human need, while fostering

programs and communities that help people," Walz said.

During graduate school, Walz worked and volunteered for a nonprofit agency in Syracuse, N.Y. that helps drug addicts and prostitutes.

Recently, Walz set another goal in his life. He is determined to start his professional career with the national organization that helped give him a new, better life—Volunteers of America.

"I want to be part of an organization that helps people by empowering them to make the most of themselves and their opportunities," Walz said.



Volunteers of America is a national, nonprofit, spiritually based organization providing local human service programs and opportunities for individual and community involvement. Founded in 1896, Volunteers of America focuses on caring for the elderly and disabled and fostering their independence, promoting self-sufficiency for the homeless and for others overcoming personal crisis, and supporting troubled and at-risk children, with the goal of helping people become as self-reliant as possible.

Every year, nearly 1.8 million people feel the helping hand and compassion of Volunteers of America.

Volunteers of America is one of the nation's largest nonprofit providers of quality affordable housing for families, the elderly and people with disabilities, and is a major provider of skilled long-term nursing care and health services.

If you would like more information, please contact your local Volunteers of America organization, or call national headquarters at 1-800-899-0089 or visit www.VolunteersofAmerica.org.

