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www.vmcinc.org

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Spring, 2014

Dear Friends of VMC,

Spring is finally here! Winter has felt interminable. But the other day, on a short walk, I spotted the first bulbs of the season bravely sticking their little heads through the soil, as if to sniff the warming air. It energized me to look forward to new growth and new beginnings. This is truly the season of Resurrections.

For our people as well, there is movement in the air. When someone walks into the Resource Center for the first time, it is because they are tired of the old way of doing things. They are tired of sleeping outside on concrete or in noisy dorms – or of simply feeling like they are going nowhere. Spring is a perfect time for them to declare that they want and deserve something better.

That is what VMC is all about. It is about holding the door open for someone so that they can walk through, even if they are scared. It's about warm greetings and welcoming gestures. It's about planning sessions that set realistic and reasonable goals. It's about meaningful classes, good food and a comfortable environment. And it is about accountability. Our programs work because we expect our people to work towards a better future. And so they do. There is dignity in that kind of work.

We are so proud of the lives that we affect and the changes we see at VMC. We are so proud that you are a part of those transformations. When I think of this coming time of Resurrection, I think about how that is very much what we see every day.



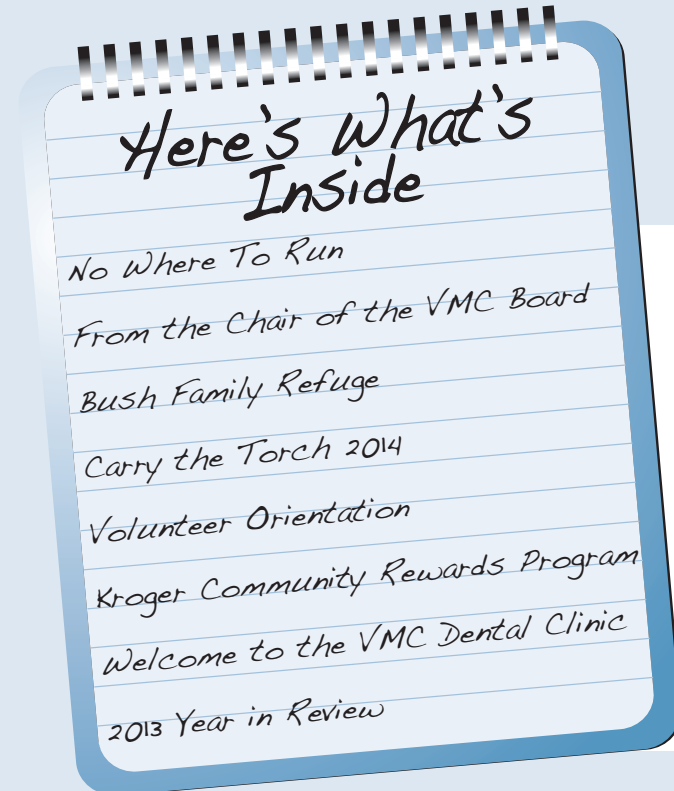
We continue to need your support. In fact, it is accurate to say that we cannot do this work without you. It is your donation that enables us to be here every day, in the service of those people we both want to help. We are together in this – and I am very grateful for your generosity. Please understand how very badly we need it. And please give as generously as you can.

Thank you. And Happy Spring!

Ginny Weatherstone
Chief Executive Officer



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Spring 2014

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The Journey Home

NO WHERE TO RUN

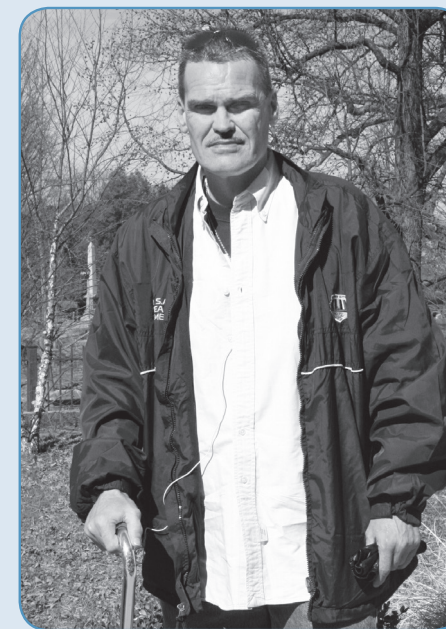
Several weeks ago, I asked the members in the Resource Center to share some of their thoughts with me in writing. I was astonished at what I received. I have selected one of those offerings for this newsletter. Henry Smith is a distinguished gentleman with a lively intelligence. His physical problems are obvious as he walks with a cane and usually in great pain from a back condition. Henry is honest

about his mental illness; he has a diagnosis of schizoid-affective disorder. As Henry explains, his life has been full of turmoil. He also explains that the time has come to deal with it. We welcome Henry to the Resource Center and share his story below.

Ginny Weatherstone

By Henry Smith

When I look back on life and where I find myself now, it seems that I've been running away all my life. Now I have found myself hundreds of miles from my birthplace with nowhere to go. I have decided to stay and, once again, start my life over. This time I realize I must do it for me – and if I can help others (my children) later, that would be great. But I must first look at the reasons why I always run away from problems. I found it began when I was a child.



Henry Smith

At the age of three, I was placed in foster care due to sexual abuse. I had told my mother what was going on and nothing happened. So I decided to tell someone else. It wasn't long before the police arrived and I was taken away. My mother seemed to blame me because "I told someone else." Throughout the years in foster care, I had the urge to run away and run as far as I could, but as a child, I did not know where to go. My mother and father's unscheduled visits only increased these urges.

Finally, at the age of nine, I was allowed to return to my mother. My mother had taken on borders to help pay the rent; they were drunks and bums. It wasn't long before the sexual and physical abuse reared its ugly head, but I wasn't going to let on. What I was told was "to keep my mouth shut" or I would be placed back in foster care. So I ran. I only stayed gone one day because I soon became cold and hungry. This activity carried on until I was fourteen.

At the age of fourteen, I watched my stepfather murder a man in cold blood. The police arrested him and that soon became my mother's main focus. What I found out later was that it

was because my mother lied that the man, innocent as he was, lost his life. My mother wanted me to lie on the stand in the trial. I could not find the courage to do this, so I ran – this time for good.

I roamed the streets, slept in cars, stayed with friends and was able to elude Protective Services until I was seventeen and then I was emancipated as an adult.

The rest of my life is mirrored with the same actions and results. Three marriages. Two divorces and my recent separation. In 2006, I lost my first born son to a drug overdose and my ex-wife, his mother, committed suicide a month later. I am left with a 27 year old son and a daughter of 7 years.

I decided to move here when my biological father told me I could stay and get on my feet. My father had raised my second son after my second divorce. What I witnessed turned my stomach. My father was selling prescription drugs and had my son caught in the middle. It wasn't long before I was fighting with my father and was told to leave.

Now, normally, I would run like hell! But this time, I'm not going to run. I'm going to face life and whatever it has to dish out. With the help I've received so far at VMC and the beautiful people who work with me, I've decided to run at the problems in life and no longer run away.

Thank you.

Henry

- **110 individuals moved into a permanent residence; 47 were formally chronically homeless.**
- **Housing Retention Rate since June 2007 is 93.3%.**
- **1,500 individuals were served in the Resource Center.**
- **32,500 meals were served.**
- **748 patients were served in the Dental Clinic.**
- **1,256 dental procedures were performed at no cost.**
- **675 homeless prevention services were provided in the Bush Family Refuge.**
- **4,881 people were served by the Bush Family Refuge.**
- **66 residents lived in an apartment in Minvilla Manor.**

FROM THE CHAIR OF THE VMC BOARD



Sheri Pender

Living downtown makes it hard to avoid “homelessness.” I see “it” in the morning as I leave my loft condo and I see “it” as I return at night. At times, a homeless neighbor will plant themselves on the bench across from my building. This fall, a woman lived on that bench for a few weeks. The longer she stayed, the more anxious the residents in my building became.

I began to hear questions like “Should we give her a blanket...clothing...food?” The woman obtained a cooler and told me it was for the food that downtown residents were providing. I watched her become more and more comfortable on the bench. Her possessions multiplied as good-hearted people assisted her.

Of course, the situation ended poorly. She was finally asked to “move on” because of the trash and unsanitary conditions that developed.

Homelessness affects all of us and I am convinced the Volunteer Ministry Center (VMC) has a solution. Pointing our homeless friends towards the VMC doors is one way we can help and give them hope. Our highly trained staff continues to produce very positive results.

Please join the VMC community this year. “Volunteer” is the first word in our name for a reason. Our programs are not possible without our volunteers—those volunteering time and resources. If you want “something meaningful” to add to your life, come and see us and learn about the volunteer opportunities. We have an opportunity for you!

Thank you,

Sheri Pender
Chair of the VMC Board and
Volunteer of time and resources

A WORD OF THANKS FROM THE BUSH FAMILY REFUGE

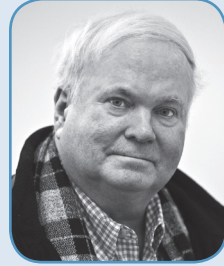
One of the programs of the Volunteer Ministry Center is to help those people who are marginally housed and who encounter problems with keeping their housing. We accomplish this mission through the Bush Family Refuge. Staffed by trained volunteers and overseen by Director Vanessa Hensley, the Refuge offers extensive services to individuals and families in crisis. These services include obtaining birth certificates and I.D.s, distributing clothing and toiletry items, and dispensing bus passes for medical appointments and job interviews. Two of the more essential and commonly requested services are utility and rental assistance.

This Winter was unusually difficult with harsh storms in both January and February which brought record-breaking cold temperatures. These cold snaps resulted in the highest peak demand for power in TVA’s history. The Knoxville Utilities Board stated that residents should expect a 30-50% increase in utility bills. For people already living on the edge, this may

mean having to choose between paying these bills or paying their rent. Unfortunately, when they come to the Refuge seeking assistance there just isn’t enough money in the VMC budget to help everyone.

To combat this situation, an appeal letter was sent out requesting contributions that would directly benefit those in need. The response we received was fantastic! Many of our supporters opened their hearts and their checkbooks to help provide the crucial assistance that allowed our clients to pay their utility bills and keep their homes and families warm during the frigid temperatures. We would like to extend our heart-felt gratitude to all who helped make this possible. Whether it was through your wallet or your time, it is because of your generosity that VMC was able to provide the essential services that helped continue our mission goal of preventing homelessness. You helped keep these good people in their homes and gave them hope. For this, we extend a sincere thank you.

CARRY THE TORCH 2014



Pat Conroy

VMC’s annual Carry the Torch event is just around the corner and we are excited to welcome New York Times best-selling author Pat Conroy as the featured speaker. Described as a leading figure of late-20th century Southern literature, Mr. Conroy has written numerous novels and essays, as well as a cookbook colored with heartfelt memoirs. Three of Mr. Conroy’s novels, *The Lords of Discipline*, *The Great Santini*, and *The Prince of Tides*, were made into Oscar-nominated films. His most recent book, *The Death of Santini*, tells the story of the volatile relationship between him and his father, and of its eventual repair prior to his father’s death. Mr. Conroy will speak about forgiveness and reconciliation

at the event which raises awareness of the many issues surrounding homelessness.

Long-time VMC supporter and friend Betsey Bush is the Honorary Chair this year. The event begins with a Mission Fair at 10:00am where agencies which serve the homeless, along with VMC, will present booths and interact with visitors who are looking for volunteer opportunities. The luncheon will begin at 11:45am and be followed by a book signing at 1:00pm. Sponsorship opportunities and further information are available from Mary Beth Ramey at 865-524-3926 ext. 229 or through the website at www.carrythetorchknoxville.com.



Betsey Bush



Peter Keese
Bush Family
Refuge Volunteer

**The next Orientation will be April 15, 2014.
For more information, contact Lisa Hutton at
865-524-3926 ext. 230 or lhutton@vmcinc.org**

**Volunteer Orientations
are held the third
Tuesday of every
month at 4:30pm
in the multi-purpose
room at VMC.**



Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church Meal Group

KROGER COMMUNITY REWARDS PROGRAM

Did you know that you can earn money for VMC each time you shop for groceries? This past Fall, The Kroger Co. introduced an all-new rewards program geared specifically toward assisting local charitable organizations and schools. By simply linking your Rewards card to VMC, you earn points every time you shop. Those points accumulate quarterly and eventually are converted into funds for VMC’s programs.

The Kroger Co. has dedicated \$750,000 to be distributed through its Kroger Community

Rewards program, which runs through August 31, 2014. VMC is proud to be a partner in this easy and effective effort to make a beneficial difference in people’s lives. If you would like to participate, visit Kroger’s secure Rewards website at www.krogercommunityrewards.com and enroll your Kroger Plus Card by selecting Volunteer Ministry Center. After that, every time you shop at Kroger using your Kroger Plus Card, you’ll not only earn rewards for yourself, but for VMC as well! For detailed instructions, click on the “Help Us” tab on the VMC website at www.vmcinc.org.

WELCOME TO THE VMC DENTAL CLINIC

Every Tuesday and Friday morning about 7:00am, a line starts forming in front of the Volunteer Ministry Center. Despite the sometimes harsh weather conditions, people wait patiently for the doors of the VMC Dental Clinic to open. They come from all over the county to receive services like cleanings, fillings, and extractions at no cost to patients. For the area’s homeless and low income residents, the Clinic is essential to their health needs, a need that dental hygienist Christy Howard says is “often unseen and unheard.”



Dr. Roberson

Six local dentists volunteer their time on a regular basis with an additional 7 offering their services as needed. Depending upon the required procedures, the Clinic will see between 8 to 14 patients each day and often stay open past normal operating hours to be sure those in need are helped. Hygienist Pattie Thiele, Louise McNeely, and Jamie Cassell make up the volunteer staff while Christy and administrative professional Roxie Moore complete the team that provides the utmost in quality care for its patients.

One of the regular volunteer dentists is Dr. Martin Roberson. Dr. Roberson volunteers on Fridays and is also a VMC Board member. When asked why he volunteers at the VMC Dental Clinic, Dr. Martin Roberson responded, “I feel we are called by God to serve others. I can’t think of a better way to do that than giving to someone who can’t repay you for what you have done. I have been helped by so many people throughout my life and feel it is a privilege to be able to lend a helping hand to someone in need however possible.”



Dr. Roberson

In January, Dr. Roberson expanded the dental services to include a monthly denture clinic. Now, with Dr. Roberson’s instrumental help, the Clinic is producing an average of 5 sets of dentures per month. He recently shared a few stories of patients receiving their dentures and beaming with pride. Some had been without teeth for many years. One individual had even gone for 10 years without them, unable to eat normally. Dr. Roberson said that when the gentleman received his dentures, he broke down crying with tears of joy, thankful to finally like what he saw in the mirror.

Stories like this are what keep the volunteers and staff of the VMC Dental Clinic motivated. Christy says, “To be able to help make such a difference in someone’s life, to give them a renewed hope, is a blessing. We are honored to be a part of it.”

The Clinic is open on Tuesdays and Fridays from 8am to noon and can be reached at 865-934-1746. For volunteer information, please contact Lisa Hutton at 865-524-3926 ext.230 or lhutton@vmcinc.org.