

FROM THE CEO'S DESK: GET A BETTER MIRROR



Bruce W. Spangler, CEO

Poets and lyricists have a way with words and the order of those words. Shane Koyczan declares with rhythmic style, “if you can’t see anything beautiful about yourself get a better mirror, look a litter closer and stare a little longer.”

Recently a neighbor confided how thankful they were that staff had the ability and willingness to see the person behind the mask of life on the streets. This is no simple gesture. It is a catalyst that evokes, ignites and/or sparks the ray of hope. We witness to the fact that other possibilities exist.

With our programs, along with the compassionate and insightful presence of volunteers and staff, each day is a daily reminder of the objective to get a better mirror.

For a neighbor facing the daily experience of homelessness, the mirror of home needs to be prominent and visible in and during our conversations and engagements.

For volunteers and staff, the better mirror reduces the tendency to judge or jump to conclusions about a neighbor.

The experience of homelessness should not have to be experienced. If it does, however, it should be as short as possible.

Committed to ending and preventing homelessness, VMC will continue the good work in 2020 fulfilling those charges through our Resource Center, Bush Family Refuge, Dental Clinic, Street Outreach, The Foyer, and Minvilla Manor program areas.

Since VMC began operating its Housing First philosophy, nearly 1080 people have moved from the streets to a place of their own. Yet, there is more to be done. We know, by name, that approximately sixty neighbors need permanent supportive housing NOW! TODAY!

The need for more permanent supportive housing has become even more visible as reflected in the “mirror” of the graph below. Our ability to help neighbors find housing that is affordable, accessible and appropriate has been diminishing in the past seven years.

The reflection of the lack of affordable housing is discouraging. Yet, we have a better mirror. We see the possibility that lies before us.

So for 2020, we will continue to work on the development of more permanent supportive housing. By mid-year, we should be able to make a couple of major announcements regarding our plans to do so.

In advance, thanks for your willingness to be part of this major effort.

As always, I am grateful for your support of ending and preventing homelessness.

Bruce W. Spangler

Rev. Bruce W. Spangler
Chief Executive Officer



The Volunteer Ministry Center Presents Carry the Torch Knoxville



**Featuring New York Times Best
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Krista Tippett

Wednesday, April 22, 2020

10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Knoxville Convention Center

Mission Fair 10:00 am-11:30 am

Lunch and Program 11:45 am-1:00 pm

Book Signing 1:00 pm-2:00 pm



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**For additional information contact Mary Beth Ramey at 524-3926 x 229 or visit
carrythetorchknoxville.com**

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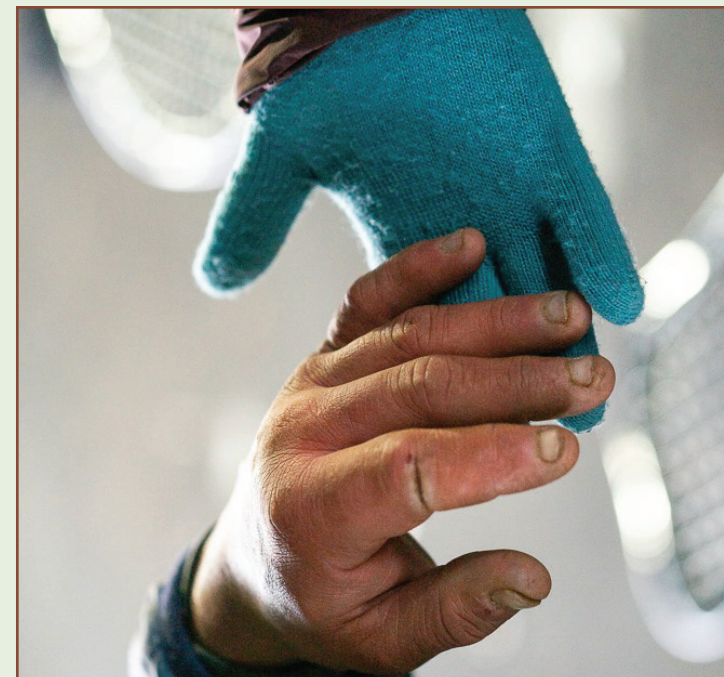
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The *Journey*
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February 2020

THE DOORS ARE FINALLY OPENING

The doors are finally opening.

It is evening as she walks into the newly opened low-barrier, housing focused shelter - The Foyer.

The nightfall of December 16, 2019 marks the opening of VMC's newest supportive program, The Foyer. It is an overnight emergency shelter designed for those who otherwise do not or cannot utilize a traditional shelter for various reasons (low barrier) with the goal of securing permanent housing (housing focused) as soon as possible.

Greeted by the evening staff, she is assigned a bed and given an orientation to both the building and what to expect while being a guest at The Foyer.



A large poster informs her of the community expectations: the hours of operation, places to store personal items, and the need to respect others and self. The poster promises that these and other expectations will “promote respect, responsibility, and safety” for the guest while in The Foyer. The last sentence concludes with the anticipation that guests will “be a good neighbor.”

She may have nodded in agreement with the expectations but would have doubted the possibility of being safe as the streets demand a strong dose of skepticism and cynicism of the intent of others. Trust is hard when survival is the lone task. Without trust, hope has no place to land. Without trust, hope is homeless.

For the past couple of years, she has slept outside in a variety of places that are less than welcoming, less than safe. Each night, she catnapped in clothes seldom washed and a body washed even less frequently. For each minute her eyes are closed, her physical well-being is in jeopardy and her emotional health stretched thin.

First on her agenda is to take a long, hot and relaxing shower. More than a cleansing of her body, it is simply refreshing and relaxing. Slowly, the tension of the constant alertness required to survive on the streets trickles down the drain with the soapy water.

With the heat of the shower still lingering on her muscles and the floral fragrance of the shampoo in her hair, she puts on her night clothes and makes her bed.

She then finds the edge of the bed and sits almost as a statue. Sitting there awhile, a staff member notices that she is somewhat distressed.

Walking over to her, it is clear that she is weeping.

The staff member reassures her that they would try to assist in any and every way;

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reminding her that she is in a safe and okay space.

Acknowledging the inquiring staff member, she speaks softly through the tears. She names the peace and calm that surrounds her that is like a long lost friend reappearing.

"But are you okay? You are crying," inquires the staff member.

Night after night, she might cry herself to sleep as night brings even more uncertainty to the streets.

Tonight, she confesses, "I cry from relief." She quickly falls asleep in her own bed, with fresh linens, surrounded by the calming scent of cleanliness and the sound of peaceful silence.

The door to hope is opening for the first time in a long time for her. Time will tell when she opens the door to her own apartment.

The door to The Foyer is finally open.

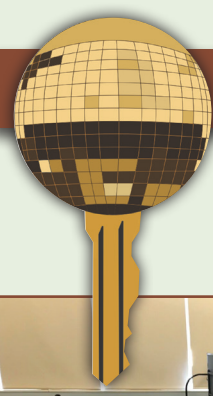
The Foyer is always the entrée to home.

By: Bruce W. Spangler

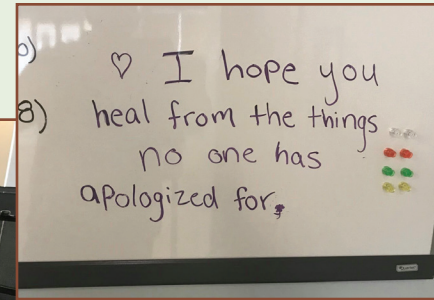
IMMEDIATE NEEDS FOR THE FOYER

- Blankets – twin size
- Bath Towels
- Washcloths
- Sheets – Twin Size
- Laundry detergent

THE FOYER OPENS THE DOOR TO A BETTER TOMORROW



The Foyer



The bulletin board in The Foyer shares a heartfelt message from a VMC staff member.

Foyer beds have underbed storage and partitions. New blankets provide warmth and hope.



The Foyer has accommodations for pet companions for those experiencing homelessness.



The foyer staff receive new blankets donated through a blanket drive organized by Richard Bensey.



Mayor Madeline Rogero cuts the ribbon to mark the opening of The Foyer.



A placard with the names of the 2019 Bed Sponsors hangs on a wall in the Foyer.

2019 YEAR IN REVIEW



- 3,947** individuals received services through the Bush Family Refuge
- 241** individuals experiencing homelessness received services in the Resource Center
- 50** individuals achieved housing; of those 28 were chronically homeless



- 354** households received utility assistance
- 113** households received rent assistance



- 5,302** volunteer hours in the Bush Family Refuge
- 4,493** volunteer hours in the Resource Center



- 2,631** dental procedures were performed in the VMC Dental Clinic



- 15,240** meals served in the Resource Center



- 70** residents lived at Minvilla Manor

VMC HAPPENINGS



A group of volunteers from KPMG took time out of their busy schedule to do yard work, landscaping, and cleaning at Minvilla Manor.



Resource Center members working to achieve housing through various classes beneficial to their particular needs. Certificates are awarded on completion of the curriculum.



Another great meal, along with musical entertainment, was served to Resource Center members by Coal Creek Company staff.

VOLUNTEER MINISTRY CENTER

VMC

Opening Doors for a Better Tomorrow



VMC staff member Zan Schriver accepts a very generous donation of coats and shoes from Lyssa with the Westside Family YWCA.

WE HAVE A HOME NOW!



Brittany's keys to her apartment mean a new start in life for her.



Ida is all smiles showing off her key to her new apartment.



Larry proudly holds his key to his new apartment after a long time of being on the streets.



Sunny was presented with a Welcome Home sign when she signed her lease to her new apartment.



TJ achieved housing and is thrilled to have a radio for his new apartment.