

## A LIFE CHANGED

Emmitt Howard was one of the original tenants who moved into Minvilla Manor when it opened in November 2010. Life now is very different for Emmitt than it was before he received the help he needed from VMC. Before he came to VMC, Emmitt's home was often a cardboard box with five blankets—the exact number to stay warm while sleeping outside. Frequently, he spent nights in jail for violent activities caused by the voices he heard from his mental illness. VMC case managers worked with Emmitt to get him stabilized on his medication and subsequently into housing.



*Emmitt: Now*

Today, Emmitt is a model resident. He is cheerful, helpful, and enjoys joking around. He recently was named Minvilla's Resident of the Month as he demonstrates a willingness to assist management, staff and residents at all times. Emmitt takes pride in his apartment and has grown to be a very responsible resident.

Yes, Emmitt's life has changed significantly and so have the lives of the other 56 residents of Minvilla Manor. We have You, our donors and very generous supporters, to thank for that. Your generosity means a home and a changed life for those experiencing homelessness in our community.

*By Mary Beth Ramey*

## VMC HAPPENINGS



*Carry the Torch 2017 Featured Speaker, Erin Gruwell, poses with Committee Chairs Peter Keese and Neill Townsend, and VMC CEO, Bruce Spangler.*

*The residents of Minvilla Manor always look forward to the monthly Birthday Celebration Lunches provided by VMC Board members.*



*LEFT: Remote Area Medical (RAM) provides eye exams and eyeglasses through the Vision Clinic at VMC.*

*BELOW: Minvilla residents and staff pose for a picture after enjoying a Valentine's lunch hosted by Lee and Helen Grant.*



**"I'll tell you how I held on. I held on to the words of the staff at the VMC. They kept reminding and encouraging me that my day would come. Don't give up! I believed them. It was their very word that I held on to so tightly. If they said it, then I believed it to be true. And they were right!"**

*—Rickshaunda upon receiving the key to her apartment.*

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## DON'T HOLD YOUR APPLAUSE!



*William and Michael received VMC Keychains from VMC case manager Craig Ahern at the Friday Community Meeting.*

Every Friday morning at 11:30am, the Resource Center members and VMC staff gather for the weekly "Community Meeting."

If you recently joined the Resource Center and this is your first meeting, then you are greeted with applause. If you received your documents required for housing such as a state ID, birth certificate, and/or social security card, then you receive a round of applause as well. If you applied for and/or received a job, you, too, are greeted with celebration of the clapping of hands. If you put in a housing application, you get the same reaction.

And if you signed a lease, you are greeted with a resounding applause and a VMC key chain.

The Community Meeting is intended to help inspire, challenge, and encourage those who are working towards achieving permanent housing. This year, thirty individuals in the Resource Center now have their own place. Of these individuals, the average length of their experience of homelessness is nearly a whole year. There is one individual who had been homeless for 84 months!

In essence, achieving housing is a process that requires perseverance, diligence, and waiting. Waiting is hard work, as most of us know. The Community Meeting is a time to reassure and inspire those who are persevering, being diligent, and waiting. We cheer



*Alfonso and Mark proudly display their VMC Keychains received from case manager Dyrll Higdon.*

them on, supporting and reassuring them that someday the applause they received when they received their birth certificate will be followed by a louder and resounding celebration when they sign their lease and receive a VMC keychain. Here are some pictures that capture the accomplishments and achievements of those recognized at the Community Meetings. Their smiles say it all.

As you look at the pictures, there is no need to hold your applause!

*By Bruce W. Spangler*



*Resource Center Director Vanessa Hensley has a big smile for the ladies who received their class completion certificates.*

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**Volunteer Ministry Center**  
**Celebrates Three Decades**  
**of Service**  
**November 12, 2017**  
**2-4pm**



## FROM THE CEO'S DESK



*Bruce W. Spangler, CEO*

My mother introduced me to the joy and power of books. Everyday upon returning from school, my mother would inquire about my day and the homework that followed. She would sit with me, at the kitchen table, as she did my younger siblings during their education years, and be a study and reading mate. Those times and memories are forever etched in my mind and imprinted on my heart.

To this day, my mother reads two to three books a week. It remains a joy for her and a power to visit other worlds from the comfort of her brown plush swivel chair.

The power of reading does indeed introduce us to places, people, and events that seem remote but yet accessible by the written word.

At the moment, I am reading a book by Wes Moore, entitled “The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates.” In essence, it is autobiographical about two young boys who are raised by single mothers in similar and difficult neighborhoods with the same name. One goes onto become a Rhode Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and a business leader. The other Wes ends up serving a life sentence after a conviction of murder.

One of the opening lines in the book immediately grabbed me as though I awoke from a thoughtless stupor. Wes Moore writes, “It’s unsettling to know how little separates each of us from the life from another life together.”

Let that sink in for a moment. I did at first reading and cannot stop pondering it every day I enter the doors of the Volunteer Ministry Center.

Having graduated from a local high school, there have been some individuals who crossed one of the thresholds of VMC with whom either I sat in front of in homeroom, watched their basketball skills, or rode the same school bus. On those occasions upon seeing them, I did think about the different places that my classmates and I found ourselves, ironically at the same place.

## MEAL GROUP SPOTLIGHT



*Josh Smith, owner of Master Dry, along with his staff prepared and served a great breakfast in the VMC Resource Center.*

But I confess, Wes Moore’s insight gave pause for me, raising the awareness of the “unsettledness” of the thin line that separates these classmates from me. It is more than, “just by the grace of God, go I.” It is an emotional instability that sometimes haunts me, but always informs me of how different things might have or could have been for me. We shared the same homeroom, the same gym, the same school bus, the same community.

The existence and presence of VMC on the corner of Fifth Avenue and North Broadway is a place to come when one slips to the other side of that slim line. And you make that possible!

You make it possible for someone who needs just a little assistance at the right time. Often times, I think of the work of our volunteers and staff as settling around a “kitchen table” offering support, encouragement, and hope. VMC is definitely a place near the “slim line.”

I confess, I would not want to imagine Knoxville without a place like VMC.

Peace,

*Rev. Bruce W. Spangler  
Chief Executive Officer*

## VMC DENTAL CLINIC—MAKING SMILES

Did you know that the VMC Dental Clinic provides free comprehensive dental services to the homeless and very low income of Knox County? And, did you know that in 2016 there were 1,777 dental procedures performed; and that all services are done in just one and a half days per week? In the first five months of this year, 1,014 procedures have been performed. Yes, the VMC Dental Clinic is busy! We are working hard to improve the dental health of the less fortunate of our community which significantly affects their physical and emotional well-being.

Recently, VMC collaborated with the CAC Office on Aging and Remote Area Medical to provide much needed dental care to the very low income seniors of our community. Through that process and in conjunction with receiving grant funding, one of which was from CNS in Oak Ridge, 100 senior citizens are receiving new dentures and new smiles. Some are even able to eat regular food for the first time in a long time. That alone is something to smile about.

We want to Thank You, our generous donors, grant funders, and volunteer dental professionals, for enabling the VMC Dental Clinic to continue to provide superb dental care to the homeless and very low income of our community resulting in hundreds of SMILES.



*Tonya is thrilled to have her new dentures.  
What a Beautiful Smile!!*

*By Mary Beth Ramey*

## WE HAVE A HOME NOW!



*VMC case manager Katlyn Gass presents keychains for their new apartments to Richard and Joseph.*

*Joseph receives a keychain after signing a lease to his new apartment.*

**Pilot Presents**

**VMC DUNKIN' DONUTS 5K**

**1-Mile Run/Walk**

**October 29, 2017**  
2:30 p.m. Hardin Valley Elementary

**SAVE THE DATE**

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**DUNKIN' DONUTS**

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Don Sproles  
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Kim Hansard as Emcee

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