

A Holiday Reunion

By JJ Stambaugh

One of the first men to move into Minvilla Manor in November after years of homelessness was Emmitt Howard, and as you'd expect he had plenty to be cheerful about as the holidays rolled around.

But Emmitt's new apartment was only the first of two life-changing events that were to occur in the span of only a few weeks.

Just after Christmas, Emmitt's long-estranged siblings called us after reading the Internet version of a news broadcast on Minvilla featuring his story. For the first time in six years, he received a visit from his younger sisters, Shirley Beard and Christine Morgan from Dalton, Georgia.

"The very last time I'd seen him, he called and wanted to borrow some money," Shirley recalled. "I brought him a coat, a sleeping bag, some gloves. He cussed me from the moment I stepped out of the car door."

Shirley said that Emmitt had wrestled with mental illness and homelessness for years before disappearing from their lives in 2004. She also described how his alcoholism and delusions had ultimately prevented her and her husband from allowing him to live with them. And, perhaps worst of all, she recounted how Georgia officials had no interest in helping him with his mental health problems, even after he ended up being arrested numerous times.

"We all tried to get him help, but all they would tell me was that it's not a crime to be homeless and it's not a crime to be crazy," she said.

After Emmitt disappeared, there were times when his family despaired of ever seeing him again.

"We always thought he was dead," Christine said. "Nobody here will help you. Every time a body was



Emmitt with his two sisters and their family.

found in Atlanta or Chattanooga, we'd wonder if it was my brother."

Emmitt says he drifted to Knoxville in the hopes of finding some type of help. He lived for years on the streets, and over time he became known to local shelter workers as a troublesome client prone to outbursts of violence. Eventually, a VMC case manager managed to break through his shell and help Emmitt to find some of the help he needed.

Today, Emmitt can still give patient instructions on how to insulate a cardboard box to ward off the winter's chill but hopefully will never again have need for that skill. He has a fully furnished apartment at Minvilla Manor, something for which he is vocally grateful, and he is especially glad to have a place where he can once again practice his culinary skills.

"I used to like to cook for myself," Emmitt said before describing how he likes to prepare everything from bacon and egg sandwiches to pork chops.

His sisters came to see Emmitt in late December, marking the first time the siblings had been together

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February 2011

Dear Friend of VMC,

I was just stopped in the parking lot by a gentleman who is a new resident of Minvilla Manor. He was excited to tell me that he had just learned about the history of the writing of the Pledge of Allegiance and *The Star Spangled Banner*. He thought it was fascinating. And now that he has his own apartment, he has access to the History Channel and to other media which allows him to learn about the history he loves.

That's what VMC does. This gentleman has a new lease on life. He used to be one of the folks hanging around under the bridge, mentally ill and lubricating his illness with whatever alcohol he could find. Now that he has a place of his own, his interests are emerging along with a lifestyle that includes volunteer work and other activities he finds rewarding. He represents one less person who is homeless and aimless.

VMC transforms lives because of the countless friends we have. It is because of you that our doors not only stay open, but we are staffed to welcome those who resolve to do better in life. Your generous donations mean that the people we have helped into housing will have the emotional support to succeed in a new life. And those who are in need of housing will attain it.

Our work – yours and mine – is no less than changing lives. That's why we are so grateful for your continuing friendship. And that's why we do not hesitate to be bold in our continuing appeals. In this troubled economy when donations are down and need is up, we need your help as never before.

Please give as generously as you can. And please be assured of our gratitude – and the gratitude of the gentleman who may be, right now, watching the History Channel to learn something new, something exciting, something hopeful.

Thank you,

Ginny Weatherstone
Chief Executive Officer

Ending Homelessness – One Person at a Time



Volunteer Ministry Center

HOPE · HOME · HEALTH

From the Chair



By David Rausch

I am so excited about the year ahead for the Volunteer Ministry Center. I have been blessed with the opportunity to serve as the 2011 Chairman of the Board for this great organization. And what a Board

it is! The talent, diversity, and experience of this Board is nothing short of amazing. We will certainly face some challenges in the coming year, but I am confident we will be able to overcome whatever we encounter with enthusiasm and energy.

On behalf of the Board, I want to thank our generous

and loyal donors and volunteers. Without your support, we would not be able to change lives or have the impact that we have had in our community. I also want to recognize the outstanding staff at the VMC. They work tirelessly to see the mission come to life on a daily basis. We appreciate their dedication and commitment.

Finally, I encourage you, the reader, the Friend of VMC, to help us fulfill the mission to end homelessness by sending a gift to the VMC. This is a worthwhile organization that holds our neighbors accountable and is a responsible agency with great leadership. As I think about the work of the VMC I recall that a wise man once said that every society is judged by how it treats its least fortunate amongst them. I am proud to serve the VMC.

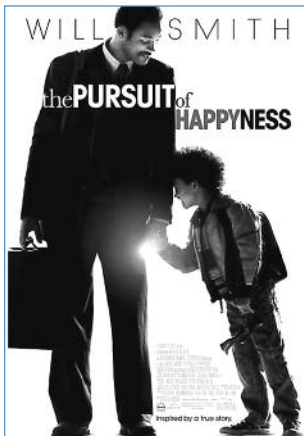
Carry the Torch 2011

By JJ Stambaugh

Mark your calendars for May 10th for this year's Carry the Torch Knoxville event.

Chris Gardner, author of the bestselling autobiographical book, *The Pursuit of Happyness* which was later made into a movie starring Will Smith, will be the featured speaker. Gardner's book tells how he struggled with homelessness while raising his young son and working to climb the ladder in the corporate world of high finance.

Carry the Torch, which typically draws 1,000 people, is both a fundraiser and an educational opportunity. Although VMC is incurring the costs, many agencies that serve the homeless will take part in the event at the Knoxville Convention Center. Participating

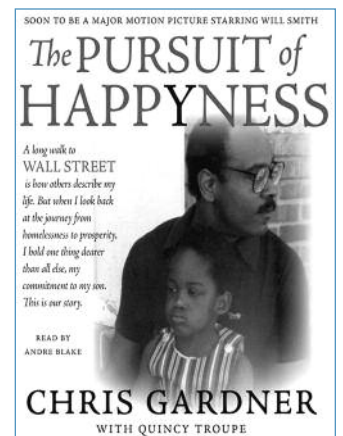


agencies and groups will have booths at the Mission Fair preceding the lunch, and they will explain their roles in the community and provide opportunities for those who would like to be volunteers.

Jim and Natalie Haslam are honorary chairs for this year's event. The luncheon will begin promptly at noon, but the Mission Fair will run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Gardner will hold a book signing from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.

Tickets will not be sold for the event, but sponsorships are available.

For information regarding sponsorships and/or sponsored tables at the luncheon, please contact Carney Ivy at carneyivy@aol.com, Sheri Pender at sapender@hotmail.com, or Mary Beth Ramey at mramey@vmcinc.org.



A Day in the Life of the Bush Family

By Ginny Weatherstone

Lynn Hutton, Director of the Bush Family Refuge, arrives early. Even though the Refuge doors won't open until 9:30 am, she knows that she must take advantage of the early morning moments to complete her paperwork and write her monthly newsletter. Refuge volunteers will be arriving shortly and there will be no more quiet.

And so she writes: "Every person who walks through our door comes to us with hope: hope for help, a hand up, an encouraging word, a listening ear. They are here because they haven't given up. Their very presence in the Refuge is a testimony to the perseverance of the human spirit."

Lynn pauses to look out the window. It is only 8:15 but already a sizable crowd has gathered. It is the last Tuesday of the month, the day on which we distribute donated appointments to see an eye doctor. With only ten appointments to give away, folks come early to be first in line. Lynn sighs because she knows there are not enough appointments to go around.

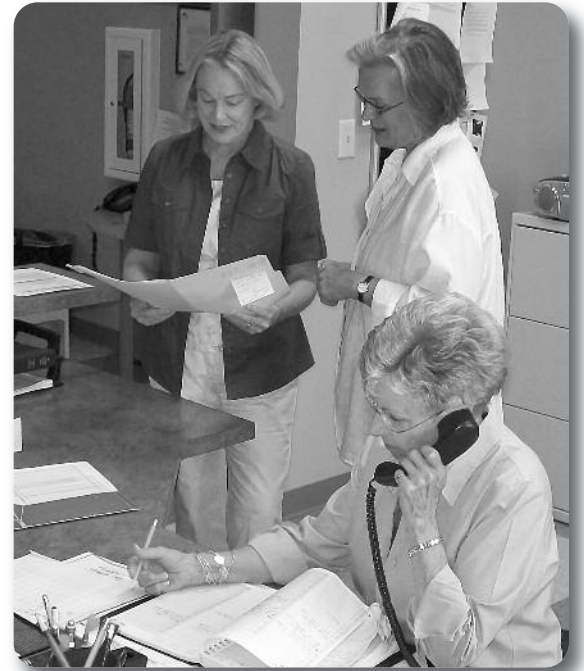
At 9:15, Judi Nelson arrives. Judi has been a Refuge volunteer for seven years and she's good at it. Mary Bailey, another veteran volunteer, enters an office and prepares to see her first interviewee. And Bill Ivey takes his place at the reception desk. Marlene Echols will be along soon, and Audrey Duncan will serve as an interviewer in the afternoon. The doors open.

Judi ushers a young woman into her office and makes her welcome. "Joanie" worked as a dental hygienist for years until she married and began to have children. Her husband didn't want her to work anymore, the first step in the pattern of control he would exert. Then he began to abuse her. Joanie left with her children and is slowly putting her life back together. She works in food service now because that schedule works better with her children's school schedules. But it's tough making ends meet. Joanie is hoping that we can help with school supplies for her kids. And so we can.

Mary is visiting with an elderly man who needs help with his utility bill. He is living in low income housing on a fixed income. He tells Mary that he eats mostly peanut butter sandwiches so that cuts down on the electricity he needs for cooking. He only turns on one lamp when it gets dark. His utility bill this month is higher than he can handle and he needs help.

Meanwhile, at the front desk, Bill Ivey is answering the phone. Between 9:45 am and 2:30 pm, he takes 44 phone calls from people who are requesting help with their utility bills. An extremely cold winter has resulted in higher than normal bills, and the marginally housed are making choices – utility bills or rent. Many of them call the Refuge.

Marlene, in her office, is helping a young lady fill out her application form. It is clear that she cannot read or write. Marlene uses this opportunity to get to know her visitor. She learns that this young woman has just received a prescription from her doctor which her insurance will not cover. And she has no money. Marlene is assured by the



Refuge Director Lynn Hutton (center) works with volunteers, Jane Armstrong (left) and Sally Gouffon (right)

doctor's office that this is a necessary medication and that there is no generic available. Marlene decides that the Refuge will help.

The day continues. Ten people receive eye doctor appointments, knowing that they can return to the Refuge for help with the purchase of glasses if that becomes necessary. Several people receive assistance in procuring a state identification which they need for a job application. And others receive clothing or supplies. Every single person meets one on one with an interviewer; they are listened to, valued and encouraged. And sometimes, yes, they are told that the Refuge declines to help them until they put forth their own effort first. In all, the Refuge has worked with 28 people during this one day.

When the door is locked at the end of the day, the notes are written, the paperwork is completed and the computer entries are made. But Lynn would tell you that no piece of paperwork or computer entry is as important as the person it represents. She's tired at the end of the day. She's barely grabbed a bite to eat at her desk. But she knows one thing for sure: "the presence of every guest at the Refuge is testimony to the perseverance of the human spirit." Lynn and her volunteers believe in hope. At the end of a long and tiring day they know they have delivered hope.

Are You Ready to Run?

...Or walk, or stroll with your favorite furry friend? If so, it's not too soon to be thinking about the 14th Annual VMC 5K Race and Fun Walk! This year's date is September 24th at the World's Fair Park Festival Lawn. There will be plenty of family fun activities and a few surprises we can't disclose just yet. New for this year is our association with Komen's Race for the Cure. The VMC Race will be featured in the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure e-newsletter, PinkLink, as a "Pre-Race Training Race" for the Komen Race. We are excited about this partnership as the Komen Race will be celebrating their 15th Anniversary this year. So save the date (September 24th) and start training now. It is going to be a fun Fall for running, walking and strolling!



A Holiday Reunion

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over the Christmas holidays in far too long.

Case Manager Megan Lappas is also pleased to see how far Emmitt has come.

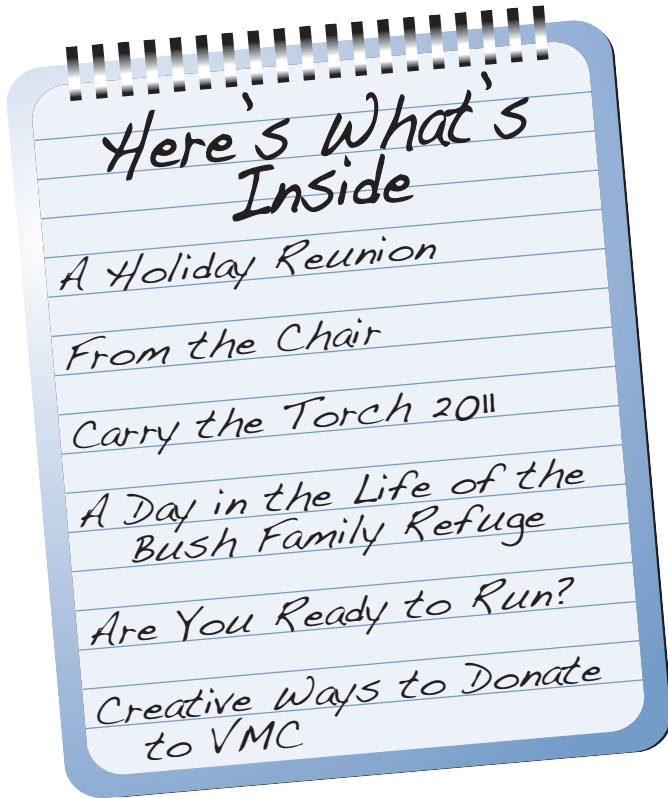
"He had been barred from the mission, he'd been barred pretty much everywhere," she said. "He was starving, living outside. His family is just delightful. It is so rare that we have family reunifications, because so many people have burned those bridges or never had them to begin with."

But Emmitt's bridges were not burned. Now, reunited with his family and living in a brand new apartment, Emmitt's future looks very bright indeed.



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Creative Ways to Donate to VMC

In addition to monetary donations, there are many other ways you can donate to VMC. Stock, bonds, vehicles, and real estate all have value and provide a source of revenue which is needed for the continuation of VMC programs. Other means of supporting VMC may include doing a drive to collect items which VMC needs on a regular basis. This can include collecting cleaning supplies, office supplies, toilet paper, paper towels, plastic cutlery, etc. A car wash, bake sale, rummage sale, or concert, with the proceeds to benefit VMC, are fun yet easy ways to raise needed funds for the Volunteer Ministry Center. And for all those loose coins lying around the house, our Coins of Hope program is easy and fun for all ages. You will be amazed at how those silver and copper coins can add up to make a difference for VMC. For additional information on ways to donate to VMC you may contact Mary Beth Ramey at 524-3926.