

## FROM THE CEO'S DESK:

**"People like us" are thankful for people like you**

One of our unhoused neighbors was quoted recently on WBIR Channel 10 saying "The VMC people are really great... [he paused, and smiled ear to ear] ... they have to deal with people like us." The topic by the newscaster was about weekly encampment sweeps, and what organizations like VMC can do to help those "living" on the streets when they are displaced.

While I knew Danny said this in jest (he is a good-natured and comedic guy), I was quick to correct him to the TV host. We don't "have" to deal with unhoused people like him--we CHOOSE to.

At VMC we don't work with an "easy" population (in terms of their challenges), and we don't operate using "easy," or temporary solutions. We work with people who are truly the most vulnerable, meaning it may take years to establish trust or encourage them to seek and accept services and housing opportunities. Why? Because they feel broken, hopeless, discouraged, displaced, and last in line for housing.

**Happy Holidays!**  
Gratefully,  
Tracey Williams, CEO



Tracey and Danny

**So, we put them first!**

We choose to operate using best practices and proven solutions (Housing First) which not only puts "people like them" first, but also their access to housing. This means that the road to sustaining housing is hard, long term, and doesn't end, even after the hard work required to receive a key to a place

to call home.

**But people are worth it. ALL people. Even people like "them."**

Today there are over 1800 people in Knoxville who are unhoused and have little hope with our existing affordable housing inventory. With your help, VMC added 48 apartment units in 2023 and will seek additional housing projects in 2025. We are grateful for people like you (who have to deal with us--always asking for financial support). And because you always step up to the plate, we will continue to deal with people like Danny.

**Not because we have to, but because we choose to, and it is our ongoing mission to do so.**

## HELP SOMEONE HOME WITH A YEAR END GIFT!

**THOUGHTFUL GIVING** Benefits Everyone and provides a future for the programs and services offered at the Volunteer Ministry Center. As we approach the end of 2024, we hope you will consider making a year-end gift to VMC. Whether your gift is made through a bank account, stock, a will, trust, or IRA, you can be assured that your gift will have an impact on the lives of the poor and homeless of our community.

Your faithful support is vital to the continuation and success of our programs, and we sincerely appreciate your thoughtful consideration of a year-end gift to VMC.

For additional information, contact Mary Beth Ramey at 865-524-3926 x229.

## FROM OUR HEARTS TO YOURS

As we approach the end of 2024, our hearts are full of gratitude for our generous supporters and volunteers who give of their time, talents, and finances to make VMC the amazing organization that it is. Without YOU we would not be able to help so many in our community who desperately need assistance to remain in their homes or to achieve housing. Without YOU we would not have street outreach workers who are out in the trenches reaching our most vulnerable homeless neighbors in encampments. Without YOU we would not have the financial resources to help a family facing eviction pay their past due rent. Without YOU we would not have case managers providing housing case management services or housing support services. Without YOU we would not be able to provide dental care for the homeless and extremely low income of our community. Without YOU we would not be able to provide food, clothing, and basic necessities for our neighbors experiencing homelessness. Without YOU and your compassion to love and help others in need, VMC could not continue its programs and services. **THANK YOU!!!! THANK YOU!!!**

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## ANGEL ORNAMENTS

The traditional VMC Angel ornament is once again available this holiday season. This small foil Angel is a lovely symbol which indicates that you have given a gift to VMC in honor of the recipient. The Angel is appropriate for use as an ornament or a gift enclosure and will provide a lasting remembrance of your thoughtfulness. This year's quote is: **"Angels remind us that we are never alone, and that the love of the divine is always surrounding us."**



- Wayne Dyer

Angels are the perfect gift for family and friends, as well as neighbors, service providers, and anyone whom you would like to recognize in a special way. Angels are also a touching way to honor the memory of a loved one. Angels are available for any donation amount of \$5.00 or more and can be ordered by calling Lisa McKay at 865-524-3926 x230 or by stopping by the VMC offices at 511 North Broadway, Knoxville, TN 37917.

## GIVING BACK



This amazing bounty of food was dropped off by a young family who wanted to make sure our neighbors have enough protein (and some sweets) as the weather is getting colder. They shared that they have been the ones who needed help in the past. Now, grateful to be in a better position, it is important to them to help others and to give back.



P.O. Box 27406  
Knoxville, TN 37927-7406  
865-524-3926



www.vmcinc.org

## WE DID IT!

Thanks to YOU, our steadfast supporters and generous community, VMC has received over \$1 million in donations and pledges for our new endowment fund and

will now benefit from the \$1 million in matching funds we told you about earlier in the year. That means we will begin 2025 with an endowment in excess of \$2 million!



This will truly be a game changer for VMC. We anticipate the endowment fund will generate about \$100,000 per year to support our programs. It also gives us a new level of financial security and stability and paves the way for more housing opportunities in the near future.

There are many to thank. The Endowment Fundraising Committee members are Jerry Askew, Jimmy Cheek, Charlie Daniel, and Hunter Purnell. Others helping out in significant ways are our friend, Ted Flickinger, and board members, Anna Justice and David Arning. The staff was integral to our success: special thanks to Lisa McKay, Mary Beth Ramey, Marty Smith, and Tracey Williams for the letters, calls, meetings, and accounting. It was truly a team effort which will benefit our neighbors for many years to come.

**CONGRATULATIONS ON A WONDERFUL ACHIEVEMENT!**

**By: Susan Conway, Chair**  
Endowment Fundraising Committee



## A TIME TO GIVE THANKS ....

Throughout 2024, VMC has continued to assist our unhoused neighbors into housing and to provide much needed assistance for those in crisis to maintain their housing. Our dedicated staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly to help the most vulnerable of our community. Despite the challenges posed by rising costs and inflation, our blessings have been many and for that, we GIVE THANKS!!

## THANK YOU - FOR CARING AND SHARING

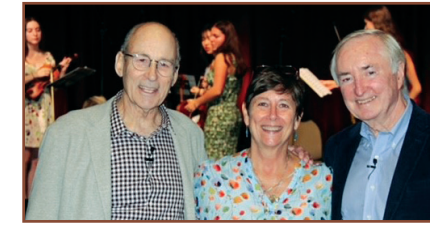


A great time was had by all at the Charlie Daniel Vols vs Gators Eve Book Signing Event! Charlie has been an avid supporter of VMC for over thirty years. He has served several terms on the VMC Board of Directors. 100% of the proceeds from Charlie's book sales are donated to VMC. THANK YOU, CHARLIE!!



The Dominion Group transformed the Bush Family Refuge into a bright and cheery space by painting all of the offices, hallway, and entrance. Dominion provided the paint and the labor for this project which involved cleaning the walls, filling holes, priming the walls and painting. THANK YOU, DOMINION!!

## CARRY THE TORCH KNOXVILLE 2024



Tracy Kidder, left, Dr. Danielle Darter of Knox Street Medicine Outreach, and Dr. Jim O'Connell

What an amazing event featuring Tracy Kidder and Dr. Jim O'Connell! Tracy Kidder, a Pulitzer Prize winner and author of Rough Sleepers, and Dr. Jim O'Connell shared their experiences of Dr. O'Connell and his staff providing healthcare to the unhoused individuals and families living on the streets of Boston.

Darter of Knox Street Medicine Outreach, visit the homeless encampments in Knoxville/Knox County engaging the most vulnerable of our homeless neighbors with medical attention and housing referral services.

We believe that Housing is Healthcare. Housing is the solution to homelessness and improved physical and mental health. Both Tracy Kidder and Dr. Jim O'Connell validated the work of VMC during their presentation at Carry the Torch.



630 guests attended Carry the Torch Knoxville at the Knoxville Convention Center to hear an inspiring message from Tracy Kidder and Dr. Jim O'Connell.

Similar to the work being done in Boston, is that of VMC's Street Outreach program whereby case workers, along with Dr. Danielle

We invite you, our supporters and donors of VMC, to join us in our efforts to end and prevent homelessness in our community.



Tracy Kidder and Dr. Jim O'Connell signed and personalized books for event attendees.

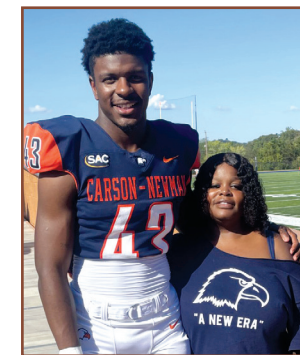


Carole and Joe Ayres hosted the Sponsor Reception at their lovely home on the water the evening before the Carry the Torch luncheon.



Special guests at the Sponsor Reception include Neill Albers Townsend, Co-Chair of the Carry the Torch event committee, Honorary Chair Dr. Robert Ivy, Dr. Jim O'Connell, Honorary Chair Carney Ivy, VMC CEO Tracey Williams, Susan Conway, Co-Chair of the Carry the Torch event committee, and Tracy Kidder.

## HELP IN THE TIME OF NEED



Henrietta with her son Jaylon at Carson-Newman University.

A single mother of four walked into the Bush Family Refuge asking for guidance or resources of any kind, for her and her children. New to Knoxville/Knox County, she did not know where else to turn.

Like many families, the 1-2 year wait for public housing and the lack of affordable housing left them no choice but to take an available apartment priced above their means. It took literally everything they had to make the move and cover the deposit. And, due to her new address change, a hold was put on her food stamps, SSDI, and bank card. She panicked.

She had recently lost her leg in a car accident, which spiraled into ongoing medical expenses that significantly affected their finances. Her oldest son, a 2024 high school graduate, had been awarded scholarship opportunities for football at a few colleges. However, the thought of leaving his mother and siblings behind was too much.

The staff and volunteers of the Bush Family Refuge at VMC provided the assistance this mom needed for rent and utilities as well as food resources. She was also connected with Knox County Schools so she would know what schools she was zoned for, the free school supply programs, and the name of a teacher who could provide help.

When families receive rental and/or utility assistance, they can better afford items like food, medical care, and clothing. Families with high rent burdens often have to choose between buying food and gas or paying rent.

VMC provided stability for this family. A family with a new future and a new opportunity. A son who is the first in the family to go to college.

The assistance by VMC has far-reaching implications. More than we may ever know.

A local university (Carson Newman) reached out with their interest. They wanted this young man on their football roster and offered him a scholarship. Mother and son traveled to visit the campus. She shared with staff how overwhelmed she was by the entire process. "All I saw were numbers...lots of zeros." This blessing was too overwhelming for this mom.

On the drive home her son said he would only go if they all moved here with him. So, they packed up and moved to Knoxville.

By: Valerie Combs

## VOLUNTEER MINISTRY CENTER

# VMC

Opening Doors for a Better Tomorrow

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A Day of Service by PetSafe significantly improved the landscaping at VMC's main entrance. Rock was removed and weeds were pulled before laying sheets of weed barrier and replacing the rock. THANK YOU, PETSAFE!!



Through the efforts of board member and volunteer, Laura Seymour, the residents at Caswell Manor and Minvilla Manor enjoy fresh food every month from Second Harvest. THANK YOU, LAURA SEYMOUR AND SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK!!



A generous donation of essential household items including toilet paper, paper towels, hand soap, dish soap, pillows, and more were collected for VMC by Operation Inasmuch. Kim Millard and Pat Noe delivered the items which are provided to our neighbors experiencing homelessness when they achieve housing. THANK YOU, OPERATION INASMUCH!!



Every year, VMC is fortunate to work with a great group of University of Tennessee English students to complete an advocacy and crowdfunding course project. Juan Rodriguez, Jacob Lawson, Tate Donica and Mackenzie Stapert have created an excellent fundraising campaign this year, The Neighborly Vols, to raise funds for VMC. THANK YOU, JUAN, JACOB, TATE, MACKENZIE!!



Board members Darrell Murrell and Nancy Friedrich whip up a tasty meal for our neighbors in the Resource Center program who are working to achieve housing. VMC is grateful to the many meal groups who come to VMC throughout the year to provide nutritious meals. THANK YOU, VMC MEAL GROUPS!!

## THANK YOU - FOR A HOME



Mark now has a home for the holidays after struggling with homelessness since 2019. Through his journey into housing, VMC was able to help connect Mark with EBT Benefits, restart his SSI and Retirement benefits, obtain his birth certificate and Social Security Card, and connect him with a primary medical care provider. To ensure that Mark has the support he needs to be successful, VMC provides post-housing case management services. WELCOME HOME, MARK!!