A Time for Thanks and a Season for Sharing

For many people including myself, the holidays are always a special time. A time to reflect on the past year — perhaps count our blessings for the gifts we have been given or look to the New Year with hope that this year’s challenges will turn into next year’s successes.

At Volunteers of America Chesapeake we have so many things to be thankful for. To name a few, I am thankful for the new opportunities we have been blessed with to expand our services; dedicated staff and volunteers who work so hard helping those in need; and an increase in the number of people we are able to help. Currently we are serving more than 9,000 men, women and children; a thousand more people than last year at this time.

We have many stories of successful outcomes for clients and residents who have completed our programs this year and now have a home to live in, found a stable job or re-connected with a family member. Our staff has also provided hope for so many others in our care that will strengthen them to re-build their lives or become more self-reliant in the future. HOPE is our gift to the men, women and children in our care.

As you plan your holiday season, I encourage you to not only reflect on this past year and your hope for the year ahead, but also to look at your blessings and see if you have some blessings to share.

Likely your children, regardless if they’re age 4 or 40, have already dropped some hints your way of what they’d like to receive this year. Then of course there is the list for family, friends and co-worker cards or presents. And if you’re like me, I’ll bet there are a few names you puzzle over every year … “what can I possibly get Aunt Harriet this year?”

May I offer a suggestion?

We’ve introduced a new offering this year — Gifts of Hope — for your use in holiday giving AND throughout the year as a gift-giving option for any special event. Through our Gifts of Hope you have the opportunity to “purchase” an item to be used in one of our 26 programs throughout Maryland, D.C., or Virginia. Simply select the item you’d like, complete and send the order form with your payment information, and you’ll receive a gift card indicating that the item you’ve selected has been supplied to the person or program in need. Giving Aunt Harriet the gift card representing the purchase of a night in an emergency shelter for a homeless person may make you the hero of the holidays.

I’m delighted to introduce to you in this issue some of the Volunteers of America Chesapeake family — a former resident at one of our homeless shelters who is now giving back, J.D. shares his powerful story of thanks; a local school shares their experience of giving; and a former Chesapeake Board Member offers his thoughts on thanks and giving as well.

From all of us at Volunteers of America Chesapeake, my very best wishes for a safe, happy and blessed holiday season.

Thank you especially for your part in giving Volunteers of America Chesapeake so much to be thankful for.

Blessings,

Russ K. Snyder
President/CEO Volunteers of America Chesapeake

P. S. I’d love to know how your “Aunt Harriet” responded to your Gifts of Hope purchase. Please let me know at russ@VOAches.org
About Us
Volunteers of America Chesapeake, Inc. is a faith-based, non-profit organization whose mission is inspire self-reliance, dignity and hope through human services.

Founded in 1896 in Baltimore, MD Volunteers of America Chesapeake was one of the first branches of Volunteers of America - one of the nation’s largest and most comprehensive human services organizations.

Through a dedicated and committed team of management, staff and volunteers and guided by our Core Values: Caring, Respect, Faith, Quality and Trust
-Volunteers of America Chesapeake helps more than 9,000 people each year throughout Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia at our 26 programs serving:

- The homeless
- Individuals with mental illness
- Individuals with intellectual disabilities
- Those in need of affordable housing
- Those in need of supportive services
- The aging
- Those recovering from substance abuse addictions
- Those involved in community corrections

Suggestions and story ideas are encouraged and welcomed. Please contact Courtney Dunn at cdunn@VOAches.org

Caring Chronicles
Caring Chronicles is a newsletter for donors, volunteers, employees, clients and supporters of Volunteers of America Chesapeake, Inc.

Communications & Media Relations Manager
Courtney Dunn

Graphic Design
Laurel Prucha Moran, Blue Room Design

President & CEO
Russell K. Snyder

Vice President, Development & External Affairs
Jan Kary

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Volunteers of America Chesapeake
7901 Annapolis Road
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(800) 646-2828 fax: (301)459-2627
www.VOAchesapeake.org

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In The News
Volunteers of America Chesapeake is making headlines!

Volunteers of America Chesapeake News Award for Innovation in Technology

Check out our new website www.VOAchesapeake.org and be sure to follow us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/VolunteersofAmericaChesapeake

Potomac Local Magazine
On a mission: Couple has helped数值 for 28 years.

To read these and more news hot off the press visit www.VOAchesapeake.org or our Facebook page.
Make a Difference Day 2010 made a significant difference in the life of a former client. On October 23rd J.D. — a former client of Volunteers of America Chesapeake’s Hilda M. Barg Homeless Prevention Center — took it upon himself to create a volunteer activity for members of AfterShare and current residents of the shelter — cleaning up the campsite in Woodbridge, VA where he once lived... and almost died. His mission for the event was to give closure to his past life — struggling with alcohol abuse and living without a job outside of his campsite for more than 20 years — and celebrate his new life. He has since turned his life around — living in a room for rent, staying sober for 16 months and volunteering with our organization helping others through the struggles of homelessness as he was once helped.

1. Tell us more about how you are currently involved with Volunteers of America Chesapeake?

“I am, and have been, a part of this organization through a program called AfterShare, where formerly homeless people from the shelter can volunteer and give back what they can. I was honored to participate in AfterShare's local Help the Homeless Mini-Walk and Rt. 1 Cleanup on World Homeless Day, 10/10/10. I was further honored when AfterShare volunteers helped me clean up the campsite I lived at for so many years. I also volunteer at the center almost every day. I answer the phones, help around the center, work with the other residents and provide comedic relief... because everyone needs to laugh once in a while! It is just something I enjoy doing. When I walk in the door, it’s like coming home — and I’ve never had a real home.”

2. Why, now that you are back on your feet, are you still involved with Volunteers of America Chesapeake?

“I’ve known Gayle [Gayle Sanders, Program Director] for a long time and she had been aware of my situation out in the streets for a long time and extended an olive branch to me many a time. But between my stubborn streak from the alcoholism and the dog I had with me that I loved, I didn’t want to leave. Finally when I had the feeling my time was just about done, I prepared myself to die in the woods. But I didn’t want to die alone. So I fished out Gayle’s number, and they came and got me. Hospice gave me 36 hours to live.

Then miracle upon miracles happened which would not have without the prayers and support of the fine folks right here at Hilda Barg. I’m totally amazed every day at the staff. Some people take for granted what these people do every day to make a difference in people’s lives. They are my ‘angels’ and I would do anything possible to make their burden lighter. These people were still standing next to me when the smoke cleared. If they were willing to stand there with me and go through that with me, I’m willing to stand here with them.

I’m here because I want to make it as comfortable to those who have, like me, had to eat out of dumpsters, gone to jail because of circumstances out of their control, have been spit on, called a bum and a drunk — what if the roles were reversed? Would you want someone to treat you that way?”

3. What can you tell others about why they should consider getting involved and volunteer as you do to help others?

“I firmly believe history is made by each breath and that a legacy is what you do with that breath. Now I can’t think of a more fitting or lasting legacy than to help your fellow man...Never lose sight of your humanity and your compassion.”

4. During this time of year when everyone is giving thanks, what are you thankful for?

“I’m thankful God gave me a second chance. I do not know why — I’m the very first to admit what happened to me was extremely 100 percent self-inflicted. No one made me drink, so I cannot blame anyone for that but myself. I am thankful I’m here and I firmly believe that we all serve a purpose. I’m thankful for the smile on a pretty girl’s face, a kitten playing with a ball of yarn, a puppy chasing his tail — I’m thankful for the simple things that a lot of people take for granted.... And even though I’ve been through what I’ve been through in this lifetime, I can honestly tell you I would not trade places with anyone. I am happy, finally, with who I am — I am at peace with my heart, my soul and my mind and there is not anyone in the world who can take that away from me. And that is what I’m thankful for.”
R ick Princinsky has been a long-time supporter of Volunteers of America Chesapeake. His involvement spans the last 20 years from his first introduction to the organization as a vendor for employee benefits. His admiration for the quality programs led by Volunteers of America Chesapeake staff led him to ask how he could do more. Former CEO Joseph Boro responded by asking him to join the Board of Directors! Rick served on the Board of Directors for more than 15 years including a term as Chairman. Since that time he has remained a faithful donor to Volunteers of America Chesapeake and our shared mission to inspire self-reliance, dignity and hope through human services.

1. Why did you decide to get involved with Volunteers of America Chesapeake?

“I was very impressed with the work that you did — it was heartfelt and seemed to attract the right people that wanted to deliver that work in a very personal way. I also was very impressed with the programs. If you have visited any of the programs — and I’ve been to pretty much all of them — it is unbelievable to see the work that you do. I remember visiting one of your old programs — Shepherd’s Cove — which was a program for homeless mothers and their children. It struck me to realize these were real-life situations where these individuals didn’t have places to live. That experience was a hard thing to walk away from and just ignore. Another current program you have — the Hilda Barg Homeless Prevention Center in Woodbridge, VA is admirable. The way your staff treats the vulnerable individuals and families living there with dignity and takes them to the next level — there are not enough words to praise that program!”

2. Why did you decide to donate to this organization?

“If you believe in the programs Volunteers of America Chesapeake is running and you realize the magnitude and kinds of problems that exist, you try to figure out a way to contribute. If you can’t give your time to help, then the best way is through a financial donation to the organization because it not only supports the programs but the people who have the expertise and dedication to helping their clients.”

3. If there are others out there who are considering getting involved or making a donation to Volunteers of America Chesapeake — what can you tell them about why they should donate to this organization?

“I would recommend you look at Christmas as a time to give to help others. Instead of giving presents to each other — pres-
A Little Goes A Long Way

Again this fall, Volunteers of America Chesapeake participated in the Fannie Mae Help the Homeless Walkathon Program. Now in its 23rd year, the Fannie Mae Help the Homeless Walkathon is the nation’s single-largest fundraiser aimed at raising funds and awareness to support beneficiary organizations that work to prevent and end homelessness in the Washington, D.C. area. As a beneficiary organization, 100% of the proceeds from walkers who designated Volunteers of America Chesapeake as their beneficiary come straight back to help our homeless programs. This year our organization participated in a number of ways: hosting Mini-Walks at our homeless shelters and supportive service programs in Woodbridge, VA (AfterShare at Hilda M. Barg Homeless Prevention Center), Leesburg, VA (Loudoun Homeless Services Center) and Washington, D.C. (DC Core Service Agency); partnering with our national Volunteers of America office, headquartered in Alexandria, VA to host a walk and fundraiser; participating in the November 20 walk that took place on the National Mall and hosting Mini-Walk programs at Arlington Science Focus School and Hoffman-Boston school; both elementary schools in Arlington, VA.

For more than 10 years Hoffman-Boston Elementary School has been supporting Volunteers of America Chesapeake, particularly our Residential Program Center located right down the road. Students here partner with our organization not only for their annual Help the Homeless Mini-Walk but throughout the year through snack-food drives, toiletry drives, towel drives and canned food drives for our homeless residents. We caught up with the Student Council — the organizers of the school’s efforts — to discuss their involvement.

1. Why does the Student Council support Volunteers of America Chesapeake and homeless residents at our Residential Program Center in Arlington?
   “I remember seeing a homeless man under a highway,” said fifth-grader Aaron, “and I thought to myself, ‘we’re all human and we should all have the same rights and all have a home.’” “It makes you feel good,” said fourth-grader Krubel. “You feel like a super hero and that you’re saving the world.”

2. Is it hard for your Student Council to have all of these activities helping the homeless?
   “It was a little bit hard,” said fifth-grader Tugi, “but we should do it because a lot of people don’t have what we have and the homeless people should be the same as us.” Krubel added, “If everybody works together, every little bit makes a difference and a big possibility of helping the homeless get off the street and on their feet.”

3. What can you tell other people, perhaps even other students, about why they should consider helping those in need?
   “If you help them, maybe once they get back on their feet they can help you if you end up needing help,” said Melvin. Aaron agrees, “you don’t know if you could be on the streets. You could be on the streets yourself any minute at anytime and you would want someone to help you.”

4. During this Thanksgiving time, what are you thankful for?
   Tugi: “Food and a roof over our heads.”
   Melvin: “I’m thankful that this year more students went on the walk to Help the Homeless than last year.”
   Aaron: “I’m thankful for people that love me.”
   Krubel: “I’m thankful for the family I have.”
   Kirubel: “I’m thankful for life.”
   Khongorzul: “The world we live in.”
In 2002 Volunteers of America partnered with the Major League Baseball Players Trust to promote the nurturing and well-being of America’s children and families. The partnership features the personal involvement of Major League Baseball players in a national youth volunteer program inspiring the next generation of volunteers across America called “Action Team.” Volunteers of America Chesapeake is proud to host a number of Action Teams at local high schools in our area which offer students ways to get involved and give back through assisting at programs helping those who need a helping hand.

As a season-opening Action Team event this year, Major Leaguer Justin Maxwell of the Washington Nationals volunteered to help Action Team students assemble toiletry welcome kits for our homeless and substance abuse recovery residents. He also participated in a Q&A session with the students. Here are some highlights:

1. **Why did you get involved with the Action Team program?**
   
   “I like the message and I like what you’re trying to do. We need more students like you in the world — you’re helping make the world a better place — so thank you.”

2. **What is your favorite part of volunteering?**
   
   “After you’re done helping, you feel better about yourself. We put together what felt like 50 bags in 15 minutes, but when the center passes them out to people in need, it will make the day for those in need.”

3. **What are you thankful for when it comes to being a Washington Nationals baseball player?**
   
   “I love being near home and playing baseball — it was a dream come true for me, literally.”

For more information on how your school can hit a homerun volunteering, go to our website:

[www.VOAchesapeake.org/ActionTeam](http://www.VOAchesapeake.org/ActionTeam)
Earlier this fall season, Volunteers of America Chesapeake's Eastern Avenue Apartments benefitted from a generous partnership with BB&T. For three days, more than 60 BB&T Prince George’s County area employees donated eight sweat-filled hours to improve our Eastern Avenue Apartments, an 88-unit affordable housing community offering permanent residences with supportive services to low-income individuals and families. The three days of labor, along with a generous $10,000 contribution from BB&T, allowed our families to enjoy a new playground, community room and computer lab.

We spoke with Heath W. Campbell, BB&T Senior Vice President, Prince George's County City Executive, to learn more.

1. **Why did BB&T partner with Volunteers of America Chesapeake?**
   “BB&T has enjoyed the privilege of working with Volunteers of America Chesapeake in numerous capacities over the years and it became increasingly obvious that our organizations share similar missions. Engrained as a part of our mission at BB&T is to make the communities which we work better places to be. This year, when our team at BB&T was researching a way to make a positive impact in our community, it was a natural fit to align our efforts with this existing partnership.”

2. **We understand this particular opportunity was made possible through BB&T’s Lighthouse Project, founded by BB&T’s CEO Kelly King. Tell us more about the project and the meaning behind it.**
   “The project started about two years ago when BB&T recognized a lot of people are going through difficult times. We started the Lighthouse Project because a lighthouse represents hope. We hope BB&T can be a lighthouse and that by making this difference that light of hope will help shine a brighter future for Volunteers of America Chesapeake, Eastern Avenue Apartments and the families and children you serve.”

3. **We know Volunteers of America Chesapeake was one of 17 BB&T community service projects. Was there anything in particular that made our project stand out?**
   “What makes this project so unique is that it is a project which should have taken three weeks; yet it took only three days because of the collaboration and hard work of our BB&T employees and Volunteers of America Chesapeake.”

4. **During this time of thanksgiving, what are you thankful for?**
   “That the Volunteers of America Chesapeake Eastern Avenue Apartments revitalization project allowed BB&T to bring joy to the lives of the 88 families through our contributions.”

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**Is your company or organization interested in making a difference in their community?**
We would love to talk with you. Just go to [www.VOAchesapeake.org/GetInvolved](http://www.VOAchesapeake.org/GetInvolved)
Don’t Forget: End of Year Giving

Save money on your 2010 taxes and make a difference in the lives of those in need. Go to www.VOAchesapeake/GiveAGift to learn more.

Gift the Gift of Hope this Holiday Season!
See inside for more!

You can also place your order online at www.VOAchesapeake.org/GiftsofHope

* Orders must be received by December 17 for December 25 delivery!