Seeing Spring Through the Snow

Spring is in the air. The weather is warmer, the sun is shining longer and flowers are in full bloom across the area. But at many of our 26 centers from Baltimore to Washington to Virginia Beach, Volunteers of America Chesapeake is still digging out from the winter snowstorms that left more than a $100,000 strain on our agency.

That’s because the record-setting snowstorm didn’t stop our organization from providing care to the more than 8,000 men, women and children we serve each year.

Instead, Volunteers of America Chesapeake’s facilities went above and beyond:

- Logging 4,500 overtime hours – with some staff even working 24-hour days.
- Buying and providing additional food and supplies – when outside volunteers or services couldn’t reach our centers.
- Providing emergency snow removal – to ensure those who needed our centers the most would find a clear path to shelter from the storm.

As the snow fell, we stood by our motto “There are no limits to caring.”

Now, we need you to stand by us. Not only to bridge the $100,000 funding gap but to restock our shelves and restore the supplies depleted by the storms so we can continue providing high-quality human services leading to self-reliance, dignity and hope all year round.

“Volunteers of America Chesapeake continues to rely upon area residents and organizations for much-needed assistance with replenishing everyday items such as toiletries, non-perishable food, bedding and clothing. We are so grateful to all of our employees, volunteers and the community for their unwavering support during the past few months. But it is important that we continue to receive this support to ensure that we will not only recover from the storms but also be ready to serve those in need all year long.”

Russell K. Snyder,
President & CEO

Want to help make sure our critical work is available today, tomorrow and through the next storm? Please call 800-646-2828 or visit www.voaches.org to donate. Turn to page 11 for a list of In-Kind donations!
Mission Statement
Volunteers of America Chesapeake’s mission is to create sustained positive life changes for individuals and families by providing high quality human services leading to self-reliance, dignity and hope in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia.

Core Service Values
At Volunteers of America Chesapeake we are passionate about helping those who need our help the most to rebuild their lives and reach their full potential. Through our dedicated and committed team of management, staff and volunteers and guided by our Core Values: Caring, Quality, Trust, Faith and Respect we help more than 8,000 people each year at our 26 programs serving the homeless, mentally ill, intellectually disabled, aging, those in need of affordable housing, those struggling with substance abuse and community corrections.

Who We Are
Volunteers of America Chesapeake, founded in 1896 in Baltimore, is the locally chartered affiliate of Volunteers of America. We accomplish our spiritually based mission by serving more than 8,000 people annually through programs that spread geographically from Baltimore, Maryland to Virginia Beach, Virginia. Our professional staff and dedicated volunteers provide high quality human services to the homeless, mentally ill, intellectually disabled, ex-offenders, victims of substance abuse, elderly, and the very young. Volunteers of America Chesapeake’s goal is to help those served become self-reliant and make positive life changes.

Here’s Where Volunteers of America Chesapeake is At Work in Your Community!

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

All articles are written and edited by:
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Suggestions and story ideas are encouraged and welcomed.
Please contact cdunn@voaches.org

Turn to page 10 for a full list of all of our programs.
Spring is upon us and we weathered the blizzards of 2010. I am so proud of our direct care staff who demonstrated our core value of caring during these winter storms. Our tagline for Volunteers of America is "no limits to caring." Many of our employees walked for miles in the snow covered streets to bring food to those confined to our homeless shelters. Others worked three straight shifts at our group homes while many of our employees shoveled snow from sidewalks and cleared doorways to remain open for those in need of shelter. What dedication and commitment to the men, women and children who rely on the human services we provide 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The dedication of our employees during these storms truly demonstrates what a "servant’s heart" really is all about in a successful human services agency like Volunteers of America Chesapeake, Inc. Because of the caring spirit of the individuals that provide direct support to our clients and residents in the programs, we have renamed our newsletter Caring Chronicles.

Caring Chronicles will bring you real-life stories about how we are enhancing the lives of the more than 8,000 individuals we are serving while weathering the blizzards, struggling with local budget cuts and the challenge of caring for more and more in need of human services. Our faith-based mission is to lead those in our care to self-reliance, independence and healing. In a word, our agency gives people in our care hope for a better life. We are extremely honored to offer this gift to our clients in our care.

Finally, I want to thank our local partners and donors for continuing their support of the human service programs we provide in their communities. It is through committed donors and strong partnerships that we are able to provide the high quality level of service to the populations we serve. Enjoy the spring weather, flowers and renewal that this season brings all of us.

Blessings,

Russell K. Snyder
President/CEO
Volunteers of America Chesapeake, Inc.
Advocating Against Budget Cuts

Volunteers of America Chesapeake Leadership, Staff, Supporters and Clients Take Steps to Save Residential Program Center and Montgomery County Mental Health & Homeless Outreach from Budget Cuts

We Need Your Help!

Area residents are urged to help us help those who need our help the most by advocating for our Montgomery County Mental Health and Homeless Outreach Program.

Please express your support of our program against the proposed budget cuts by:

- Sending an email: county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov
- Writing a letter: 100 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, MD 20850
- Or by calling the budget hotline 240-777-7802.

Former client Sidney McEachin (left) stands beside Program Director Victoria Karakcheyeva (right) at Volunteers of America Chesapeake’s Montgomery County Mental Health & Homeless Outreach Program.

Former RPC client turned staff and Advisory Board Member Mike Prioleau & President/CEO Russ Snyder do an interview on NewsChannel 8 about RPC.
A famous phrase at Volunteers of America Chesapeake is a quote by our founders Maud and Ballington Booth, “We will go wherever we are needed and do whatever comes to hand.” Over the years and in our every day business that quote acts as our compass; guiding our organization in all that we do whether its shoveling the snow as many of our staff members did during this year’s winter storms; heading into the trenches of the underpasses and alley ways to find homeless people in need of our services; or more recently, being a voice for those who are unable to speak for themselves.

That role of advocate took center stage these past few months as a number of our centers were facing budget cuts imposed by the counties with whom we share a contract. But leadership, staff and supporters of Volunteers of America Chesapeake did whatever they could to voice the message that in these tough economic times, cutting funding to the services already struggling with an increase in the number of people needing our help is not the answer.

In Arlington County, VA both the Advisory Board and Russ Snyder wrote letters urging the county to reconsider its proposed three percent reduction in non-profit funding. “I definitely think that the letters sent to the Board made a difference,” said Volunteers of America Chesapeake Residential Program Center Senior Director Eileen Corbet. Instead the County Board restored two percent of the proposed cut in its final budget.

In Montgomery County, MD proposed budget cuts are threatening to close Volunteer’s of America Chesapeake’s Montgomery County Mental Health and Homeless Outreach Program which serves the county’s homeless population of more than 1,200. Currently county officials are considering cutting all of its funding to our program; funding that makes up 43 percent of our budget or $114,000. Russ Snyder spoke at a public hearing advocating that the county reconsider cutting funding to our program, which is a vital part of the community.

“Without the outreach engagement and supportive services we provide, street mentally ill individuals will be very likely to be involved in the corrections system, adding unnecessary costs for incarceration, and not helping these men and women become healthy, productive members of society,” Snyder said.

Chief Darien Manley, of the Maryland National Capital Park Police, Montgomery County Division and former client Sidney McEachin wrote letters of support in our program. “Thanks to Volunteers of America [Chesapeake] I am not longer homeless,” McEachin wrote. “Please do not stop funding programs that help the homeless.”
Taking Technology to the Cloud!
Volunteers of America Chesapeake is featured in a case study for taking our technology to the next level.

Background
For more than 110 years, Volunteers of America (VOA), one of the nation’s largest human services organizations, has been serving nearly two million people annually. Founded in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1896, VOA Chesapeake is one of the first branches of the national organization. As a faith-based, non-profit corporation providing high quality human services that result in positive life changes for more than 8,000 people every year, VOA Chesapeake meets the needs of persons in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

Under the cost reimbursement method of funding for non-profit organizations, government grants play a key role in helping VOA Chesapeake meet the needs of its community. After grants are secured, funders require receipts for cost-reimbursement invoices. VOA Chesapeake’s paper-intensive processes made the filing, archiving and retrieval of billing and accounts payable invoices difficult to manage and cost unnecessary time and dollars. In addition, audit reports pointed to its poor documentation and lack of archiving, making the need for an audit trail crucial to continue operations. Lost documents were leading to lost revenue and hindering the overall mission of the organization.

As a non-profit company, VOA Chesapeake needed to minimize operational costs to ensure the maximum available budget for its core human services. Since it did not have the time or resources to deploy and maintain a large IT infrastructure, it focused its search for a solution on those providers with hosted offerings that were easy to use and implement.

Partnering with KnowledgeTree
VOA Chesapeake needed a scalable solution that would first roll out departmentally, and eventually be implemented across the entire organization. The solution needed to provide secure access to documents from anywhere, at anytime via a web browser and enable effortless collaboration among geographically dispersed employees. VOA Chesapeake evaluated several document management systems, including SpringCM, but ultimately selected KnowledgeTree’s software as a service (SaaS) offering for its ease of use, rapid implementation and cloud-based hosting on Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud™ for security.

KnowledgeTree was easy to implement, and its intuitive interface ensured quick adoption by the entire finance department. VOA Chesapeake completed implementation in only 60 days with all accounts payable and accounts receivable documents, billing invoices, cash receipts and bank reconciliations seamlessly loaded into the system - making it easy for the billing department to pull the relevant invoices and speed up the annual audit process by enabling the retrieval of test invoices on the fly.

Specifically, KnowledgeTree provides Volunteers of America Chesapeake with:
• Enterprise-class document management functionality without the cost, maintenance, administration, and infrastructure requirements of traditional on-site solutions
• Secure access to documents from anywhere, at any time via a web browser
• Effortless collaboration among geographically dispersed employees
• Faster time-to-value with rapid deployment and minimal training requirements

“Aim extremely excited to know that our technology team is on the cutting edge of the solutions available to our business,” said Russell K. Snyder.

To read the rest of this case study and learn more head to www.voaches.org and click on News.
The Story Behind the Cover

On the front cover of our annual report is the picture of a woman looking lovingly at the baby boy she is holding – while the baby yawns, content in his mother’s arms. On the back cover of our annual report is the same family – this time the father holding his son, all three staring at the camera with a determined look in their eyes. Even the eyes of the baby, who was only two months old at the time, reflects the essence of a family who has already been through so much – yet who is committed to doing whatever they need to succeed in the future.

It was that commitment to succeed which brought Anexie Negron and David Wood to Volunteers of America’s Loudoun Homeless Services Center. Because with a seven-day-old baby and no place to go, they refused to give up.

Negron had moved to Leesburg Virginia with family but because her name was not listed on the lease, was evicted as soon as she delivered baby Leahm. Wood recently moved to Leesburg from New Jersey, but without a job in the area all the money he had went to hotel rooms or transportation looking for work. The couple had been planning a new life in a new place with their new baby. Showing up at our homeless shelter was not in their plans.

“It was very stressful – we didn’t know what our next move was,” Wood explained.

Luckily the staff at the center did. They pushed Wood to look for work and apply for a number of jobs every day. They helped the family apply for a Rapid Re-housing Grant that helps provide rent for the first three months. They did everything they could to encourage and motivate the couple to become self-reliant and in a little less than three months, they did. Wood found a job, Negron went back to work after maternity leave and the couple moved in to a two-bedroom condo in the heart of Leesburg where they are now raising their son.

“I feel great,” Wood said. “This place has done a lot for us. I really appreciate everything they’ve done for us.”

Negron agrees. “As long as you put your heart into the program, you can get a lot of things accomplished by being here” she said.

To read more success stories of people who accomplished a lot thanks to Volunteers of America Chesapeake, read our full 2009 Annual Report. You can download a copy online at www.voaches.org Click on “News & Publications.”
A great big thank you goes out to two special schools in Arlington County: Patrick Henry and Hoffman-Boston Elementary Schools. More than 80 kindergarteners, along with parents and school staffers from Patrick Henry Elementary School in Arlington partnered with Volunteers of America Chesapeake’s Residential Program Center to lend a helping hand to residents by packing more than 100 healthy lunches. The activity was part of the school’s service learning project and students also decorated the lunch bags and packed hand-written notes to the residents. “It made me feel good and it was a fun and nice thing to do,” said kindergartener Olivia Fried.

Meanwhile Hoffman-Boston Elementary School has been a long time supporter of the Residential Program Center. Its Student Council recently hosted a Snack Drive for residents at RPC where students made posters, flyers and boxes to organize and collect a variety of treats to help supplement snacks at the center.

A Home of Their Own

On March 28 Volunteers of America Chesapeake held a special open house and blessing for its newest Intellectual Disabilities Services group home. The recently-renovated, five-bedroom house located in Arlington, VA was purchased by Volunteers of America Chesapeake and will house and provide individualized service plans for five intellectually disabled men to become independent, integral members of the community.

“The individuals who will be living here are just thrilled to be here,” said Belinda Tiller, Volunteers of America Chesapeake’s VP of Intellectual Disabilities Services. “They are very happy to have a room of their own and a home that belongs to them.”

Tiller said the event was also an important way to introduce the home to the community. “The neighbors enjoyed the open house so much that the families want to get together on a regular basis!”

This home marks the 12th house in Volunteers of America Chesapeake’s Intellectual Disabilities Services group homes. At each group home, staff and volunteers not only care for the individuals but also provide intense programs to help them on their ways to self-sufficiency. Each adult has his own room, use of the kitchen and other common areas in the house and is provided with transportation to and from appointments, jobs and classes. The house has been completely renovated to serve the special needs of the residents.
If you walk through the main doors at Volunteers of America Chesapeake’s Lanham Administrative Office Beverly Pleasants will greet you. If you call the main number wanting to learn more about our organization, Beverly Pleasants will tell you. If you show up at our doorstep or dial our number needing information or our services, Beverly Pleasants will connect you. Even if you need help but don’t know who to turn to or where to go, Beverly Pleasants will point you in the right direction.

That’s because for the past 16 years Beverly Pleasants has been serving Volunteers of America Chesapeake as our Administrative Receptionist. It’s also because for Pleasants, not being able to help is not an option.

“I really like being at the front desk because I meet a lot of interesting people and I like to be able to forward them on to our services,” she said. “It really bothers me when I don’t have an answer for them. I want to always have the resources that people need.”

For Pleasants that mentality isn’t just an example of her dedicated work ethic. It’s an example of her giving character – something that’s been innate to Pleasants and her family for generations.

“We have volunteered our whole lives,” Pleasants said, “in my family and my husband’s family. We have always opened our doors to someone who needed a place to stay and have always given back.”

One of Pleasants most rewarding volunteer projects was when she helped twice in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Pleasants worked 12+ hour days on the recovery, clean-up and program relocation of Volunteers of America New Orleans. At Volunteers of America Chesapeake Pleasants also has a long history of volunteering, including some favorite projects like sponsoring our organization’s “I Remember Mama” Mother’s Day event in the 1990’s and helping our Prince George’s Mental Health Services program with its Halloween and Christmas parties by taking pictures for the clients.

“I like how it puts a sparkle in their eyes,” she explained.

Now, thanks to the suggestion of her sister-in-law Jan, the entire Pleasants family (of more than 30!) is putting sparkles in the eyes of Volunteers of America Chesapeake’s Shelter Plus Care families. Every Christmas for the past two years four generations of Pleasants have been generously purchasing, wrapping and delivering Christmas presents to our clients instead of giving or receiving their own gifts.

“For Pleasants that mentality isn’t just an example of her dedicated work ethic. It’s an example of her giving character – something that’s been innate to Pleasants and her family for generations.”

The Pleasants family poses for a picture while gathering their Christmas donations. Beverly Pleasants is seated fourth from the bottom.

Our heartfelt thanks to... Lucille Pleasants Williams, JoAnn & Rene Taylor, Carl & Vivian Pleasants and their daughters Jeri & Shaheen, Clark & Ina Pleasants and their daughters Twain, Lulu and Keena; Mark & Deborah Pleasants and their children Markie, Desmond, Farrah and Briana; Jan & Doug Farmer and their children Chanel, Lil Doug & Ashley; Beverly & Michael Pleasants and their sons Lil Mike & Anwar; Rapheal & Edna Pleasants; and all spouses and children of the 3rd generation and loyal friends: Simone Smith, Duane Crawley, Glenda Massenburg, Melinda Turner, Jackie Hall and Phillip Goffney.

Join Our Team! We are always looking for employees and volunteers to help us make a difference. Just go to www.voaches.org or call 1-800-646-2828
Snow Hero List

Special thanks to these 82 Volunteers of America Chesapeake employees who went above and beyond by providing service during the winter storms:

Walter Ficklin
Devon Cole
Sarah Delva
Peter Flanagan
Keyana Griffin
Kenneth Newby
Jocelyn Smith
Danny Sanders
Tracey Thomas
Karen Mathews
David Cox
Rachel Lynn
Til Bennie
Elaine Havener
Linda Kimble
Carmen Palacios
Wendy Bakken
Angie Stewart
Katie Richardson
Hassan Elhaij
Brian Williams
Dan Shain
Janet Norris
Al Cole
David Harris
Demarcus Mulbah
Kirby Garland
Chris Watkins
Jackie Hall
Marva McCombs
Dian Bailey
Shurmin Alleyne
Amanda Roman
Virginia Graham
Priscilla Thakurdas
Lakima Brown
Lillian Fountaine
Joseph Mwangi
Chucks Egwuatu
Carol Stucky
Lenora Stanley
Rudolph Bradley
Lee Ann Few
Larry Joyner –El
Denise Price
Elizabeth Kallon Kmah
Sandra Vanderhurst
Durrand F. Mitchell
Hindi Arif
Jaff Fonyuy
Rosalind Brooks
Mohamed Bah
Paul Boadu
Julie Lowdermilk
Hakeem Said
Korpo Kollie
Sylvia Aryeh
Catherine Mukami
Warren Siler
Harold Miller
Dinah Botchway
Fatmata Cherif
*Denitress Houston
*Paul Tolbert
Norma Santos
Lee Johnson
Simon Sampson
Richard Pope
Nicolette Pitts
Eduardo Usurin
Hakim Rushdan
Beronica Salas
John Davis
Essie Marble
Anthony Davis
Elizabeth Aguilar
Paul Parker
Judi Scott
Stephanie Smith
David Greener

At Work in Your Community

Homeless & Supportive Housing Services:
- AfterShare Programs
- Bailey’s Crossroads Shelter
- Bailey’s Crossroads Hypothermia Shelter
- Eastern Avenue Apartments
- Hilda M. Barg Homeless Prevention Center
- Irvington Woods Apartments
- The Lighthouse Center
- Loudoun Homeless Services Center
- Loudoun Transitional Program
- Paca House
- Pratt House
- Residential Program Center
- Shelter Plus Care
- Virginia Beach Winter Shelter

Intellectual Disability Services:
- Baker House
- District of Columbia Community Living Centers
- Northern Virginia Community Living Centers

Mental Health Services:
- Baltimore Mental Health Services
- Community Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program
- D.C. Core Services Agency
- D.C. Jail Liaison Services
- Montgomery County Mental Health & Homeless Outreach Program
- Prince George’s Mental Health Services

Substance Abuse Services:
- Residential Program Center Detoxification Program
- Residential Program Center Early Recovery Program

Community Corrections Services:
- The Residential Re-Entry Center
- The Supervised Residential Center

Senior Services:
- Harford Senior Center
Spring Cleaning!

As you’re storing your winter coats to get ready for swimsuits now is the perfect time to clean out your closet! Just go to www.voaches.org or call 1-800-646-2828 to find our nearest program for your tax-deductable donation. Our clients would love to have your new or gently used and clean:

- Clothing
- Winter Coats
- Winter boots, hats, scarves
- Extra umbrellas
- Extra spring and summer rain coats
- Shoes (sneakers, boots and nice work shoes)
- New Socks and undergarments
- Belts
- Bedding
- Toiletries
- Canned goods and other non-perishable foods

Make A Difference Today!

Is your business or organization looking for a way to make a difference in your community? Are you or your children looking for a summer volunteer project? With our 26 programs from Baltimore through Maryland, D.C., Northern Virginia and out to Virginia Beach we’re certain to have a center and activity to meet your interest! Go to www.voaches.org and click on “Get Involved” or call us at 1-800-646-2828 today!

The client clothing closet at the Residential Program Center, which is stocked entirely by donations.
Volunteers of America Chesapeake is a United Way Agency (Agency # 8471)

Volunteers of America Chesapeake participates in the United Way Combined Federal Campaign. Our giving code is 57076.

Volunteers of America Chesapeake is a certified 501 (c) 3 organization, tax identification number 52-0610547

Go Green: Subscribe to the Caring Chronicles e-version
Simply send your name and email address to: voaches@voaches.org or log onto www.voaches.org and click on the “Sign up for our Newsletter” link.

Volunteers of America Chesapeake celebrated Bring Your Child to Work Day! Stay connected with our latest news, activities and calls to action by visiting our Facebook page. Go to www.facebook.com and search for Volunteers of America Chesapeake!