CARING CHRONICLES
Summer 2012

The Book of Matthew
WHAT YOU MAY NOT KNOW

Chesapeake Chatter:
News & Views
From Around Our Programs

From “Dark Waters”
To Bright Days
The James Allison Story

THE GREAT EQUALIZER
The impact of mental health on families

Are you Called to Care?
Letters to the President

Join the Twitter Movement
#operationbackpack2012
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Communications Specialist

Called to Care™
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Around our Programs...

1. Volunteers from The Action Team and Arlington’s Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints direct cars towards our “Shred” Homelessness event on May 19, 2012.

2. Volunteers from VOAC & BB&T renovate a home in our Prince George Mental Health Program on May 15-16, 2012.

3. Emily enjoys her dinner at Johnny Rockets, part of the Called to Care Dine-Out in Virginia Beach.

4. Residents at Virginia Beach’s Baker House got dressed up and attended the Prom on May 18, 2012.

5. Children of our Pratt House Transitional Housing Program decorate recycled bags and planters with Earth Day messages as part of Comcast Cares Day on April 21, 2012.

6. VOA Chesapeake President and CEO Russ Snyder presents VOA National President Mike King with a Palm cross on May 9, 2012.
Dear valued friends, donors and supporters,

I would like to thank you for your continued support of Volunteers of America Chesapeake. With your help we are able to provide the highest level of quality care for those most in need. This summer we are answering the Call to Care for our children.

Our Lighthouse Center, a homeless services day center in Virginia Beach, held their annual Make A Difference Dinner on May 10th. During that dinner we were able to recognize children who are Called to Care™ including 5 year old Cora Niles. Cora used her birthday to ask friends and family to make donations to The Lighthouse Center. The response was overwhelming. Over 700 items including blankets, hygiene products, and canned goods were collected. These items are vital to The Lighthouse Center’s Winter Shelter Program where we partner with local faith leaders to provide shelter and food to the unsheltered homeless in Virginia Beach.

Cora’s story of giving touched us all; our children are answering the Call to Care and recognizing the importance of helping others in need. Here at Volunteers of America Chesapeake we care for over 500 children in our homeless and supportive housing programs. We provide case management, housing assistance, community and employment services as well as safe and secure homes to families on their road to regaining independence. We need your help to ensure the children in these families are getting the highest level of care as well. That is why this summer we are launching our Operation Backpack initiative.

This back-to-school initiative started in 1999 to provide children in our homeless programs with backpacks and school supplies. One of the most devastating consequences of homelessness is the impact it has on children’s education.

Homeless and homeless-at-risk children face tremendous stigmatization; as a result, they are more likely than students living in more stable home environments to be placed in special education classes and drop out of school. Our goal is to provide the children in our care with the tools they need to be successful in class. In furthering our mission to inspire self-reliance, dignity and hope through health and human service, we need to ensure our children are supported and prepared to grow into adults.

We have partnered with The Washington Redskins Charitable Foundation as well as Johnny Rockets, Modell’s Sporting Goods and Enterprise Rental Car to help us care for our children. You can be an Operation Backpack partner as well; Drop boxes will be set up at participating locations to collect new backpacks and school supplies. You can also donate $25 online for the purchase of a new backpack filled with school supplies for a child in our homeless programs. Operation Backpack will also support the schools our children attend as we know teachers at many schools are faced with the burden of providing school supplies for their classrooms. It is through programs like Operations Backpack that you can make a difference in the lives of the vulnerable children in the communities where you live and work. With your help we care for over 10,000 of the most vulnerable men women and children in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia and we will continue to expand our service offerings to new communities and populations.

We are blessed and humbled to fellowship with you as we serve God every day. Thank you for your continued support.

Together, we are all Called to Care™.
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Visit www.voachesapeake.org/OperationBackpack for a list of drop locations and information on how you and your organization can get involved! Together, we are all Called to Care™ @VOAChesapeake #OperationBackpack2012 800.646.2828
Recently, Thomas Nichols, Program Director at Bailey’s Crossroads Community Shelter invited us over to meet the staff and learn more about the exciting changes going on. We made the trip down to Falls Church, VA and arrived just as the sun was coming from behind the clouds.

“When the weather is bad I open the doors up, let people come in out of the rain,” said Mr. Nichols as he walked us through the main room. “I’m from Florida so if the temperature gets to where I’m chilly I open up to make sure people in the area can come in and keep warm.”

In addition to being a 50 bed homeless shelter, Bailey’s also offers a drop-in service 5 days a week from 9:30 – 1:30pm and a 7-day hypothermia program from December through March.

In the large community room at Bailey’s we found a continental breakfast buffet donated by Panera Bread. Mr. Nichols lays out the donated bagels and pastries for quick grab-and-go snacks while residents and drop-ins make use of computers, laundry facilities and counseling services.

Our tour continued into the kitchen where we met Chef Jasmine Dorris. The kitchen at Bailey’s, under Chef Dorris’ direction 7,000 meals are served during the Hypothermia program from December 1st through March 31st. On our visit the menu consisted of tilapia and fresh green vegetables.

Through the kitchen Mr. Nichols took us into the food pantry. Bailey’s has been blessed by community donations but they cannot make use of small cans due to the volume of people the shelter feeds each day. Ever the quick thinkers, the Bailey’s team uses these donated cans and individual boxes to create baskets for families in need. “People come here looking for help. Sometimes they’ve fallen on hard times and need assistance. We have the ability to provide them with food for their families” says Mr. Nichols.

Affixed to the food pantry door is the kitchen calendar which lists the days that local community groups come in and provide meals to shelter residents and drop-ins. “They come in primarily on the weekends but they donate and cook the food and each group has its own designated day.”

Next we visited the staff offices at Bailey’s. We met Facilities Operations Supervisor Thornell Hancock and Case Mangers Alicia Ruiz and Barbara Johnson. We were also introduced to Nurse Linda from the Virginia Health Department and Ms. Nella from the Community Service Board (CSB). Bailey’s unique partnerships with the Department of Health and the Community Service Board provide residents with medical and mental health care on site.

“We were a testing site for new CSB protocol” explains Mr. Nichols. “We see mental health patients here and sign them up for more intensive therapy and substance abuse treatment based on their needs.” In conjunction with the CSB partnership, Bailey’s also provides 5 emergency shelter beds in order to get individuals in crisis off the streets quickly and connect them with the resources they need. “We have a partnership with Fairfax County Schools to provide temporary shelter to homeless students while we work towards permanent housing. We also have a partnership with probation and parole and Inova hospital.”

Bailey’s also offers Community Case Management to help prevent homelessness. Residents of Fairfax County who are in danger of losing their housing can speak to the Community Case Manager who works with Fairfax County to provide funds to keep these individuals in their homes. “It allows us to prevent these individuals and families from becoming homeless in the first place.” says Mr. Nichols.

To learn more about Bailey’s Crossroads Community Shelter and how you can be Called to Care™ please visit www.VOAChesapeake/Homeless-Services
“I would tell anyone reading or struggling with homelessness that it’s ok, just keep the faith, keep pressing on and keep looking forward.”

“Located in Woodbridge, VA the Center is a 30-bed, short-term shelter helping homeless families and single adults develop individual plans that promote self-sufficient living. Provided with funding from the Prince William County Department of Social Services, programs at the Center provide intensive case management including: mental health evaluation and counseling; drug and alcohol abuse prevention services; children’s services; budget training; adult education and employment services.

“I came in and immediately felt cared for. I didn’t feel the pressure of my homelessness.” Mr. Allison developed friendships and helped with the Center’s AfterShare program by assisting in the inventory and collection of donations.

Former residents of the Hilda Barg Center formed the AfterShare program in 1991 as a way to share excess donations with the community. Food, clothing and housewares are donated every Sunday to 50 families in need.

“Things are looking up for me now. Publishing my book was a dream come true and who knows where it could go from here.” says Mr. Allison who found permanent housing in 2010. “I’m working 6 days a week and I have a room and a roof over my head. I’m not out of the woods but I’m getting there.”

When asked if he still owns the truck he once called home Mr. Allison chuckles, “I sure do!” It serves as a reminder of what he endured as well as a testament to the power of faith. “I would tell anyone reading or struggling with homelessness that it’s ok, just keep the faith, keep pressing on and keep looking forward.”

The last lines of Mr. Allison’s poem Wings To Fly reads “These geese may have wings to fly but for me, I am flying solo, wingless into a new day.”

Volunteers of America Chesapeake is truly proud of Mr. Allison and blessed to have been a part of his journey into new days.

The Volunteers of America Chesapeake AfterShare program began in the winter of 1991 at the Hilda M. Barg Homeless Prevention Center (formerly the Prince William County Homeless Prevention Center). Founded by former residents, the mission of AfterShare is to encourage self-reliance, dignity and hope through the knowledge that even those who have lost much, have much to give.

In 1992 AfterShare won the first of many awards highlighting the importance of giving back to the community. Volunteers, under the guidance of the Center’s staff raise money for the Center’s rent fund; advocate and educate about homelessness, participate in the Cooperative Council of Ministry’s meals programs at the Center and organize distributions of food and clothing through their “Outreach and Prevention” program.

Some AfterShare volunteers find their calling in helping the Center with food pick-ups, sorting donations, cleaning and doing essential day-to-day duties that keep the program running. Others further the program’s mission by speaking out as advocates, educating about homelessness, fundraising and providing assistance and guidance to current residents.

AfterShare’s “Outreach & Prevention” program shares excess donated items with the unsheltered homeless at campsites as well as families in the community who are financially fragile and in danger of homelessness. Every Sunday 50 families arrive at the shelter to receive excess food, clothes, toys and household goods.

Though the majority of volunteers are former center residents, Sister Sharon is one exception. Formerly homeless herself, Sister Sharon came to Volunteers of America in need of food assistance 7 years ago. Since then she has become an integral part of the program and one of its most outspoken advocates.

“I’m a disabled nurse and I was having trouble making ends meet for my children and grandchildren. Someone told me I should go to the house on the hill, the Hilda Barg Center.” says Sister Sharon of first hearing about the AfterShare Program. “They helped me bridge that gap,” she says “with food, clothing, even house wares, lamps and things. If I had enough I wouldn’t go, but when I was in need they were there.”

“A few years ago I started volunteering. That was 5 years ago, and today Sister Sharon volunteers 26-30 hours every week with AfterShare.

“There’s a stigma about homelessness, but not everyone is an alcoholic or on drugs. Sometimes people find themselves in a position of need. There are all types of backgrounds here: people get laid off, sick, you never know.” says Sister Sharon about what makes her so passionate about the program. “It lets you know there’s always a place you can come back to, you’re not out here alone.”

When you support the AfterShare program you support people like James Allison and Sister Sharon. To learn more about how you can be Called to Care™ at the Hilda M. Barg Homeless Prevention Center visit http://www.voaches.org/Services/Homeless-Services
"Some people say death is the great equalizer but I say mental illness is the true equalizer." Jacqueline Shukur-Powell sits at her kitchen table with her hands in her lap as she politely begins to tell us how she found Volunteers of America Chesapeake. A mother of 3, Jacqueline is a participant in the Volunteers of America Chesapeake Shelter Plus Care program, a supportive housing program serving homeless individuals and families dealing with mental health issues.

"I had the best intentions for marriage and children. I graduated from college and even went to graduate school but mentally life seemed to just overwhelm me."

Sharing her story is not easy for Jacqueline who has been in the program for less than a year. "I suffered so much embarrassment and shame. I would look at my peer group and feel so far behind. They all seemed to get it so easily and everyday things were so difficult for me."

Separated from her husband, Jacqueline and her family moved between friend’s homes, shelters and even the family mini-van before finding the Shelter Plus Care program.

"My husband was a veteran. He was diagnosed with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and Bi-Polar Disorder. I was trying to care for his illness and raise children when we lost the house. I was so embarrassed, I felt like I should be able to do these things but I just couldn’t."

Jacqueline, like many suffering from mental illness, was afraid of the stigma attached medication and therapy. That fear kept her from getting the appropriate treatment and counseling.

"I would have these stern talks with myself. Tell myself to get it together. I thought I could just power through it with positive thinking, but I just kept failing and feeling more ashamed each time." Says Jacqueline.

The objectives of the Shelter Plus Care Program are to assist participants in obtaining permanent housing and provide rental subsidies as well as provide linkages to medication and therapy resources on an individual needs basis.

Families with a parent suffering from untreated mental illness are uniquely susceptible to homelessness, addiction and under employment. It is vital that programs like Shelter Plus Care address the individual’s needs as well as the needs of the entire family.

"It wasn’t until that first interview with Victoria that I realized how difficult this was to talk about. I couldn’t figure out what was wrong with me and I was so ashamed, I felt like I should be able to do these things but I just couldn’t."

Jacqueline, like many suffering from mental illness, was afraid of the stigma attached medication and therapy. That fear kept her from getting the appropriate treatment and counseling.

"I found so much hope here." Jacqueline says "My children have a home, a place they can come to and do their homework, a place where I can cook them meals. You can’t imagine how much that means to me."

"The program is funded through a HUD grant," says Program Director Victoria Karakcheyeva. Under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and in partnership with the Prince George’s County Department of Family Services, the program provides supportive housing services for 9 individuals and 27 families.

"We educate the families in our programs about living with mental illness and we provide a stable environment where they can grow and learn how to manage the illness and the impact it has on the family."

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Says Jacqueline. The Shelter Plus Care program provides supportive services for families like Jacqueline's throughout Prince George's County, MD. The intensive case management services are designed to decrease as residents gain a better understanding of how to manage their illness and regain their own independence.

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Now 10 months into the program, Jacqueline is enrolled in therapy, meets with a counselor and is continuing her studies in film.

"It’s not perfect; I have quite a ways to go" she says, "I do sometimes still feel down and feel like I’m so far behind my peer group but my counselor Ms. Bailey is so encouraging and I just focus on being better every day."

According to the Prince George’s County Department of Family Services Fiscal Year 2011-2013 plan, $20,000 was cut from Disaster Mental Health services leaving a gap that the Shelter Plus Care program has been able to fill.

"I don’t know where I would be without Volunteers of America Chesapeake. I don’t even want to think about it." says Jacqueline.
Five year old Cora Niles didn’t have a birthday party this year. Instead, in lieu of presents she asked her family and friends to make donations to Volunteers of America Chesapeake’s Lighthouse Center.

The Lighthouse Center is a homeless services day center owned by the city of Virginia Beach and operated by Volunteers of America Chesapeake. The center provides case management, art and group therapy, housing assistance and supportive services to homeless adults.

Cora’s family and friends answered the Call to Care in a big way, donating over 700 items to The Lighthouse Center including blankets, hygiene items, canned goods and clothing.

Check out our Facebook page for more photos of Cora’s Birthday!

www.facebook.com/VolunteersOfAmericaChesapeake

Sharon Middleton

Volunteers of America serves more than 10,000 men, women and children each year. We engage over 2,000 volunteers and over 650 staff members across our 29 programs. Each one of us has a unique story and we’d love to share it!

Have you volunteered with us? Perhaps you’re a former client, donor or partner. We’d love to hear from you!

Send your letters to the editor at: info@voachesapeake.org
The Volunteers of America Chesapeake Lighthouse Center is a homeless services day center located in Virginia Beach. The Center provides day services, case management, winter hypothermia shelter and art therapy classes to homeless men and women in the Virginia Beach area. Program Director Debbie Maloney introduced us to former shelter resident James Burrell who sat down with us to discuss his journey and how The Lighthouse Center made an impact on his life.

“I came to The Lighthouse Center’s winter shelter almost 5 years ago,” says Mr. Burrell. “I had lost my apartment and I was moving from shelter to shelter.”

The Lighthouse Center’s winter shelter in partnership with the Virginia Beach faith community provides shelter, food and services to unsheltered homeless individuals in the Virginia Beach area. Participating churches open their sanctuaries to these individuals to provide safe and warm places to sleep and fellowship. Many winter shelter participants return to The Lighthouse Center throughout the year for supportive services and housing assistance.

**VOA Chesapeake:** Was there a turning point for you?

**Mr. Burrell:** Ms. Debbie [Program Director Debbie Maloney] called me into the office and told me they were going to put me out of the winter shelter program because of my drinking. That was a real turning point for me.

**VOA Chesapeake:** What did that support help you?

**Mr. Burrell:** Well, it let me know I wasn’t alone. Ms. Debbie showed me that she really cared. She didn’t want to put me out of the program but I had to do my part. She encouraged me to go to the Veterans Administration and get involved in counseling and I did. I started seeing a psychologist and I told him how Ms. Debbie sat me down and how I was ready to work on myself now.

**VOA Chesapeake:** Ms. Debbie tells us how proud she is of you and how you’re an inspiration to others.

**Mr. Burrell:** I appreciate that. I’ve been sober for 17 months now. I have housing and I’m working down at the Veterans Administration. I come by here to sit and talk to people and just give them the same encouragement that helped me. That’s important to me. I don’t want to forget where I came from.

**VOA Chesapeake:** If you could talk directly to people who don’t know about The Lighthouse Center what would you say?

**Mr. Burrell:** I just want to let them know that this program is changing lives every day. I’m living proof of this encouragement and support. I’m taking it one day at a time but I know there is a place that’s here for me when I need help. I would still be on the street if they didn’t take the time to care for me when I didn’t even care for myself.

To learn more about our Ministry Program please contact our Chaplain Reverend Sandra T. Gray at SGray@voaches.org

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**The Gospel of Matthew**

**The Book of Matthew – What you may not know**

“I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Matthew 25:36


Matthew was a tax collector and disciple of Jesus and the Gospel of Matthew is considered the most complete account of Jesus’ teachings. The Gospel of Matthew contains The Sermon on the Mount ( Chapters 5-7) as well as the Parable sections (most notably Chapter 13).

Here at Volunteers of America Chesapeake our Ministry of Service serves as a ministry of faith enhancement, spiritual growth, hope, care, trust and respect. Based on Christianity, we offer opportunities for individual and community involvement for people of all faiths. We are embraced and comforted by God 24 hours each day. The people of Volunteers of America Chesapeake are making sure individuals in need receive clothing; are cared for when they are sick, homeless, or feeble; are visited and receive God’s Word in prison.

Someone touches the hand of another, listens patiently, and/or sits quietly with someone offering support and love. God’s comfort is demonstrated in a variety of ways through our work. Each expression is an instance of God functioning in and through us. Without hesitation, we provide comfort when we notice a need. We convey it by being charitable, kind, considerate, caring, and compassionate.

Whenever we feel alone, simply breathe deeply and connect to God’s presence within us for comfort; to receive guidance; and to just relax and know that we exist in God’s magnificent Sea of Love and all is well.
Donor Spotlight

A very special THANK YOU to Freddie Mac for their $50,000.00 donation to our Loudoun Transitional Housing Program/Homeless Services Center.

The Loudoun Transitional Housing Program provides shelter and supportive services to homeless individuals and families in Loudoun County, Va. Funded through the Loudoun County Department of Family Services and managed by Volunteers of America Chesapeake, this multi-family residency program features 8 on-site apartments and 7 off-site vouchers. The 2 year program transitions residents from crisis and emergency shelter to self-sufficiency and permanent housing.

While in transition, residents enhance life skills, gain financial independence, and focus on addressing the factors that contributed to their homelessness.

Officially opened in 1991, The Transitional Housing Program is one of 4 programs operating out of the Loudoun Homeless Services Center.

To learn more about The Loudoun Transitional Program or any of the other programs operating out of the Loudoun Homeless Services Center please visit www.voachesapeake.org and click “Our Services”.

Awards & Honors

CONGRATULATIONS to our own Lauretta Byers, who received the Dedicated Service Award from the Prince George’s County Government Dept. of Family Services. Ms. Byers has been with our PG Mental Health and Baltimore Mental Health Programs since 2011. Join us in thanking her for being Called to Care™!

Volunteers of America Chesapeake was selected as a Computerworld 2012 Honors Laureate! We are among only 20 Human Services Organizations to receive this honor. What a credit to our staff and volunteers! Congratulations!!!

CONGRATULATIONS to our own Lauretta Byers, who received the Dedicated Service Award from the Prince George’s County Government Dept. of Family Services. Ms. Byers has been with our PG Mental Health and Baltimore Mental Health Programs since 2011. Join us in thanking her for being Called to Care™!

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Volunteers of America and the Major League Baseball Player’s Trust teamed up in 2002 to encourage high school students to get involved in their communities and help those in need. Each year the Player’s Trust awards 20 National Scholarships to Action Team captains making a unique difference in their communities. We are pleased to announce 4 exceptional Action Team members from Volunteers of America Chesapeake who were awarded scholarships this year!

Maggie Edmunds, 17 of St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School in Alexandria, VA. Maggie will attend Rice University to study Psychology.

Maddie Davidson, 18 of St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School in Alexandria, VA. Maddie will attend Claremont McKenna College to study Pre-med, English or Spanish.

Samantha Hall, 18 of HB Woodlawn in Arlington, VA will attend Virginia Tech to double major in Political Science and Communications. Sam has also been awarded the Presidents community engagement scholarship at Virginia Tech.

Anne Budway, 18 of HB Woodlawn in Arlington, VA will attend Wellesley Collage to double major in Middle Eastern Studies/Peace and Justice Studies.

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JOIN A HERITAGE OF CARING:

The Ballington & Maud Booth legacy Society

The Ballington and Maud Booth Legacy Society, named for the visionary founders of Volunteers of America is a national stewardship program for donors. You can help us continue this rich heritage of caring in several ways. Name Volunteers of America Chesapeake in your will to provide hope for generations to come.

For more information, and to make a gift we invite you to call James Wynn at 240.764.2660.

It’s Time To Help Out.

When you donate your car, RV or boat to Volunteers of America Chesapeake you demonstrate how you are Called to Care for over 10,000 men, women and children in our area. As a certified 501(c)(3) charity you can be certain that when you make a donation it will be fully tax deductible and go directly to individuals most in need. To find out more about our Car Donation Program and how you can answer the Call to Care please visit www.CarsHelpingPeople.org or call 877-721-4862.