MEETING THE NEED
SERVING ALMOST 24,000 PEOPLE IN MORE THAN 40 PROGRAMS
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Freedom House moms and babies are joined by Jennifer Hancock, Kentucky State Senate President, Robert Stivers, President of Churchill Downs Racetrack, Kevin Flanery, Derby City Gaming President, Tim Bryant and his team of leaders from Churchill Downs at our Shelby Street VOA Recovery campus in Louisville. Churchill Downs made a generous gift to VOA and their team spent the morning giving back to our residents.

Dear Friend,

At Volunteers of America Mid-States, we know who is absolutely essential to changing the lives of the people we serve: you.

The enthusiastic support of our mission from donors and friends like you challenges us to do more every day. You inspire us with your partnership and you motivate us with your desire to make our world better.

Without you, we couldn’t tell stories like Rickey Green’s. Rickey spoke at our Power of 1 Breakfast this fall and you’ll read more about him in these pages. He is a success story made possible by your generosity. Rickey came to our men’s addiction treatment program from prison. He knew we were his one last chance for a safe, healthy and productive life.

With the support of Volunteers of America – and friends like you – Rickey overcame substance use disorder and became the person he knew he could be. He started a good job, was promoted and bought a home. He found the love of his life and started a family. He helped others like him.

Today, because you and our Volunteers of America family believed in Rickey – he is a father, husband and mentor. He runs his own thriving business. And he’s a member of the Volunteers of America Board of Directors. We trust and count on Rickey to make decisions about the future of our work and how we can lift up more people.

Rickey is not alone. In more than 40 programs, we served nearly 24,000 people across four states last year. We believe in data and analysis, but it’s when we see amazing leaders like Rickey and so many like him start new lives that we truly celebrate. When we look at Rickey, we see the hope within every person who walks through our doors – and we see the results of your support.

Thank you for being part of the Volunteers of America family.

Jennifer Hancock
President and CEO

Mother Teresa said that “I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.”

At Volunteers of America, creating ripples of change is our daily work. And @voamid is the daily story of that work.

When you visit us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, you are sharing in a mission of change and hope that you make possible with your support and generosity.

We’ll share stories of moms struggling with addiction who start new lives at Freedom house. Of adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities who find fulfilling and rewarding jobs. Of veterans who receive the support they deserve to honor their sacrifice for our country.

Every day @voamid brings videos, pictures and stories of amazing VOA clients, colleagues and supporters who are casting stones that start ripples of change.
Volunteers of America’s Unity House is one of very few places in our region where families facing homelessness can stay together while we work with them to find stable, long-term housing. Our Freedom House program is a nationally-recognized model for pregnant and parenting women overcoming substance use disorder.

The families who are with us at Unity House and Freedom House working hard on starting new lives are just like you and me – hoping for a joyous holiday season. Because of your generosity, last year Volunteers of America gave the gift of hope to more than 600 individuals like Quila and Ashley.

What helps our families the most?

- Gift Cards to budget friendly stores
- Socks
- Personal hygiene items

Please donate gift cards at 4303 W. Broadway and winter accessories, personal hygiene items at any Heine Brothers and Rainbow Blossom location.

For a list of items we need the most, drop-off locations in your area and other ways you can help families in need, visit voamid.org/holidays. You can also contact Michelle West at (502) 815-2907 or MichelleW@voamid.org.
Power of 1 Breakfast busts myths about addiction and homelessness

Stop for a moment and picture the face of addiction. Is the picture in your mind someone who is a success story and a leader? Do you see a loving husband and the father of three children? A hard-working small business owner? Someone who advises and guides Volunteers of America as a member of the Board of Directors?

Rickey Green is all of those things — a family man, thriving entrepreneur, mentor and key partner to VOA. Rickey is also a VOA graduate. He was released from prison into Volunteers of America’s residential treatment program for men more than a decade ago.

My experience at VOA laid the foundation for my life today. When I had nowhere else to turn, I found Volunteers of America. I owe my life to them. —Rickey Green

Rickey told his story to more than 1,000 people who came together at the Kentucky International Convention Center to learn more about VOA and support our mission. The breakfast is now one of Kentucky’s largest non-profit events, made possible by 122 table hosts who invite their friends and colleagues to learn about VOA.

To find out more and support our Power of 1 Breakfast, go to voamid.org/po1breakfast

200 HEALTHY FREEDOM HOUSE BABIES—AND COUNTING

At Volunteers of America, we believe in tracking numbers and demonstrating the quality of our work. But for us, one of the most exciting numbers this summer was 200. That’s the number of healthy babies that have been born at Freedom House. In July, Veronica gave birth to Julian — a healthy baby boy. Veronica is one of the pregnant and parenting women who came to VOA Recovery’s Freedom House for comprehensive care and treatment that helps them to understand and overcome substance use disorder. Freedom House has already started counting our next 200 with Kendaline, baby number 214.

Every healthy baby is an investment in Kentucky’s future and Volunteers of America’s program is a national model for helping women start new lives.

WALKING TOWARD RECOVERY

Volunteers of America was honored to join leaders and activists from across Kentucky to celebrate National Recovery Month this September. VOA staff and clients joined Secretary John Tilley and Executive Director for the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy Van Ingram in a walk for recovery that ended on the steps of the Kentucky State Capitol building. VOA Shelby Men’s Recovery clients and Freedom House moms joined to celebrate their own recovery and highlight the importance of the work VOA is doing across Kentucky. The dedication of leaders like Secretary Tilley and Director Ingram is essential to VOA’s expansion and ability to change the lives of even more people in need.

SO MUCH MORE THAN SHOPPING

Now VOA helps you to add one more important item to your holiday checklist — changing lives. Our new Beaded Treasures social enterprise empowers women by building their skills and helping them to become entrepreneurs. We feature artisan-made jewelry and hand-crafted scarves, pillows and other textiles. And here’s another reason to love Beaded Treasures — pillows and pearls are 30% off from now until January 1st. Celebrate and empower our women by shopping online at Beadedtreasures.org, stop by our full-service retail shop at 564 South Fourth Street in Louisville or host a Beaded Treasures party in your home or shop. E-mail Gema Moreno at gemam@voamid.org for more details.

ELIZABETHTOWN STAND DOWN

Our Volunteers of America Mid-States team constantly goes above and beyond to provide the highest-quality of services to those in need. This Fall, our Supportive Services for Veteran Families team in Elizabethtown, Kentucky hosted an incredibly successful Stand Down, a community effort that provides much needed relief to at-risk service members and veterans. With the help of important community partners and volunteers, this event connected individuals with essential services including help with housing eligibility, health screenings, employment counseling and more.
After 35 years of keeping families facing homelessness together, Volunteers of America knew that a new name for the Family Emergency Shelter was overdue.

So this August, along with all the fun that goes along with an anniversary celebration -- from cake and ice cream to games and music -- Volunteers of America announced that the Family Emergency Shelter would become "Unity House" and VOA's comprehensive housing programs, including the Family Stabilization Program and Eviction Prevention Program, would be known as "VOA Home."

"These names describe our mission. VOA Home is a place in need can turn -- a place that keeps them united and safe, a place that starts them on a path to long-term stable housing. We've been committed to keeping families together for 35 years and we're committed to doing it for 35 more," Jennifer Hancock said.

Hancock was joined by VOA Board of Directors members and community partners for the celebration and unveiling. Also joining her was Marcus Stubbs. When he was a high school student, Marcus and his family stayed with VOA when they experienced homelessness. Now, Marcus is a Western Kentucky University graduate and PhD candidate at Bellarmine University.

"Volunteers of America was there for us when we had nowhere else to turn. Fortunately, we found a place where we could turn our lives around. We could stay together. I could go to school. I could study. I could prepare for my future," Marcus said.

VOA Home continues to serve families like the Stubbs.

Crystal is a current resident of Unity House who thinks the name change is right on target.

"Everyone here finds a way to come together and support each other. We're not a family but we're the closest thing to family that you can possibly get. That's unity to me," Crystal said.

Crystal and her three boys, Christian, Milaki and King came to Unity House last March after losing their home and living on and off with relatives and in their vehicle for nearly a year. Christian was missing school and she was concerned about losing custody of her children.

Then, she found out about Volunteers of America. The safe and welcoming environment at Unity House -- as well as the comprehensive services -- have changed Crystal’s life in fundamental ways.

"For the boys, it's like living in a little hotel. They’ve made friends. It’s a place where kids can be kids," Crystal said.

Milaki's made a new best friend at Unity House -- Charles -- who recently came back and celebrated Milaki's birthday with him. Christian has counted on VOA's Study Buddies program -- a tutoring center with computers, books and resources staffed by volunteers who help kids with their homework.

Soon, Unity House will be part of Crystal's past. Unity House staff helped her to find an apartment and she is moving in any day and she’ll be in her own place with her children.

"I'm hoping to go back to school. And when I leave I'll come back for the financial classes and continued therapy. I plan on coming back and volunteering, too. I'll help in the playroom and serve food. It's part of our life."

We’ve been committed to keeping families together for 35 years and we’re committed to doing it for 35 more.

-Jennifer Hancock

This year, Louisville metro government faced serious budget concerns that ended with significant cuts for essential housing programs. This cut in funding threatens the future of Unity House -- VOA's home for families in need. VOA leadership continues to advocate for more funding and we count on the help of our friends and supporters to keep Unity House’s doors open.

To find out more about how you can help us directly or advocate for more resources, go to voamid.org

Donate today at: voamid.org/donate

Budget cuts threaten Unity House’s future
VOA Expands Freedom House to Southeastern Kentucky

For more than 20 years, Freedom House, Volunteers of America’s nationally-recognized program for pregnant and parenting women overcoming substance use disorder, has been providing comprehensive care to women in Louisville. But VOA knows the need for comprehensive and effective addiction recovery services is urgent throughout the area served by VOA. That’s why VOA is now serving the residents of Southeastern Kentucky with a Recovery Community Center and will open the first Freedom House outside of Louisville in the coming months.

“We know that communities in southeastern Kentucky have been affected more deeply by the opioid and addiction epidemic than almost any area in the nation. We know we have a solution that works. We know we can make a difference and want to be there for families in Clay County and beyond,” Jennifer Hancock said.

The Recovery Community Center is already open and thriving in Manchester. The RCC serves as a welcoming home and gathering place for anyone looking for community, support and camaraderie. It hosts meetings and speakers, and features comfortable couches and game tables. It’s a place to share stories and learn about addiction recovery – but also simply a place to relax and talk with your neighbors and friends.

In the coming months, the recovery center will be joined by the new Freedom House, which will provide a home to 16 pregnant and parenting women and their children. Freedom House focuses on comprehensive and life-changing services, including individual and family therapy and parenting and life-skills classes. VOA’s trained, professional staff will work with residents to locate transitional housing as well as employment and educational opportunities.

A key focus for Volunteers of America has been partnering with and learning from local leaders to make the RCC and Freedom House as effective as possible.

Tracy Farmer, Dental Director for the Elgin Foundation, has been one of many essential community partners in Clay County.

“We’ve seen so many people come here who didn’t want to get embedded into the community. They might want to invest some money or start a program and then go on their way. I was just so impressed that VOA wanted to learn and be part of the community,” Farmer said.

As Volunteers of America began work in Manchester, Tracy was among many leaders who were instrumental in making connections and helping VOA become a member of the giving and tight-knit southeastern Kentucky community. The Axis Coffee Shop & Gathering Place, which is an outreach of the Manchester Gospel Mission, a local church pastored by Tracy’s father Tess Lipsy, is adjacent to the Recovery Community Center. Axis donated the building that became the Recovery Community Center and is an essential partner in helping it thrive and become a community hub for any resident who needs access to crucial addiction recovery resources.

For Tracy – and so many Manchester area residents – helping VOA to help more people is simply a way of life.

“The first time you visit Manchester you’re a visitor, but the second time you’re one of us. The staff at VOA are one of us now,” Tracy said.

Still, there are tough problems to solve, and VOA is committed to providing long-term solutions.

“Our work started as solving for an addiction crisis, but the more we have built community around our work here, it has become clear that we can’t just solve for addiction, we have to solve for housing, we have to look at job creation and economic development opportunities that go along with it. We are so grateful to be here working in this beautiful community. We’re here to stay,” Hancock said.
The Healing Power of the Arts

In a basement on Shelby Street in Louisville, a large group of men are sitting in a circle, singing “Aye, kuvebo, nyamadu-e.”

The language is from West Africa, and the men are playing African drums while they sing.

The men’s singing and drumming is accompanied by laughter and movement, along with interest and curiosity about what they might learn next. The words they are singing mean “Over here, drum and dance party at the chief’s house.”

But this party is not at the chief’s house – it’s in the cafeteria of VOA Recovery’s Shelby campus.

The scene might not be what you expect in a men’s addiction recovery program, but for the men working to start new lives at Volunteers of America, the weekly Arts in Healing program is more than just fun. It’s a needed release and a way to make friends and learn more about themselves.

“For me, it’s like getting a weight off my chest. Everyone is upbeat, talking and having fun. It lifts your spirits,” said Donnie Blackwell, a U.S. Army veteran and VOA client.

Arts in Healing – which recently changed its name to ArtsThrive – is one of many programs VOA partners with to provide therapy and inspiration for the men it serves.

“Everybody in here comes from different backgrounds, but today we were coming together to make music, to make one sound,” said Donnie Blackwell.

For men like Donnie, VOA – and the many programs designed to help with recovery – is exactly what they’ve been looking to find.

“I love this place. I’ve never completed a program before – but I’m going to complete this one. I can’t wait to get back and see my family. And when I do, I’m going to volunteer and give back to the community,” Donnie said.

ArtsThrive instructors show Volunteers of America clients how to make amazing music with drums and instruments from Africa.

Everybody in here comes from different backgrounds, but today we were coming together to make music, to make one sound.

-Donnie Blackwell

Arts in Healing is designed to invite everyone in. It’s a very inclusive music culture.” Feeling included, connected and accepted can also be instrumental in the healing and recovery process.

“We want the people we work with to connect art to life and life to art,” said Gregory.

ArtsThrive partners with professional local artists like Gregory and Hamidou to bring art to individuals and families recovering from a variety of physical and emotional traumas. Every Friday since July of 2012, ArtsThrive has partnered with VOA and filled the Shelby Campus with beautiful music and works of art that reflect the growth, empowerment and self-expression of men in recovery.

For VOA, the regular arts workshops and classes are simply part of providing comprehensive and results-oriented addiction recovery care.

“We serve the whole person – that’s the only way to help men and women to overcome the incredibly difficult challenge of substance use disorder. Our arts partnership is so important to helping people rediscover themselves and start new lives,” said Tiffany Cole Hall, VOA Chief Operating Officer.
Christina Compton has a simple message for the women she works with at Freedom House: “I love you and believe in you.”

That’s a message that means the world to Christina because she is more than a Freedom House employee. She’s a Freedom House graduate who knows how important support, encouragement — and love — is to pregnant and parenting moms who come to VOA’s Freedom House to start new, healthy lives.

“It gives me joy to be able to give the gift that was given to me. They believed in me when I didn’t even know if I could believe in myself,” Christina said.

Christina wasn’t sure that belief would ever come to her. She learned about Freedom House from a social worker when she was in jail. She had a history of drug and alcohol abuse, had been incarcerated six months and was facing additional time. She was also pregnant and nearing her due date.

“I thought there was no future for me or my child. If you had told me I would be here today I would have told you I’d fallen off my rocker and bumped my head,” Christina said.

But she was given a chance to leave prison— if she agreed to treatment. Within a week of arriving, Christina gave birth to Wyatt, a healthy baby boy. And from the first day, Freedom House started changing her.

“I walked in and saw all of the art and I knew it was different. When I came to Freedom House, I literally only had the clothes on my back. But my son and I never wanted for anything. They gave us everything we needed. All I had to concentrate on was my recovery,” Christina said.

Christina learned that Freedom House was welcoming, but also required hard work. Every resident has a full schedule of therapy, meetings and classes — a personalized plan for a fresh start.

“My therapist met me right where I was. She would challenge me. Sometimes I would think, ‘this is stupid, I was up all night with the baby — why do I need to be at meditation at 8:00’? But I have to be at work today at 8:00 a.m. It was teaching me how to live -- how to plan my time, utilize public transportation and make something better than ramen noodles in the microwave to feed my family,” Christina said.

Now, Christina has a valuable, life-changing skill set that helps women traveling the same path she has successfully navigated. After going back to school to get her Peer Support Specialist certificate, Christina went to a VOA job fair.

“I asked VOA to take a chance on me again. I told them I wanted to give back. And they believed in me again,” Christina said.

She has become a respected VOA team member, working with Freedom House moms as a Therapist Technician and Peer Support Specialist. She was recently promoted and will now also be working in a key role helping to manage intake of new residents.

“They need someone with lived experience. I help to figure out what my clients need to be successful and break down the steps they need to get there and hold their hand while they work on that journey,” Christina said.

Today, Christina has been sober for three years. Her older children are thriving. Her daughter Christina is in all honors classes. Her son CaRon just won a blue ribbon in a digital art competition.

And Wyatt — born barely a week after Christina started a new life at Freedom House — is a healthy and a happy two-year-old.

“The best part of my day is when I pick my son up and he throws his arms wide and yells ‘mom.’ He’s so happy to see me. He can count on me,” Christina said.

And now VOA also counts on Christina — to share her lifetime of experience and help more moms find hope for better futures.

“I get to plant the seed for recovery. Whether I get to see that seed become a tree or not -- I know it’s growing.

- Christina Compton
Who are the voices of VOA? They are veterans and adults with developmental disabilities. They are families facing homelessness, moms and dads struggling with addiction, friends who need answers about HIV. They are donors and volunteers who lend a helping hand. They are the voices of our community, coming together.

Heine Brothers’ Coffee & Mike Mays

“He love, love, love the individuals in my homes. To be at VOA and make a difference in someone’s life – it doesn’t get any better than that.”

Shareetta McCutcheon

Shareetta McCutcheon, who has worked in Nashville with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities for 13 years with VOA, doesn’t have to be able to talk with the people she serves to know how they are feeling or what they need. “I can tell if something is bothering them even if they are not verbal. You just have to get to know them and care about them,” Shareetta said. She started at VOA in an entry-level position as a Direct Support Professional and worked her way up to Home Manager. Shareetta was named a Residential Service Coordinator – a vital position that oversees six homes – on October 1st. “Now I really have a voice and can speak up and work for all of our residents and staff. Our work is about giving every individual the very best life – just like you and me.”

Without amazing community partners, Volunteers of America cannot serve nearly 24,000 people across four states. Nobody is more essential than our Community Partner of the Year, Heine Brothers’ coffee in Louisville. In fact, their generosity speaks for itself. They state their mission clearly, right on their website: “At Heine Brothers, we have always been about much more than simply making a profit. From the beginning, we have been committed to treating people and the planet with respect and dignity.” For VOA, Heine Brothers has sponsored Hope for the Holidays with every store featuring a collection box. They also donate and serve coffee and hot chocolate at our annual Hope for the Holidays party and the Power of 1 Breakfast. Heine Brothers’ hosts collection drives for our street survival kits and is an enthusiastic participant in Mayor’s Week of Service. CEO Mike Mays and the Heine Brothers’ team know a secret ingredient to running a great business, and that ingredient is one of VOA’s core values – compassion. Thank you to Mike and their team for helping Volunteers of America help others.
Jennifer Hancock thanked State Senator Julie Raque Adams and State Representative Joni Jenkins for opening Volunteers of America’s 2019 Power of 1 Breakfast by calling them “a dynamic duo who fight for people in need every day and are champions for the people we serve. And they know how to take a stand for what they believe in.”

As partners to Volunteers of America, they have helped more pregnant women receive treatment for substance use disorder and raised awareness of the need for more investment in recovery programs. They are leaders in Frankfort and their communities on the issues most important to VOA.

Every day, they demonstrate how bipartisan cooperation and leadership can make our communities safer and healthier places to live.

At all of her mindfulness and meditation sessions with Freedom House residents, VOA Volunteer of the Year Mary Farmer asks the same questions. First, she asks everyone to share something they like about themselves. And she asks the women how they want to live today. “They are all dealing with so much. They need some time to focus on themselves,” Mary said. For five years, Mary has worked with pregnant and parenting moms at Freedom House to teach them how to use meditation to reduce stress, connect with others and plan for their futures. She shared this year’s Volunteer of the Year award with her husband Ed, who has served as a mentor and coach for VOA President and CEO Jennifer Hancock for more than five years. Mary sees how much the women love her work, and is committed to returning to give new moms a chance to relax and learn – and to supporting VOA’s mission. “VOA is never willing to accept the status quo. They are always looking for ways to grow and do more,” Ed said.

“Volunteers of America is an essential partner to us in the work that we do as state legislators to make our communities safer, healthier and stronger.”

– Julie Raque Adams

Mary & Ed Farmer

“I’ve done this work for years because I know the women love it. They need some time to focus on themselves.”

– Mary Farmer

Mary & Ed Farmer

VOA VOICES

#voavoices

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HOPE FOR THE Holidays

HELP US GIVE THE GIFT OF HOPE

All of our families love gift cards
This year we need gifts for adults

For a list of items we need the most, drop-off locations in your area and other ways you can help families in need, visit voamid.org/holidays.

For more information, contact Michelle West at MichelleW@voamid.org or (502) 815-2907.

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