Dear Friend,

This holiday season, I have found myself thinking about the words of the Dalai Lama. He said, “If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy – practice compassion.”

At Volunteers of America Mid-States, we live the truth of these words every day, but they are particularly poignant during the holidays. Compassion is one of our core values, and when practiced, we are doing so much more than serving others – we are creating joyous and meaningful lives for ourselves.

Finding strength, comfort and value in being compassionate is essential to our work. Together, we provide stable housing for veterans and families, healthy futures for moms and babies and loving homes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These outcomes empower the people we serve and make our communities better places to live. But when we see how compassion changes lives, it also overwhelms us with happiness. We are grateful to do this important work.

With your support we served more than 23,000 people this year in 41 programs. We doubled our ability to serve pregnant and parenting women working to overcome addiction. We are bringing more services to veterans by expanding our outreach in Tennessee. And we continue to be one of Kentucky’s largest providers of free HIV and Hepatitis C testing. We look forward to doing even more.

This holiday season, I hope you will join us in thinking about the joy of giving back, and about the power of compassion. We are honored to show compassion and kindness every day, and with your help, see the amazing results of our work.

Jennifer Hancock
President and CEO
FOR KIDS, THE HOLIDAYS SHOULD BE A TIME OF EXCITEMENT, ANTICIPATION AND HAPPINESS. BUT FOR FAMILIES WHO ARE STRUGGLING WITH ADDICTION, OR DO NOT HAVE STABLE HOUSING, THE HOLIDAYS CAN BE A TIME OF WORRY AND NEED. WE SERVE CHILDREN JUST LIKE JAMESON AND JOURNEY EVERY DAY. AT LOUISVILLE FAMILY HOUSING SERVICES, WE KEEP FAMILIES FACING HOMELESSNESS TOGETHER AS WE HELP THEM LOCATE SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING. AT VOA RECOVERY’S FREEDOM HOUSE, WE WORK WITH DETERMINED AND COURAGEOUS MOMS WHO ARE OVERCOMING SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER AND REBUILDING THEIR FAMILIES.

WHAT DO OUR KIDS NEED MOST?
- LEGO for all ages
- Multicultural Barbie dolls
- New toys of all kinds
- Gift cards for our teens

HOW CAN I HELP?
- Drop off toys to any Heine Brothers’ and Rainbow Blossom locations, and select Papa John’s locations in Louisville.
- Donate gift cards to Volunteers of America at 933 Goss Avenue in Louisville.
- Go to voamid.org/holidays to donate, learn more or find a drop-off location near you, and to learn more about giving outside of Louisville.
- Contact Gema Moreno to have all of your questions answered: Gemam@voamid.org or 502-636-4664

Twins Jameson and Journey live with their mom Candice at VOA Recovery’s Freedom House.
OUR NEW VOA RECOVERY FACILITY IN WEST LOUISVILLE IS HOME TO MOMS AND CHILDREN STARTING FRESH AFTER OVERCOMING ADDICTION.

IN-HOME TESTING MAKES HIV AWARENESS EASIER THAN EVER

In October, Volunteers of America launched a new in-home HIV testing initiative, which allows individuals to make an appointment and have professional and confidential HIV tests done in their home.

This innovative and convenient program, which is the first of its kind in Kentucky, is part of Volunteers of America’s commitment to awareness about HIV and our ongoing partnership with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention to provide free, easy and confidential HIV tests throughout our community.

Our in-home testing initiative is part of our VOA FIT campaign, which uses financial incentives to encourage more people to get tested. FIT stands for Friends Inspiring Testing, and individuals who are tested in the VOA FIT program receive a fifteen-dollar incentive and ten dollars for every friend they refer.

“We are very excited to make HIV testing more convenient than it has ever been in Louisville and our surrounding counties. You will not need to leave your living room to learn your status and take steps to make sure you’re healthy. Awareness has never been easier,” said Marshall Kellner, Volunteers of America Program Manager.

Volunteers of America’s HIV testing, outreach and education program relies on evidence-based data related to outcomes and effectiveness. The outreach focuses on populations most at-risk for HIV infection, including gay men between the ages of 18 and 24 who have multiple sexual partners without using protection. Research shows that men age 24 or younger account for nearly a quarter of new HIV infections in the United States.

“We just call or click, and Volunteers of America will be at your door with an in-home test. We want VOA In-Home testing to encourage every person to know their status,” Jennifer Hancock said.

Call (502) 310-2417 or visit voamid.org/HIV to schedule your appointment.
Delila Edwards started caring for others when she was eight years old— not long after watching her twin sister go into a diabetic coma.

“I remember waking up and seeing an ambulance. People were trying to wake her up.”

The daughter of a single mother who worked long hours to support her family, Delila soon found herself caring for her sister.

“Not a lot of people knew about diabetes back then. All I knew was that she was sick,” Delila said. “So at eight years old, I was giving insulin injections and checking blood sugar levels. From then on, I knew I wanted to be a nurse.”

Fortunately for Volunteers of America, and for the clients Delila serves, her lifetime of caring for others brought her to our program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Delila works as a nurse in Old Hickory, just north of Nashville.

Delila Edwards provides Tennessee families with love and support.

Delila Edwards

Delila greets Sean, a Volunteers of America Mid-States Developmental Disabilities Services resident. Delila has been providing care for Sean for nearly a decade.

What kind of care would you want for your own family? What would you do for your own family member?

- Delila Edwards

a nursing home you might have 40 people on a hall and I just wouldn't be able to serve them like I do here,” Delila said.

Our residents receive nursing care and around the clock support. Our nurses, home managers and direct support professionals manage the health of our residents but also help with day-to-day tasks, take them on outings and provide companionship and support. In Clark and Floyd Counties, our growing Supported Employment program has placed clients in challenging and productive jobs at employers including Mark’s Feed Store, Hitachi and the Louisville Slugger Museum and Factory. Delila has been a nurse for 18 years and has spent the past 13 years with Volunteers of America. Before she came to Volunteers of America, she had never worked with clients with developmental disabilities and was not sure she was ready for the task.

“Not a lot of people know about diabetes back then. All I knew was that she was sick,” Delila said. “So at eight years old, I was giving insulin injections and checking blood sugar levels. From then on, I knew I wanted to be a nurse.”

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Delila has a simple philosophy that guides her in her work.

“What kind of care would you want for your own family? What would you do for your own family member? You would never give up on them -- you would keep working with them. That's what I do,” Delila said.

She models this behavior when she takes her current residents, Sean, Bonnie and Dorothy, on outings to places they enjoy, like the mall.

“Sometimes people don't know how to act around people with disabilities. So I give Dorothy a hug. I want people to know – you don't have to be afraid. These are great people. I want everyone to understand,” Delila said.

And she emphasized the most important ingredient in the care Volunteers of America provides.

“They need love. It takes a little time, effort and love.”

Want to work with our Developmental Disabilities Services team and provide care for more men and women like Sean? Visit voamid.org/careers to start your career as a Direct Support Professional.

Sean knows me

and he trusts me.

Just the joy of seeing

him happy makes

me happy.

- Delila Edwards

Now, after nearly ten years of care from Delila, Sean welcomes her and smiles when he sees her. He is now able to walk with a walker. He is able to enjoy things he loves – like being a huge University of Tennessee Volunteers football fan.

“I think consistency is really important. Sean knows me, and he trusts me. Just the joy of seeing him happy makes me happy,” Delila said.

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Right: Delila stands in front of the house that is the home to Sean, Bonnie and Dorothy, three residents of VOA’s Developmental Disability Services.
Volunteers of America knows that opioid use disorder is a public health challenge that demands a public health solution, which is why we are thrilled to be part of an innovative program that diverts individuals from the criminal justice system and into treatment and recovery.

This fall, we launched the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program in Louisville. Working in partnership with Louisville Metro Government and the Louisville Metro Police Department, LEAD targets individuals who will benefit from immediate access to treatment and care rather than being arrested and incarcerated.

"LEAD is a cutting-edge program that provides new and creative solutions to our opioid epidemic. I am confident that LEAD will make Louisville a safer – and healthier – city," Jennifer Hancock said.

In the LEAD program, LMPD officers identify candidates for diversion to treatment. They have been trained to identify individuals struggling with opioid use disorder who have not been involved in a violent crime. These individuals are brought to Volunteers of America for assessment and we make our comprehensive addiction-recovery services available on the spot.

Volunteers of America was chosen among many providers as the best partner for Louisville to provide this intervention and care.

"The opioid crisis remains a vital concern to public safety in this community," said Mayor Greg Fischer. "But incarceration cannot be the only option for those struggling with addiction. We must find ways to divert people to treatment and stem the tide of drug-related crime. This program is one more option for our community."

"LEAD takes on the opioid crisis head on and offers hope, options and a better future."

-Jennifer Hancock

LEAD has a solid track record of success nationally. Officials in Seattle, Washington first launched LEAD in 2011. After three years of operation, the outcome of a controlled study reported that LEAD participants were 58% less likely to be arrested again after completion of the program.

In Louisville, LMPD officers working in the Russell and Portland neighborhoods are using their discretionary authority at the point of contact to divert eligible candidates into our care. Louisville began researching LEAD in 2015 and in January of 2017 the Bureau of Justice Assistance awarded the city a grant for $400,000 to launch an 18-month long pilot program.

"Whether providing residential treatment, intensive outpatient services, comprehensive case management, family counseling, psychiatric services, workforce re-entry services or housing we will be there to assist every individual that LEAD brings through our door," Hancock said.

To learn more about how the LEAD program is helping Louisville’s community visit voamid.org/news
After finishing her housework, South Oaks resident Pat George sits down with a crochet hook and The Young and the Restless. Shuffling between her fingers is the delicate pink fiber of baby-weight yarn.

Pat has crocheted a blanket for every new member of her family, including her daughter, four grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. But this blanket is for a child Pat has never met.

After receiving a donation of yarn from his sister, Service Coordinator Mike Jupin proposed a connection between the infants at VOA’s Freedom House and the residents at South Oaks Senior Housing: handmade baby blankets.

Mike met the ladies of Freedom House through his participation in VOA’s minister’s group. At one of their gatherings, Mike got the chance to hold some of the infants—one of Mike’s hidden talents.

“If you got crying babies, I’m your man. I wear hearing aids,” Mike jokes.

Back at South Oaks, Pat was immediately onboard. Eyeing Mike’s box of yarn, Pat expressed her fondness for crocheting but difficulty affording the supplies. It was a perfect fit.

Pat had seen firsthand the comfort a handmade article can bring a child. Her grandson was particularly attached to the baby blanket she had made for him.

“I swear he carried that thing and slept with that blanket until it just literally disintegrated,” Pat says.

Pat wasn’t the only resident with a knack for crochet. Residents Charlotte Twiddle and Shelia LaFond also wanted the chance to provide warmth in the upcoming cold months to babies of Freedom House. Each resident crocheted at their own speed with their own routine. Pat and Shelia crocheted while watching their favorite programs on television. Charlotte managed to finish blankets in between fetching the yarn her Yorkie, Pepper—a dog Charlotte admits should be named Cinnamon due to the color of her coat—kept snatching from her basket.

“I would have been able to crochet more if I hadn’t been chasing Pepper around the apartment to get my yarn back,” Charlotte said.

Little did the women of South Oaks know how much their good deed meant to the mothers of Freedom House.

“Mothers come here, home from the hospital, and the only blanket they have for their baby is the thin-issued one the hospital gave them,” Freedom House graduate Deidre Wells said. As she watched her 6-month daughter April wrap herself in one of Pat’s creations, Deidre added, “And these are beautiful. And so warm.”

These blankets were made with love and I hope these children feel that every time they use them.

-Sheila LaFond

Warmth was exactly what the South Oaks residents hoped the babies would feel. Warmth, and love.

“These blankets were made with love and I hope that these children feel that every time they use them. And I hope they know how many people love them,” Shelia said as she looked down, stroking the pink striped blanket that was resting on her lap with strong, aged hands. The blanket was recently finished and would soon be making its home to someone with much newer hands—one of a Freedom House baby.

Find out more about what is going on at our programs by following us @voamid on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

Above: South Oaks resident Charlotte Twiddle shows off one of the blankets she knitted for the babies at VOA’s Freedom House.
Right: Freedom House baby April with one of the blankets knitted by a South Oaks resident.
“When my family had nowhere else to turn, we found Volunteers of America. They came into my life when I needed them most.”

- Marcus Stubbs

at the 2018 Power of 1 Breakfast

Program graduates Marcus Stubbs and Megan Coldiron helped Volunteers of America celebrate our tenth annual Power of 1 Breakfast this year, sharing stories of how their lives were changed when they found Volunteers of America.

Marcus shared his powerful story of overcoming homelessness and Megan spoke about battling addiction. Today, Marcus is a graduate student studying for a master’s degree. Megan is an addiction recovery professional and healthy, sober mom.

They are just two of numerous stories we’ve share with our friends and supporters during this essential fundraising event. From veterans who have found housing to moms who have turned their lives around for themselves and their children, we are there for people in need.

We can’t do it without you. We send our most sincere thanks to everyone who attended and supported us this year and in past years. And we ask everyone to learn more about our mission and engage with us.

Do you want to support more people like Megan and Marcus? Visit voamid.org/donate to change the futures of more people in your community today.
State Representative Joni Jenkins fights hard in Frankfort and Louisville for her South Louisville constituents, and has been a consistent friend to Volunteers of America and a champion for Kentucky families.

Rep. Jenkins formed an opioid task force to serve her community and to partner with our efforts to address addiction and provide recovery services. In the legislature, she has been a leader on reforming and improving Kentucky’s adoption and foster care system. "Representative Jenkins understands our work and cares deeply about helping our community. I count on her in Frankfort to be a voice for families in Louisville," said Jennifer Hancock.

"Recovery doesn’t happen in a vacuum - families are more likely to be successful when we provide wrap-around services. Volunteers of America is an important part of our community response on the opioid crisis and so many issues.”

“Voters of America gave me what I don’t think anybody else could have given me. And that is the tools to get back on my feet. Now I know I can.”

Theresa Scheitz understands challenges. For years, she taught her students about them. She taught them so well that she was named “Teacher of the Year.” But eventually addiction came between Theresa and her ability to do her job.

Theresa’s challenge became how to beat addiction. “I had a new baby who was completely dependent upon me.” That’s when Theresa found Freedom House. Theresa is now living a healthy, sober life with her daughter, Annabella, at VOA Recovery’s transitional living.

And she’s taking on one more challenge – getting ready to teach again.

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.
Anyah Hoang is no stranger to military life. The product of a military family, and an army reserve veteran, Anyah found herself drawn to serving others who served our nation.

After graduation, the California resident found herself focusing on homeless services, which became a deeper focus around veteran homelessness. When Anyah wanted to move east, she centered her job search around organizations that shared her worldview, and Volunteers of America Mid-States’ core values spoke to her. Now our Director of Veteran Services, Anyah and her team combat veteran homelessness and have helped more than 2,100 veterans and their families find safe and stable housing this year.

Mark Hubler’s father, Al, sits by his son and asks him a simple question.

“What would you say to anyone who tells you you can’t do something?”

“To get out of here.”

Mark Hubler, of America Mid-States’ core values struck me from the very beginning. And with Louisville striving to be the most compassionate city, I knew that Volunteers of America and Louisville would be home for me.”

Volunteers of America serves Mark in our program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Clark and Floyd Counties in Indiana. Our partnership helps Mark to thrive, and to spend his time helping others as a motivational speaker who tells others about all they can achieve if they work hard and believe in themselves.
Every child should have a wonderful holiday. You can help the kids we serve celebrate this year. It’s easy.

- Give gift cards for our teenagers.
- Give legos, multicultural Barbie dolls or toys of any kind for children.
- Go to voamid.org/holidays or call Gema Moreno at 502-636-4664 to donate.

Learn more about Hope for the Holidays: @voamid on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.