

The
**UNION
MISSION**

MISSION NETWORK

Food, Clothing, Shelter ... and so much more!

MARCH 2021

**"This place will
always be a good
memory for me."**

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The David Development Program

A Path to Purpose for Young Men

More and more of the guests arriving at The Union Mission's Bashford Men's Shelter are young men under 30. For most, it's their first time being homeless. Some have survived fractured families, foster care failures, or unexpected traumas. Others have made bad decisions or desperate choices to numb the pain of everyday life. Many, though they are men, still feel and act like boys, never having had anyone teach them how to become confident, wise, responsible adults.

That's what they learn in our David Development Program, an immersive network of support for homeless young men. The program, now in its fifth year, is named for King David, "a man

after God's own heart," though his life choices were far from perfect. As young David slew Goliath with God's help, he's a model for our own young Davids to face the giants in their own lives.

The program provides a second chance to those whose first chance didn't stand much of a chance. It's an early opportunity to address the root causes of their homelessness before it becomes chronic, and to help them to become productive, independent, and healthy. Young men who were hurting, lost, and struggling receive personalized help removing the barriers that keep them stuck in a cycle of poor self-esteem, bad relationships, substance abuse, incarceration, immaturity,

unemployment, and shame. Since many of them are fathers themselves, changing their futures also changes the next generation for the better.

One standout resource was an intensive workshop series called **The FatherHOOD Initiative**. Presented by the nonprofit Decided, Inc., it focuses on strengthening each young man's relationship with his loving **Father** God, as well as how the Bible provides practical advice for **Helping Others Overcome Difficulty**.

A variety of mentors detailed how they overcame a specific defeat, disappointment, doubt, disaster, detour, or deficit in their life. The final session offered a blueprint on how to make

More Ups Than Downs: Khalil's Future



Life has been trying to make me feel old," says Khalil, 27. "But I'm still young—and I'm determined to be better than I was yesterday."

"My childhood was filled with ups and downs. It just had more downs than ups." Khalil was born to parents in college, and a few years later, his father was paralyzed with multiple sclerosis. When his mother remarried, he gained a loving stepfamily until that fell apart in his teens. The divorce left him alone in the house a lot, often without any food. "It was just really a tough time for me. I didn't have anybody. I was really just trying to survive."

At 18, he broke into a neighbor's house and pawned what he stole. He was paroled for his first offense, but

in 2019 when he missed a probation appointment, Khalil ended up in jail for a few months. After his release, "I didn't have anything or anywhere to go."

He called The Union Mission, but the pandemic had briefly closed the shelters to new guests. Khalil took his chances at the Oceanfront. Some nights he slept on city benches. By working two jobs, he earned enough to rent a cheap hotel room and eat every day.

By July, Khalil was overjoyed to move into the Men's Shelter. "I didn't have to worry about the police, bugs, being dirty, how I was going to eat, sleep, or wash clothes. The Mission gave me another chance! And ever since then, life has had more ups than downs."

To read more about Khalil's Union Mission experience, search **Stories of Hope** unionmissionministries.org.



godly decisions and act on them.

With each empowering session, the eight participants changed their negative perspectives to positive. One shy young man had felt invisible and unimportant: “People see you every day, but it’s not every day someone takes time to hear you and walk with you.” A classmate said, “I wish I had someone talk to me

like this years ago. Even if I didn’t have it then, I want to take advantage of everything I’m getting now!

By the end of the week, the young men started seeing themselves as victorious in Christ. “I’ve never had someone share how Jesus wants to help me get out of the place I’m in. It was always a matter of what I’m not doing.

I realize I can’t stay there anymore, but [I’ll] let it go and let God in,” said one participant.

Another summarized the course perfectly: “You don’t know what this week of learning has done for me! All I’ve ever heard is I CAN’T, but after all of these years, I’m really feeling like I actually CAN!”

In the fall, Khalil’s case manager mentioned The FatherHOOD Initiative. He didn’t know what to expect, but “it was one of those turning points in my life!”

The participants were asked to rename themselves after their most positive trait. Khalil chose Consistency. “I’ve always been consistent with what I love to do: making music or skateboarding or just trying to figure out who I want to be. I’ve been homeless for so long, but I’ve kept going.”

Khalil also built relationships with reliable role models who had lived through many of the same life situations he has. When the mentors honestly talked about what they’d gone through and how they apply the Bible to difficult life challenges, Khalil took notice. “Not every day do you meet people who have answers for you, have faith in you,

believe in you, respect you, love you... not for anything in return, just for you, because they want to see you succeed.”

“That FatherHOOD program was a lifesaver!” he says. “It gave me those missing pieces in my life—it gave me so much hope!”

“Y’all have been such a blessing to me and I know you are going to be a blessing to other people.”

Living in the shelter, Khalil put his future back on track. The daily routines helped him order his day, budget his

money, and take the steps to achieve his goals. He’s gotten his birth certificate and driver’s permit, repaired his hearing aid, and moved into permanent housing. He’s working for a restaurant, but once he gets a car he hopes to earn a better-paying job at a local shipyard. “These are just the stepping stones. By being consistent, I’m going to make it work this time!”

“The Union Mission gave me a better understanding as to what life is about,” and Khalil wants to tell others that they can find help here. “It’s made such a difference in my life. It’s been so heartwarming, the whole experience of being here,” Khalil says, tearing up a bit. “It’s definitely been a blessing! This place will always be one of those good memories.”

*Help young men fulfill the promise of their potential at
unionmissionministries.org/purpose.*



Earl on the Move

A RECLAIM Success Story

For the first time in 25 years, Earl has his own apartment!

Since 2017, the 63-year-old has been working toward the goal of independent living with the RECLAIM staff and Transitional Resource Specialist Michael Marshall. The life-skills training, health tips, and financial coaching he's received have prepared him for this day.

Like most of our shelter guests, Earl has seen his share of trouble. He would rather discuss the grace of God than his wayward years. "I have known His forgiveness over and over! I thank the good Lord for keeping me and for all His tender mercies."

Earl is expectant as he arrives at the Norfolk Rehabilitation and Housing

Authority, which coordinated his new Section 8 housing. There's a lot of paperwork involved, but Marshall and the NRHA Occupancy Specialist assist with every form, from lead paint to housing discrimination to how his affordable monthly rent is determined. As he signs his final sheet, Earl points upward and exclaims, "Thank you! God of mercy, thank you!" He closes up his packet of important papers, excited to preview his new home.

A six-minute drive from downtown, his apartment complex buzzes him in. The building, originally a soda bottling warehouse, was retrofitted in 2006 to become Hampton Roads' first permanent supportive housing community. It has 60 subsidized, affordable units for low-income residents. Earl is glad to learn that his new home is on the quieter second floor.

His studio apartment has a cheery blue door with a small gold plaque noting Bank of America as the corporate sponsor. It's small, but semi-furnished, and our Thrift Store will help him with household goods. A sunny window overlooks a greenway, everything is clean and in perfect working order, "and praise God!" Earl says as he opens a door. "I finally have my own bathroom!"

In this public housing complex, Earl must live alone for at least a year. That's great news to him. "I'm single and loving it!" he says, but adds that he's not really living alone. "Jesus is my companion, 24/7. That's my love, right there!"

Earl appreciates all the help he received at The Union Mission, but he'll really miss the chapel services: "My Lord, that's what's kept me. That's been like family!" But he'll have plenty of classical music, Christian radio, and time to focus on the Word of God. "Being by myself, wow! I can have boot camp alone with Jesus. That's just beautiful!"

Welcome to your new home, Earl!

Hope Begins with a Meal!



The Union Mission has three great ways you can provide practical help for our hungry homeless neighbors.

- 1 Pack bagged breakfasts or lunches for homeless neighbors housed in local hotels during the pandemic.** We need to distribute 300 meals—150 of each—every Friday for the foreseeable future.
- 2 Prepare or cater a full, cooked meal for our shelter guests.** You can choose the Men's Shelter (70 servings), the Women & Children's Shelter (30 servings), or both (100 servings)! Menus are available.
- 3 Provide funds for either option.** Send us a check marked "Meals" in the memo line or use the online pulldown menu to select "Meals/Shelter" at donate.unionmissionministries.org.

To schedule your meal delivery, request our sample shopping lists, or just learn more, email volunteer@ummnorva.org.

Staff Needs

We're hiring!

View our openings or apply online at unionmissionministries.org/job-opportunities



5100 E. VIRGINIA BEACH BLVD.
NORFOLK, VA 23502
757-627-8686



Thank you for Your Generosity!



REV. JOHN W. GRAY, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we move toward Resurrection Sunday, we are grateful for Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross, as He took on the sins of mankind to set us free. We also celebrate His glorious triumph as He rose from the dead, giving us the promise of eternal life in heaven with Him.

But for some people, Easter is no holiday. It's just another day to survive. Many of our homeless neighbors feel no joy, only despair. They are too busy struggling on the streets, not knowing where they can safely sleep, escape the weather, or even find their next meal.

Hope often begins with that first meal here at The Union Mission. By meeting our homeless guests' most basic physical and emotional needs, they open their hearts to spiritual truths and the hope that we've found: the hope that is found only in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Because you care and because you give faithfully, our shelter guests find a brighter future—full of help and hope. Thank you for having a heart for your homeless neighbors and remembering them in this holy season. As God gave His best gift—Jesus—I hope you'll give your most generous gift, too!

Gratefully yours,

Rev. John W. Gray, Jr.

Executive Director

EASTER CELEBRATION 2021



Help our guests
move from

Hunger to Hope!

You can provide physical and spiritual nourishment this Easter and beyond for **just \$2.58 per meal!**

\$25 for 10 meals

For just a little over \$25, you can help 10 men, women, and children with a hot, nutritious meal.

\$250 for one month of meals

For \$250, you can feed, clothe, and shelter a guest for more than a month—and offer the opportunity to build a better life.

Give today and transform a life:
unionmissionministries.org/donate

Yes, Rev. Gray, I want to help those in your shelters resurrect hope!

I've enclosed: ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$75 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$150 ☐ \$_____

☐ I would like to commit to a **monthly gift** of \$_____. My first gift is enclosed.

Method of Payment: ☐ Check ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express ☐ Discover

Card Number _____ CCV Code _____

Expiration Date _____ Signature _____

Please make your check payable to The Union Mission. To make an online donation, go to donate.unionmissionministries.org.



Please complete this slip and return it to The Union Mission with your generous gift. Your gift is tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. We will send a receipt for your records.

03-2021

Three Easy Ways to Avoid Family Heartache

Some families make surprising discoveries after a loved one dies. As one blogger recalls, “My mom’s step-grandpa told everyone he was an electrician that was often called to do repair jobs out of town. After he died, the family received a letter from the President of the United States, revealing that he was actually a demolitions expert and worked in some sort of special ops bomb squad for the military. Even his wife had no idea.”

But not every revelation is as exciting. Some families discover their loved one was hiding a secret, an addiction, or debt. Many children are stunned to discover they were omitted from their parents’ wills –with no chance for an explanation. Not only is this bewildering and hurtful, it’s ultimately the last message a parent sends to their child.

To avoid these heartaches . . .

CONSTRUCT AN ESTATE PLAN.

Did you know 60 percent of Americans do not have one, though creating a will is actually a simple process. And the impact is monumental! An up-to-date will can ensure your loved ones are provided for without additional expense and frustration after you’re gone.

COMMUNICATE YOUR HEART.

As you plan your estate, explain the decisions you’ve made. Family relationships can be complicated, and it’s better to be honest than to leave questions. It’s an opportunity to share your values about causes and organizations that you’ve chosen to include in your will.

COLLECT INFORMATION.

Many people create a “love file” of important information their loved ones will need in the future. Legal documents, insurance policies, a financial accounting, passwords, medical wishes, and personal letters all demonstrate your love for them in a difficult time.



IT’S EASY TO INCLUDE THE UNION MISSION MINISTRIES IN YOUR ESTATE PLANNING!

To create a will that reflects your values and blesses others, visit www.christianwill.org/umm or contact Helen Sommer at 757-627-8686, x504 or legacygiving@ummnorva.org.

Comments / Change of Address:

EMAIL

PHONE

THE UNION MISSION MINISTRIES

P.O. BOX 3203 | NORFOLK, VA 23514 | 757-627-8686
info@ummnorva.org | www.unionmissionministries.org

No person is denied service based on race, creed, gender, disability, or national origin.

Photos are representative of actual Mission clients.

If you would like to donate much-needed supplies, please see unionmissionministries.org/ways-to-give/give-goods. Thank you!

In the event contributions exceed expenses, extra funds will be used to feed, shelter, and care for the hungry and homeless throughout the year.

Financial information about this organization and a copy of its license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 919-807-2214 or 888-830-4989 for NC residents.