

*The*  
**UNION  
MISSION**

# MISSION NETWORK

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

JULY 2021



**"The Mission is the  
blessing now for me!"**

*Details on page 2*

**INSIDE: Brittle Bones, Resilient Spirit | Healthier Living for RECLAIM  
Camp Hope Haven's New Director | Provision for Uncertain Times**



# A Good Break for Shon

Shon has lived for 47 years never knowing when one of his bones might just break.

Osteogenesis imperfecta, or “brittle bone disease,” is hereditary, incredibly rare, and incurable. “I’ll need to deal with it forever. It affects my bones, my joints, my respiratory system. My bones could crush my lung. And now that I’m older, I’m in pain.”

Growing up, Shon “knew that I could hurt myself easier than the regular kids. I wasn’t supposed to be doing flips and playing football and basketball.” Though his mom, who also has the disease, always warned him to be more careful, Shon often came home with a broken bone.

“Over the years, I’ve broken every bone in my body except my neck and my back, by the grace of God.” He has metal reinforcements where his ankle, jaw, and chin fractured. “They don’t bother me much...but the breaks that healed on their own, those hurt now that I’m older.”

When he was younger, Shon did construction work and heavy labor. “I felt my body could handle it, but now, I couldn’t do it.” Even his recent, less strenuous hospitality jobs were painful.

When the pandemic hit, Shon lost his restaurant job. Between PTO and unemployment benefits, he was able to pay his rent until last August. Then he was on his own. “For a month and a half I had nowhere to go.” He spent warm

days living on the streets, but mostly stayed “couch to couch” with family and friends until he “started feeling too dependent on other people.”

Raised in Norfolk, Shon knew about The Union Mission. He was hesitant to come to a homeless shelter, but friends who had stayed here convinced him he’d find the help he needed. “My life was in a rut. I wanted to make it better.” Shon arrived at the Bashford Men’s Shelter last October, “but I didn’t know all the ways the Mission would help me.”

“For a long time I went without healthcare,” and he never considered filing for disability for his debilitating disease, “but more and more now, my body really feels it.”

Shortly after arriving, Shon met with the Mission’s Wellness Team, partially funded by Sentara to coordinate healthcare for the shelter guests. “From our first conversation, their interest in me was real.” In his personalized action plan, Shon had regular appointments with a family care physician and a geneticist at Eastern Virginia Medical School, and he met with Wellness every week. They helped Shon with bus passes to get to appointments, prescription pick-ups, and protein drinks and vitamin supplements to strengthen his bones. “I really like that they want to know how I’m doing every day. They’ve had my back 100%!”

“My medical care is much better now! To be honest, I just really started any type of treatment since I’ve been here at the Mission. I have Medicaid now. I actually have a doctor who’s interested in my bone disease. I’ve applied for SSDI Disability and I’m told that I have a strong case. Things are starting to look really good now that I’ve been here at the Mission!”

Shon recently moved into his own place again, but he believes that his time at The Union Mission was part of God’s plan. He couldn’t imagine being homeless and trying to put his life, his health and his future back on track alone. “That’s the blessing that the Mission has been for me: the peace of mind to get myself together. A lot of people here, our situations would be bad if it wasn’t for the Mission. That’s my testimony! The Mission is the blessing now for me!”



*“The Wellness Team: They’ve had my back 100%!”*





# Reclaiming their Health

A dozen men in our RECLAIM transitional program are making healthier choices now, thanks to the HEAL Program®, presented at the Mission by Optima Health.

“We all have a stake in our own well-being, and this new partnership educates our tenants in the importance of healthcare,” says Adrian Wyrick, RECLAIM’s Spiritual Formation Counselor, who facilitated the virtual classes alongside the Mission’s Wellness Team. “The HEAL Program® is an engaging resource that I know God will use to heal both bodies and souls in a new pursuit of healthy living!”

Each Wednesday in March and April, Optima’s Community Outreach Coordinator Tenisha Jones and Moderator Courtney Seaborne led the men through the 90-minute lessons. Since many homeless people have neglected their healthcare for years, the course covers basic information: what to expect at a doctor’s appointment, physicals and check-ups, nutrition and healthy eating, illness and disease, medical emergencies, medication use, and preventative measures like weight control, exercise, and stress reduction. A pair of easy-to-understand workbooks give participants a primer, as

well as a place to take notes and record their own medical history.

In each interactive class, the men discussed their own health concerns. Many of them deal with chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, obesity, and heart disease. Others have a history

*“The commonsense rules made me more conscious to review my actions.”*

of cancer, addiction to nicotine, drugs, or alcohol, or long periods of poor nutrition and medical neglect.

Here at the Mission, most of the men now have Medicaid coverage and, often for the first time in years, primary care physicians. “Trust your doctors, please,” Tenisha urges them, “but it’s your health! If you don’t understand something about a test or a medication, ask questions until you do.” The men

end each class enjoying healthy snacks and competing in a rousing round of bingo using medical terms from their session.

At the end of their eight classes, the men are happy to share what they learned. For the first time in 30 years, Sam has set up an appointment to see a doctor, and Darryl feels more confident about how to take his medications properly.

“It was real easy to catch on,” Melvin says. “Once you start the class, you get a second look at things. Now I stop and think about what I’m eating, and I know how to prepare myself a decent meal.”

Rich has a new grandson on the way, so “my thing now is prevention, being more aware of my health. I want to be around for a while.”

“Our first half is over and we can’t get it back,” Franklin notes. “So now we’re gonna have to eat right...all the time so we can hang around as long as we can.”

“The commonsense rules made me more conscious to review my actions. It’s given us a chance to see where we need to do better,” says Bob, who hopes others will enroll in the HEAL Program®. “It’s very good!”

Help Shon and others like him at [unionmissionministries.org](https://unionmissionministries.org).





# Meet Dakota Bowley

Director, Camp Hope Haven

are some big changes to the cabins this year that will surprise those who have attended camp for a while.

## What's the same?

The focus of Camp Hope Haven: we are here to show our campers the love of God and the truths that are in His Word. We are here to have a safe, fun, and Christ-filled week. That will never change!

## What is your background with Christian camping?

I got saved at The Wilds camp just after turning 16. At 18 I worked on the cleanup crew, then at 20 as a counselor. Since camp influenced so many important moments of my life, I wanted to be a part of that for others. The atmosphere of lighthearted laughs, wild games, and a focus on God and His Word—what's not to love?

## Camp Hope Haven was cancelled last year. What do you think campers are looking forward to most this year?

The barn! Interacting with the animals really gets campers to open up and it is an experience that they remember. Actually, I would say they look forward to the whole Camp experience. Only at Camp can you get so many activities in one place.

## What's different about Camp Hope Haven this year?

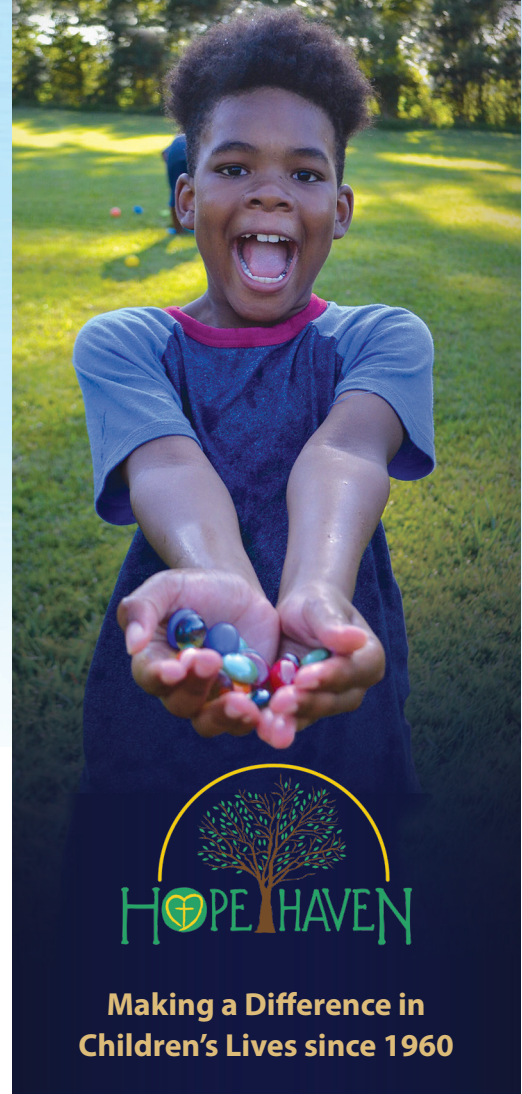
Because of COVID, we are closely following the Virginia Department of Health guidelines for overnight camps, updating our policies as those change. Other than safety precautions, there

## How does Camp Hope Haven share the love of Jesus?

Everything we do here at Camp must be for the sake of the Gospel. How we run check in, clean bathrooms, serve food, and treat others all should point campers to Christ. Nothing should hinder that.

Often Camp Hope Haven is the only place these children will hear about Jesus and the Bible. These kids have been looking forward to Camp—when they can hear the Gospel and enjoy their week here, it makes all of our sacrifices worth it.

We hold Camp-wide chapel each evening, and our counselors share Christ through cabin devotions and everyday conversations. All of our rotations (Bible, Pool, Barn, and Nature) are meant to be fun, but also to share the Gospel. To have an impact, we must be rooted in the Bible, the God-breathed words that apply to all areas of life. Being part of a camper's summer is being part of fulfilling the Great Commission. It is through God's Word that they will be saved.



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# Thank you for Your Generosity!



REV. JOHN W. GRAY, JR.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's been a long time coming, but as the pandemic subsides, life finally is returning to "normal." And after a year of being so focused on illness, it's encouraging to see so many of our shelter guests focused on healthier living. They are receiving personalized medical care coordinated through our Wellness Team and Case Managers. Plus, classes by local healthcare partners are giving them tools they can use to live better lives.

We're also finally enjoying the laughter of kids gathered together in the summer sun. Camp Hope Haven is only halfway through its six-week run, but already campers from underprivileged families across Hampton Roads are enjoying times of fun and faith that were impossible just a year ago. The early reports from our Virginia Beach campus remind us why we have offered Camp Hope Haven for five decades now. As children experience the love of Jesus, many of them make eternal decisions to follow Him!

Though charitable giving is often lower in the summer, our ministries remain dedicated to serving those who need it most. Your selfless generosity has always made this possible—and I know we can continue to count on you and your faithful support, in both financial partnership and prayer. Thank you for the blessing you are to The Union Mission Ministries and those we help!

In His service,

Rev. John W. Gray, Jr.  
Executive Director



Dear sponsor,  
Thank you so much for sponsoring me for camp I've had so much fun. The best thing about camp for me was the barn and swimming. I think sponsoring children for camp is a great thing and I hope God will bless you with many great things.  
sincerely,  
Oriana



P.S.  
Thanks to infinity

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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.

07-2021



# Holding on Through the Storm

When an EF2 tornado hit a small town south of Omaha, its 120-mile winds destroyed the home of Robin Stoll. The 76-year-old was working in his shed when he spotted the twister racing across the field toward him. Stoll's dog Joe raced under the porch for refuge, but the tornado picked him up and threw him against a tree..."so I just held on—tight!" Though Robin suffered a few cuts and scrapes, that tree helped save his life.

When unexpected events blow into your life, it's important to know that we have something strong to hold onto. Psalm 46 starts, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." Though we can't see what is ahead, nothing takes God by surprise. He can be trusted to protect and provide.

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

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