

The
**UNION
MISSION**

MISSION NETWORK

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

MARCH 2022

"The Mission has great people who do so much and make it all come together for everyone. It's definitely helped me!"

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The Gift of Sensory Bottles | Housewarming Hope Totes

With *Security* in His Future



Meet a hero living at a homeless shelter. Kody, 24, is a security guard at downtown Norfolk's premier mall. He's been working there for nine months now, "seeing that everyone is safe" and "making sure things don't happen."

But one busy day last summer, something did. Kody noticed a barefoot man in the mall, "acting crazy—completely out of it." As he approached him, he saw a knife, but not a gun. Kody was asking him to leave when the man swung and split Kody's lip, but "I was able to grab hold of him and keep him there until the police arrived." Mall security later heard that the man was convicted of killing his grandfather that morning, and Kody's efforts were awarded. "I guess security has always been my kind of work."

But Kody lacked security growing up. "I didn't have the best childhood." His parents divorced, and Kody was often in trouble and got kicked out of school. "I just didn't like how I was living. I think part of me was purposely bad to be able to go somewhere else, even if it wasn't a place I wanted to be." He spent some time in residential counseling, which "kinda helped," but returned to the chaos at home.

His anxiety and anger problems deepened, and at 17, he left his dad's home. While living with his mom, he

graduated from high school. "I take care of my mother the best that I can," but in 2019, Kody didn't know that she was unable to pay the rent until they were evicted.

Kody had never been homeless before coming to The Union Mission, and his anxiety was high. Kody told his shelter case manager that he just wanted to find work, save money, and move out. Lamont Harris urged him to take advantage of all the Mission's

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about the future."*

resources and worked one-on-one with him on some of his longtime issues. But Kody found a security job and left the shelter after only six months. But afterward, "I was barely making it."

By July 2021, Kody was laid off and needed the Mission again. When he called Mr. Harris, "this was a different Kody. He had matured a lot and [has things] much better under control," Harris says. "I'm very proud of him."

"Kody always knows what he wants to do, so this time it's more about slowing down so he doesn't miss a step by going out too fast," Harris

says. Kody invested in more of the offerings of our David Development Program for young Men's Shelter guests. "I lost faith when I was at my lowest, but I'm always trying not to give up. I want life to be better."

He was one of the first shelter guests to be interviewed for TBRA housing. As the program manager went over the details, Kody asked great questions about utilities, bus routes to get to work, even whether he could have a dog. With a few verifications and signatures, Kody was approved. Soon he'll be moving into his affordable new apartment.

"This time [at the Mission] I was able to get a good job, and I got into a program that helped me get into my own place and pays for a good percentage of it." And Mr. Harris "is more of a father figure to me than my dad ever was. He's helped me throughout the problems I've had. I don't think I could have made all this possible without him."

"I try not to think about the past," Kody says. "I think about the future." He'd love to go to college to study software development to have a good-paying career.

Kody's future is more secure because of his time here. "The Mission has great people who do so much and make it all come together. It's definitely helped me!"

Paving the Pathway to HOME

Several of The Union Mission's shelter guests and RECLAIM residents are taking their next steps toward sustainable housing through Tenant-Based Rental Assistance, or TBRA. Funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the affordable rent program is designed to bridge the gaps between local housing costs and what individuals making less than 60% of our area's median income can actually afford. The Mission has access to this affordable housing program through the Southeastern Virginia Homeless Coalition's Continuum of Care, working together to help make homelessness "rare, brief, and non-recurring" in Hampton Roads.

In 2021, the Mission's Chief Operations Officer, Rev. William Crawley, prioritized our participation in this valuable resource. Our case managers prescreen our shelter guests and recommend their best nominees for TBRA, then advocate for them at biweekly Continuum of Care meetings. After an affirming vote by the CoC members, each approved shelter guest meets one-on-one with Raymond Evans or Regina Land, our coordinators who case manage TBRA for our men's and women's shelters. They give an overview of the program and the process, as well as our expectations for each candidate. "The way they conduct themselves in the shelter helps me to understand how they are going to conduct themselves outside," Evans says. He and Land also ensure that each candidate has no outstanding barriers to obtaining TBRA housing and is "document ready" with a birth certificate, Virginia ID, and Social Security card in their possession. "Everybody in the TBRA program has those ducks in a row" before intake, he says.

Norfolk's TBRA Program Administrator, John Guglielmino, comes to the Mission regularly for official intake meetings with every candidate.



"This meeting with John G is utterly important," Evans says. After Guglielmino explains the program and its requirements thoroughly, he verifies the candidate's income and documents, answers any questions, and ultimately gives the final approval for TBRA.

Guglielmino writes a letter of acceptance for the approved housing seeker to present to potential landlords. It outlines the program's subsidy agreement and the client's obligations. In most cases, the tenant is responsible for the \$35 application fee and the prorated 30% rent each month, and TBRA covers the rest. With this letter in hand, "It's boots to the ground!" Evans says, and the apartment search is on.

Evans maintains a detailed ledger containing scores of potential landlords, so a few prospects are usually quickly available. Once the client selects a viable apartment, a HUD inspection ensures that the unit is safe, sanitary, and in sound condition. If so, our shelter guest signs a one-year lease, with the option to renew their TBRA status for an additional year at any approved property in Norfolk.

With the keys to their rental property in hand, the new tenant can use funds they saved during the stay at

the Mission to furnish their new home, often with discounted goods from our Thrift Store—and the helpful kitchen, bath, and laundry items in donated Housewarming Hope Totes give a head start with housekeeping. And monthly meetings with their TBRA case manager help to assure that each formerly homeless guest's journey to independent living is permanent and that they have found—finally—their own "Home, Sweet Home."



CHRISTIAN LANDLORDS

Do you have a leasable apartment or house

in Norfolk with rent under \$1,015 per month? Are you willing to participate in a federal program with a 70%-30% rent split? You may qualify to become a TBRA housing provider. Annual program enrollment and a HUD inspection of the rental property are prerequisites.

CONTACT

Rev. Raymond Evans
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revans@ummnorva.org

Do you have a leasable apartment or house in Norfolk?



Shelter Guests 'Pay It Forward' with Gifts for Others

Passing on a creative way to break down anxiety!

It is better to give than to receive" Some Bashford Men's Shelter guests discovered in their recent mental health workshops. Restoration Behavioral Health Services led the Friday-night sessions funded by a generous local foundation.

Case managers recommended attendance to shelter guests who were dealing with anxiety issues. Agreeing that whatever they discussed there would not be repeated elsewhere, the men opened up about their life experiences and emotions, building trust and support for each other. And "once the guys started talking among themselves, it just grew," Dr. Tiffiney Thompson, DNP, said, until 12 to 15 men participated each week.

Early classes focused on common anxieties, symptoms, and coping skills for each, but the most relatable topic was post-traumatic stress disorder. "So many of the guys had a lot of traumas," Thompson said. Some were victims of dangerous violence. Others had chronic medical issues or poor health. Many felt alone due to broken relationships and a lack of family support. And all agreed that "it's a major life change to become homeless and come to live in a shelter, so we focused for several weeks on PTSD."

"We discussed with the guys how engaging their senses would help them cope," so in December, Thompson and the men created sensory bottles. The soothing bottles often benefit those dealing with mental health issues, autism, or memory loss. The moving bubbles, sparkling glitter, and floating additions provide a peaceful distraction to slow down the mind or a calming focus to boost comfort in discussing difficult subjects.

"Sensory bottles are very visual—watching the colors and inclusions slowly swirl is calming in itself—but they also have tactile, auditory, and kinetic engagements: the shaking of the bottle, feeling its shape and weight, the noise of items brushing the sides. You just really have to be sure you're hitting those senses—the more senses the better. That all helps to break down anxiety."

But their art therapy had another benefit. "We told the guys that they were going to 'pay it forward' this Christmastime." The men would be creating the mesmerizing bottles for Restoration to deliver to seniors with dementia, ALS, and Alzheimer's in assisted living communities.

That motivated the men even more. They decorated their giveaway bottles inside and out with bright colors, rhinestones, sequins, beads, ribbons, and bows. Each artist also signed a card for his recipient. "I really got into the process of making mine until I got them to be just like I wanted them," said one guest, "I got really creative—I wanted to captivate whoever got my gift!"

Their joy of giving reinforced the truth of Proverbs 11:25: "Whoever refreshes others will be refreshed."

HOUSEWARMING

HOPE TOTE

A Spring
Volunteer
Project



It's expensive to set up your first apartment, so this collection drive project is a big help to shelter guests who are moving into permanent housing. Housewarming Hope Totes include many basic kitchen, bath, laundry, and cleaning supplies.

Each tote costs about \$75 to \$100 to fill with the items on our shopping list. This is a great project for families, Sunday schools, churches, youth groups, Bible studies, and Scouting troops.

See our easy packing checklist at

[unionmissionministries.org/
get-involved/drives](https://unionmissionministries.org/get-involved/drives).

If you will participate, let us know at

volunteer@ummnorva.org.

Immediate Impact, Eternal Rewards

The Union Mission Ministries has immediate job openings in several departments. Take a look at our current employment listings or apply online at

[unionmissionministries.org/
job-opportunities](https://unionmissionministries.org/job-opportunities).



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Thank you for Your Generosity!



REV. JOHN W. GRAY, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“Welcome home!” It’s a sentiment that many of us hear every day. But for most of the homeless men, women, and children we serve, they are the two words they long most to hear.

So many of our shelter guests have been fighting to survive for so long that they’ve dared not dream of home. It’s been enough of a struggle just to find a safe place: to sleep, to stay warm, to weather the storms of life, even to eat their next meal.

But once they arrive at The Union Mission, they come to feel safe at home. Here they find a warm welcome and people who genuinely care. Here their most basic physical and emotional needs are met. And here, even if it’s just their temporary home, they open their hearts to the truths of Scripture and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ—and that gives them an eternal home, too.

In this triumphant and holy Easter season, I hope you’ll remember our homeless neighbors here and I hope you’ll give generously. Your compassion and faithful giving will help them create a better life and brighter future—full of help, hope, and, in time, their own permanent home.

In His service,



From hunger to hope... It all starts with a meal!

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

For just over \$50, you can help 20 men, women, and children feel the love of home with a hot, holiday meal. And our emergency shelter guests receive so much more than food.

Here at The Union Mission, homeless neighbors in need find a safe haven and a warm bed, clean clothes, life-skills training, wellness support, counseling, housing assistance, and Christian staff who truly care. Your generous financial support gives them the opportunity to discover a better—and perhaps even eternal—life.

**Give generously today
and transform lives!**

unionmissionministries.org/Easter

Rev. Gray, I want to help The Union Mission’s guests find their place to call home!

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.

03-2022

Can't Get on The Same Page?

Have you ever found yourself struggling to agree with your spouse? If you are at odds on your retirement and legacy planning,

here's some help . . .



Stock Photo

See conflict as an opportunity.

It's uncomfortable, but an unavoidable part of intimacy. But when you view conflict resolution as necessary for growth, you can rethink your priorities, uncover harmful patterns, and identify weaknesses so you can work to fix them together. It may be difficult, but it's worth the effort to find solutions you both support.

The wise way is better than "my way."

It's natural to see your own way of doing things as superior, and sometimes it is. But self-preservation and fear are negative motivators. When we can unpack why we are feeling defensive or emotional, it can help us humble ourselves to hear someone else's idea—which may be the wiser choice.

Consider inspiration over information.

Making end-of-life plans is easier when you see your estate plan not just as a legal or financial decision, but as an expression of what is important to you. When your will aligns with your values of faith, family, and philanthropy to organizations that inspire you, it becomes a crucial part of your family heritage that you want to pass along. Communicating legacy plans today creates peace and unity tomorrow.

"The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride."

ECCLESIASTES 7:8

IT'S EASY TO INCLUDE THE UNION MISSION MINISTRIES IN YOUR WILL!

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

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.

THE UNION MISSION MINISTRIES

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