

*The*  
**UNION  
MISSION**

# MISSION NETWORK

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

MAY 2022

**"All I can say is, God is faithful! I just want to be a beacon of His light."**

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**INSIDE:** Carlton's Path to Purpose | Our David Development Program for Young Men  
We're Hiring! | Change a Child's Life at Camp Hope Haven | Bloom in Every Season



# Faith beyond Football



In Hartford, Connecticut, known for its guns, drugs, and gangs, Carlton grew up in a Christian home—but his real faith was in football. His talent as a defensive lineman earned him a scholarship at Central Connecticut State. His own early-life traumas inspired him to study social work and criminal justice. But as a star athlete, he indulged in his standout status and sin.

By his junior year, Carlton had a crisis of conscience that “was the Lord’s intervention.” Though being a great football player had always been his identity, he “went from being a rising athlete to a college dropout.”

Lost without football, he reconnected with godly friends and family, and as he learned to rely on the Lord’s guidance, he decided to return to college. Knowing that football could not be his only focus, he vowed to do whatever God asked of him.

At The University of Connecticut, Carlton proved himself to the Huskies’ coach and was awarded a full scholarship. Though he was a leader on the football team, Carlton also prioritized his sociology degree, got baptized, and led crowded Bible studies.

After graduating from UConn in 2019, he hoped to play pro football, but his dream never became reality. As he prayed about his next steps, Carlton felt led to reconnect with his father in Virginia Beach, so in October 2020 he

packed up his truck and moved to his father’s house.

Though Carlton, now 25, and his dad both were hopeful, “it wasn’t the immediate connection that I thought it would be.” After eight months, he moved out.

Carlton arrived at The Union Mission in August 2021. He told the David Development Director, “I’m gonna be out of here as soon as possible,” but Lamont Harris urged him to slow down—“You just got here. Be patient with God.”

*“Looking back over everything that the Lord was taking me through, I’m excited to have a profound new outlook now!”*

That week Carlton began jobs at two group homes that help youth with behavioral difficulties. But his 70-hour work weeks left him exhausted and even more anxious to get on with his life. Harris continued his gentle encouragement: “Don’t leave too soon! God is doing something in you and for you while you’re here.” When Carlton was promoted to full-time work at one group home and could quit his second job, he recognized God’s sustaining hand.

But living in a homeless shelter made it hard to understand why God led him to Virginia. “I’ve been here over a year now, Lord. What now?” He was not expecting the four words he heard: “Go back to school.” But in November he drove by a billboard that said “Christian leadership to change the world.” After praying about the apparent sign, Carlton called Regent University.

“I have a degree in sociology and the Lord is leading me to go back to school,” he told the admissions counselor, “but I don’t know what I want to study.” He said he’d been reading in Isaiah “where the Lord wants to reestablish government,” and the M.A. program in law and public policy quickened his spirit. A few hours later, his application was submitted. A few days later, he was filing for financial aid. “You hear the Word of the Lord, you believe God, and you take a step of faith. And then He moves.”

And Carlton stayed on the move. The Mission helped him find affordable housing in Norfolk, and days later, he started his master’s degree at Regent. “Life has just been like a rollercoaster. Looking back over everything that the Lord was taking me through, I’m excited to have a profound new outlook now. It’s my heart’s desire to change the world, simply by talking about the Lord and what He’s done!”

For more about Carlton’s journey, see Stories of Hope at [unionmissionministries.org](https://unionmissionministries.org).





# PATH to PURPOSE Campaign

Lamont Harris directs our David Development Program designed to help our youngest Bashford Men's Shelter guests overcome homelessness. Learn how the program is training young men to live productive, meaningful lives.

## Our David Development Program

### **Tell us about the David Development Program.**

It's for all our young male guests 18 to 31 so we can train them while they are young, before their problems become chronic. Our main goal is to introduce them to Jesus Christ, *then* we're offering a pathway of programs that can help them end their homelessness and its causes forever.

### **How have these young men become homeless?**

Some made bad mistakes and have come to The Union Mission straight after jail or prison. Some have physical or mental health issues. Thank God, very few have addictions that require rehab, but many have learned to use drugs or alcohol as a coping mechanism. You can't do that while you're here. We work with them to address their depression, anger, anxiety, and overall wellness.

Some just don't know the value of money. They need to learn about holding a job and getting paid, bills and budgets and savings. Or they have bad credit or no credit, so there's job readiness and financial literacy training.

### **So they're just not fully independent?**

Not yet. I talk with a lot of frustrated parents whose sons are grown men still

living at home at 18, at 21, at 26. They aren't in school. They aren't working. They know they aren't doing what they are supposed to do. They just feel entitled.

Some guys are living with family, but go running away from home. They just don't like the rules. But life has rules—that's the first thing I tell them—and the Mission has lots of rules, too. I tell them, "You need to go back home and do better."

Sometimes parents come over here and we sit down together to see what the problems are. We help them understand each other. A lot of them are only here for a few days because they reconnect with their family.

### **How common are broken families?**

So many of these young guys were raised by single moms who finally told them it's time to leave. I've had moms come in to talk with me and just cry. They don't want their son to be here, but he's acting up. He just won't listen or contribute.

Or guys who were raised by mom long for a relationship with their dad, so they move in with him. They think it's going to be all buddy-buddy, but they're surprised when dad has expectations, too, so they end up here.

That's one way we help here at The Union Mission—we teach these young

men to take care of *themselves*. If they don't, most likely they're going to be homeless again and again.

### **How many of your Davids are dads themselves?**

Only 25% to 27%—and that's good! All they have is themselves to care for. Having children too early can slow down your progress, but God is faithful!

### **You know something about that?**

[laughs] These guys see me now, as a program director. They don't think that I've "experienced life," but I was a teenage father at 17. I had that relationship with my parents where I wanted to be grown, but I wasn't yet. These things they're facing I have been through myself. I thank God for everything that He allowed me to go through to prepare me for the work that He needed me to do here.

### **How important are job readiness and education?**

Many of our youngest guests don't have any work experience. Along with life-skills training, we help them discover what they can be good at and how they can be a great employee. We are working with Tidewater Community College's program that offers trades training for jobs like construction, plumbing, HVAC, electronics, maritime technology. TCC has scholarships available to help these

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men build a career where they can work hard and succeed.

### **So employers will hire men with a history of homelessness?**

Definitely! We have been building great relationships with employers across our area, so most of our guys can be working full-time soon after they arrive. For many this is their first real job, so we offer support on how to do their best—and they do! The employers see their growth and leadership potential.

We have guys working in restaurants, grocery stores, retail, warehouses, and hotel maintenance, of course. But we also have connections with bakeries, apparel factories, mattress manufacturers, customer service companies, security firms, shipyards, and military recruiters. Plus, many of these employers are actually paying a living wage to start.

### **So after a job, is housing the ultimate goal?**

I teach these guys that it's not enough to *obtain* housing. They've got to learn to *sustain* housing. They need to keep working, keep addressing the things that troubled them, keep seeking God, keep being a responsible adult. That's what will keep them from ever being homeless again.

### **Have any of them returned to the Mission?**

Some have asked about it when "things just aren't working out." But that's life, I remind them. We talk through it. They have to learn how to stick it out when things get hard. Something really, really is going to have to have happened to them to be able to come back here.

### **Does David Development include any aftercare?**

Absolutely! I'm still their case manager after they leave, but I'm also an informal mentor. All the guys have my cell number. They know I care. They know that I'm always going to be there for them.

### **What enhancements do you hope to add in the future?**

I have a very ambitious wish list for David Development: driving lessons, a GED program on campus, college-prep seminars, entrepreneurial training, relationship-building classes and events to restore and strengthen families, cultural enrichment trips...my list goes on and on!



**Working at  
Paramount Sleep Co.**

*For the full interview with Lamont Harris, see our David Development Program webpage at [unionmissionministries.org/ways-to-give/changing-futures](https://unionmissionministries.org/ways-to-give/changing-futures). And help homeless young men fulfill the promise of their potential at*

[unionmissionministries.org/purpose](https://unionmissionministries.org/purpose)

## 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).

To participate, let us know at

[volunteer@ummnorva.org](mailto: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).



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





Thank you  
for Your  
Generosity!



REV. JOHN W. GRAY, JR.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Spring is always a season of fresh starts. Here at The Union Mission Ministries, after our campus shed its dull winter shell, tender green leaves emerged, then colorful flowers burst into bloom.

It's a natural lesson with a spiritual application. So many of our shelter guests have come from tragic, life-altering situations and hopelessness to experience a sense of renewal, then growth as they stabilize and start to set their lives aright.

That's especially true among the youngest of those we serve. Our Bashford Men's Shelter guests between the ages of 18 and 31 are finding wholeness and hope through our David Development Program. They are standing in God's strength, moving forward with courage, and wielding their faith to confront the giants that have mocked and immobilized them for too long. They are growing in ability, in confidence, and in the Lord.

And when Camp Hope Haven begins next month we will share the love of God with hundreds of eager children and teens. It's a joy—and a responsibility. Camp is where many of these precious souls will hear about Jesus for the first time, and we pray that all will come to know Him as Savior and Lord.

It's your partnership that makes our ministry possible. May God bless you for your heart to help, your generous giving, and your faithful prayers!

In His service,

## Change a child's life with a week at CAMP HOPE HAVEN



For many kids, a week of summer camp is a treat their family cannot afford.

**BUT FOR JUST \$150**, you can sponsor a child for a week at Camp Hope Haven. This summer they'll enjoy nature walks, swimming, sports, horseback riding, team games, and, of course, Bible lessons on our beautiful campus in rural Virginia Beach. Introduce a child to the joy and love of Jesus. Give today and transform a life!



SCAN TO GIVE  
ONLINE

[unionmissionministries.org/camp](http://unionmissionministries.org/camp)

*Rev. Gray, I want to help children and young men through The Union Mission!*

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**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](http://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.

05-2022



# Three ways to *Bloom* in Every Season of Life

*A wise leader once said, "Never judge a tree on one day alone."*

Though one season may seem barren, another will be fruitful. We all go through challenging times, but don't let the discomfort of one season destroy the joy of another. Maybe you're starting a new career or raising children. Or perhaps you're recently retired, empty nesting, or widowed. No matter your season of life, you always have something to offer:



## *Time*

When kids are young, parents have very little time and a myriad of demands on every minute. But as we age, we settle into a slower, more manageable pace. Do you have time to volunteer at an organization you care about or to serve someone in need?

## *Talent*

The skills you have developed were designed by God to benefit others, and 1 Peter says we're called to use our gifts to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace. Is this a season where your talents could bring advancement or attention to an important cause?

## *Treasure*

Those who can no longer go still can send. Older adults who are physically unable to volunteer can instead focus on the legacy they'll leave behind—deep treasures like values, memories, and giving to worthy charities like The Union Mission Ministries.

*Which is your unique season of giving?*

### **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](http://www.christianwill.org/umm) or contact Helen Sommer at 757-627-8686, x 504 or [legacygiving@ummnorva.org](mailto:legacygiving@ummnorva.org).

#### *Comments / Change of Address:*

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EMAIL 

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PHONE 

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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](http://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**

P.O. BOX 3203 | NORFOLK, VA 23514 | 757-627-8686  
[giving@ummnorva.org](mailto:giving@ummnorva.org) | [www.unionmissionministries.org](http://www.unionmissionministries.org)