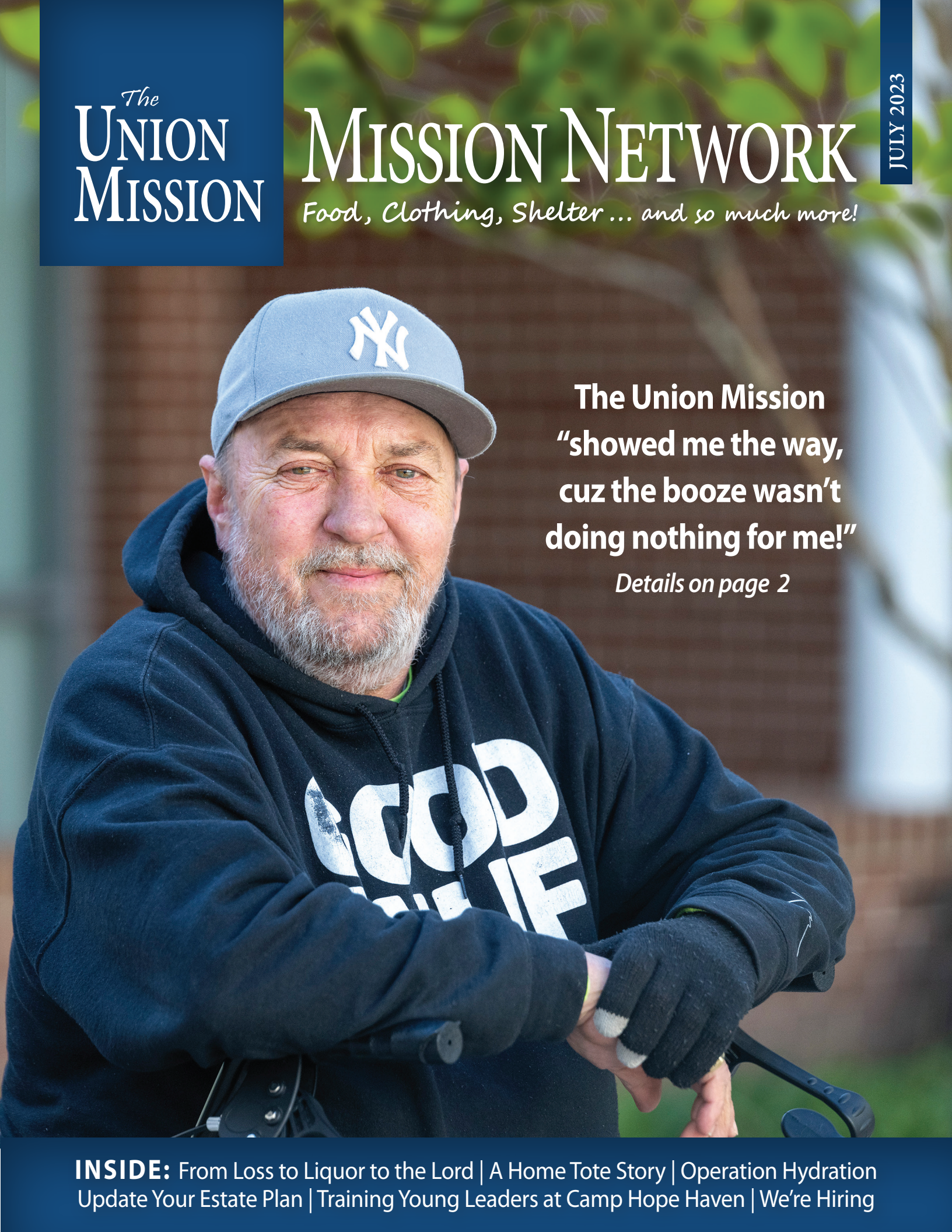


The
**UNION
MISSION**

MISSION NETWORK

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

JULY 2023



**The Union Mission
“showed me the way,
cuz the booze wasn’t
doing nothing for me!”**

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Russell with Dr. Eiesha Williamson, instructor of the Glasgow Health Relationships course.

Love, loss, liquor, and the Lord

They've all been a part of Russell's past.

They won't all be a part of his future.

Russell, 63, was raised in Brooklyn in a close, Christian family. "I had a great home life," he says. His mother was a bank executive. His father was a glazier who did the restaurant windows at the World Trade Center. "I went to Catholic school for eight years. I was an altar boy." But by his teens he started drifting away from church.

He grew up loving baseball, and as a high school catcher was drafted by the Detroit Tigers' farm team. But his major-league dreams died when a rival player slid hard into home plate—and into Russell's leg. "That's when everything went downhill."

When his parents retired to Virginia, he moved, too. Russell became a successful electrician, but an accidental electrocution and fall from a tall ladder ended his career. He qualified for disability, but "now I have a steel plate in my neck and I have to use a cane."

In his mid 40s he met the love of his life, Judy. Together for 16

happy years, they got a house on the Eastern Shore. But sadly, his wife was diagnosed with liver cancer. Russell cared for her until her death several years ago. "I love her to this day," he says tenderly.

"Since I've come here, my faith's been reignited. This place just brought it back out of me!"

Russell was shocked to discover that his name was never on the mortgage. Her family "served me with papers. I had 90 days to get out." In addition to losing his wife and his home, he lost his three dogs "and almost everything else."

His widowed father in Virginia Beach was able to take him in, but his dad, too, was terminally ill. Russell cared for him and supported the household, giving the rent and bill money to his sister, but she never paid them. "The landlord gave us an eviction notice."

He was able to stay with his friend Mike for a few weeks, then he rented hotel rooms. When his father died just a few months later, Russell couldn't endure all his pain, loneliness, and anger. "It was just like I'd had it with life. I'd have a beer all day long. And then I'd get a fifth of vodka and would drink and drink and drink. Yeah, it was bad!"

He knew it was no way to live. Russell had heard about The Union Mission from police officers who served his eviction papers. In late July 2022, he came to stay here. "You see the homeless on TV shows and the shelter is all run down and full of a bunch of bums. But the Mission is nothing like that. I got a place to sleep, three square meals a day. I put on almost 40 pounds. It's great! I love it here!"

The Mission's chapels, devotions, and spiritual focus helped Russell find a new outlook. "Since I've come here, my faith's been reignited. This place just brought it back out of me!"

He's also stayed sober. "I was a full-blown alcoholic, but I don't miss it. They showed me the way, because the booze wasn't doing nothing for me."

In RECLAIM, the Mission's transitional program for men, "I'm not idle." He finished the Glasgow course on relationships, and he's thankful for Sentara's medical care and treatment for his depression. His demeanor has "totally changed."

He's working to rebuild his shattered credit and qualify for his own apartment through Norfolk's Tenant-Based Rental Assistance program. "It's just a matter of time." Russell looks forward to getting his own apartment, going to AA meetings, and living independently.

"I'd recommend The Union Mission for anyone who's homeless." And he's grateful for the donors who support the ministry. "Keep giving, because look how many lives it has saved! It saved me!"

On Hope & Home

“I’m gonna die out here.” One dejected sentence, muttered in September 2019, changed Lorenzo’s trajectory. It’s when he returned to The Union Mission.



Lorenzo’s life had never been easy. The youngest of eight kids, he was a reserved child, raised in the Christian faith in Portsmouth. His broken family and ankylosing spondylitis, an arthritis that inflames the joints, limited his confidence, and his unsteady walk and occasional stutter made Lorenzo the target of bullies’ ridicule.

After graduation, Lorenzo took some college classes and worked at the Norfolk shipyards, which was hard on his body. Then, in 2016 he found the steady job he still loves with a polymer insulators manufacturer.

Living with family was difficult, but costs were too high for him to cover alone. A friend of his had found help at The Union Mission. Lorenzo was hesitant to come, but “I felt like I was in a safe place right here.” The case managers encouraged and prayed with Lorenzo, and our Wellness Team began to work with him. After years of worsening pain as his bones began to rub together, Lorenzo had surgery on his right hip. “Now it’s perfect—no pain.”

After months of saving half of each paycheck, Lorenzo felt he was ready to leave, though the staff encouraged him to stay. He moved in with some “friends,” but his many roommates took advantage of his kindness—and his money. “I like to help and put others above myself. Sometimes that’s a detriment.”

He left the crowded house for hotels, then after a few weeks started sleeping in his car. Embarrassed and depressed, “I wouldn’t tell nobody what I was going through. People like to judge.” In time, Lorenzo returned to the Mission parking lots after hours. Even in his 2004 Dodge, he felt safe here.

When Mission staff discovered that Lorenzo was living in his car on campus, they asked him what he was doing here. “Down on myself and discouraged,” he uttered his fear of dying homeless and alone. Hearing his desperate need, the staff forgave Lorenzo his trespassing and readmitted him to the Men’s Shelter. “That’s why I consider this like a family, like a home for me!”

Lorenzo began to thrive. He completed classes and rebuilt his savings. In RECLAIM, he made trustworthy friends who “get a second chance at life together.” And “because it’s a Christian shelter, [the staff] teach me to be closer to God. They really care about me and want better for me. And I want better for myself!”

Though nervous, Lorenzo easily qualified for a subsidized apartment through Norfolk’s Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program. “I didn’t want to leave, but I really didn’t want to miss this opportunity.”

Before moving out in April, Lorenzo, 34, was pensive and grateful. When Rev. Evans asked, “Do you want us to bring cups and paper plates over for your move-in party?” he chuckled. Then Mr. Marshall gestured to a large plastic tub and said, “Wait a minute—you already have plates, Lorenzo!”

As they opened the Home Tote, Lorenzo broke into sobs, raising his hands and exclaiming, “Thank You, Lord!” The storage bin “was full of all sorts of stuff I needed: plates, silverware, soap, a shower curtain, kitchen utensils, you name it!”

Now Lorenzo loves living on his own in his one bedroom apartment in a safe, quiet neighborhood close to his job. “I’m really trying to be serious and work hard for my future.”

But Lorenzo also is thankful for his past. “I make sure every day to let the Lord know how grateful I am for The Union Mission!”



HELP A
SHELTER GUEST

move into housing by
packing a Home Tote!

To learn how to help, visit us at unionmissionministries.org/get-involved/drives or contact volunteer@ummnorva.org.

ADVENTURE AWAITS!



Developing Young Christian Leaders

Director Dakota Bowley shares how Camp Hope Haven disciples teen and 20-something followers of Jesus.

We've always recognized that our best Camp workers are former campers who become staff. They've been impacted by their time at Camp and are seeking to have that same impact on the next generation. That's why we created Switchback, our monthly program to keep counselors and campers plugged in during the school year.

Staying close to God and building community with the staff is a great reminder to counselors and campers of how the Lord has worked in their lives through Camp Hope Haven. It encourages them to continue to 'run their race with endurance.' Switchback is the bridge between what God has done and what He will continue to do. We challenge each other to take that next step of faith.

We hope to add some community service projects to show those coming to Switchback how God is working in our area beyond Hope Haven.

What spiritual elements go into training Camp staff?

In order to lead others to Christ, it's important that our staff be walking with Him themselves. We train staff how to share the Gospel, pray, study the Bible in their devotions, and resolve conflict in a biblical way. Some of these are formal lessons, but many are learned just walking beside each other through the summer and pointing each other to Christ.

How is Camp Hope Haven good preparation for missions?

Ministry is hard work, and those who want to work in missions should realize this sooner rather than later. But working in ministry often makes us hungry to do more ministry. When you can see the ways God works through you, it makes you want to devote your life in service for Him and for others.

Also, Camp operates best with a wide variety of people with different spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12). It allows our staff to discover which ministry activities best fit the gifts God has given them. We have staff who currently are studying to go into missions as a career, and many others who are glorifying God through their chosen vocations.

And there's some personal mentorship as well?

Mentoring our staff is an essential part of our vision for the future. Part of discipleship is keeping your eyes open, trying to discern how God is working in the lives of people, and seeking to cultivate the fruit He is producing in their hearts.

Four returning staff have been involved in a Spiritual Leadership Training internship for about a year now. I am primarily investing in the two guys while my wife Kristina, Camp's Assistant Director, is mentoring the girls. We meet in groups during Hope Haven office hours, but also spend time with our protégés as friends.

OPERATION HYDRATION

A Summer Donation Drive



Every summer, we need more bottled water for our ministries. Help The Union Mission and Hope Haven by donating cases of individually sealed bottles of water or unopened water cooler jugs.

We will be happy to accept your water donations Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. at

**DONATION DROP-OFF
THE UNION MISSION
5100 E. Virginia Beach Blvd., Norfolk**

**HOPE HAVEN
3000 North Landing Rd., Va. Beach**

OUR STAFF Caring Like Christ

The Union Mission is hiring! We have several openings for direct-care shelter workers, as well as new positions in program management and operations support, development, and our Thrift Store! Review our current employment listings or apply online at:

[unionmissionministries.org/
job-opportunities.](http://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

Summer is never dull at The Union Mission Ministries. Just ask our frontline shelter staff! Unlike many of us, homelessness takes no vacations. There are always men and women in need: of safety, of shelter, of sustenance, of solace. And though each guest's story differs, our calling does not. We are here to provide each person who comes through our doors with the help and the hope they need to overcome their temporary troubles, and we do so in the love of Jesus.

His love also is in action at Hope Haven, where Camp is in full swing. Since I live on the property, I see just how much the boys, girls, and teens who attend enjoy their week away from home. More important, each will hear the good news of salvation at Camp. And we pray that each and every camper will come to know Jesus as their Savior and will grow as His disciple. That is our joy!

You, too, bring smiles to our faces. We are grateful to have you as a partner in our mission to provide help and eternal hope. Your support makes all the difference, especially in the summer, when donations tend to fall off, though just as many people need help. May God multiply His blessings on you as you faithfully serve Him through your generous giving!

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, contests, 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 for eternity!



SCAN TO GIVE
ONLINE

unionmissionministries.org/camp

Rev. Gray, I want to provide help and hope through The Union Mission Ministries!

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.



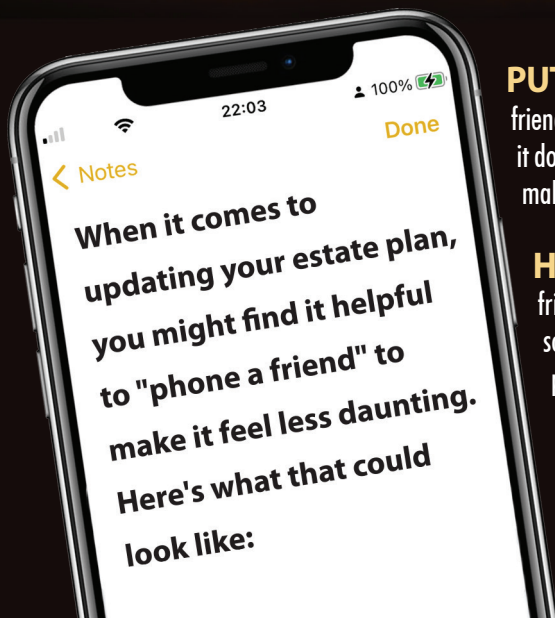
Please complete this slip and return it to The Union Mission with your generous gift. Your gift is tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. We will send a receipt for your records.

07-2023

A LIFELINE FOR YOUR

Estate Plan

Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? was an instant hit when it premiered in 1999. The game show featured contestants answering 15 increasingly difficult trivia questions, with the goal of winning a million dollars. If you've ever said, "Is that your final answer?" you probably have this show to thank. If contestants got stumped on a question, they had three "lifelines" available—including to phone a friend. If you're unsure about a big decision, wouldn't you want to hear a familiar voice that could point you in the right direction?



PUT YOUR PRIORITIES ON PAPER. Meet with a trusted friend or two to talk and pray about what's meaningful to you, then write it down. ChristianWill.org/UMM features many free resources to help you make informed decisions.

HOLD EACH OTHER ACCOUNTABLE. Keeping friends involved in your efforts can help you stay on track. Ask someone to follow up with you – and pray for you – during the process. The best part? You can do the same for them.

SHARE IDEAS AND INSIGHTS. Good friends know your heart, and their wisdom can help you create a plan that reflects what's important to you. Discuss helpful research and resources with each other to achieve your goals.

"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers, they succeed," Proverbs 15:22 reminds us. Now is the time to use that lifeline—invite some friends to help you consider and update your estate plan to leave a legacy you cherish.

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, x 504 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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