

The
**UNION
MISSION**

MISSION NETWORK

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

SEPTEMBER 2023

**“Don’t be afraid to come here.
They really care, and they will do
anything they can to help you.”**

— Heather
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The Women's Shelter: Launching a New Lease on Life



Sophia Louis &
Regina Land



Sophia Louis is the Ministry Director at our Women's Shelter, where Regina Land serves as Emergency Services Program Manager. Discover how The Union Mission helps women overcome homelessness to achieve independence and ongoing success.

Sophia, tell us how you see our Women's Shelter and the services we provide.

SL: We consider our Women's Shelter a community where we house and serve up to 36 women experiencing homelessness. Though we are not responsible for ending your homelessness, we are dedicated to partnering with you while you do so. While you are a guest in our shelter, we provide emergency housing, meals, clothing, wellness services, and compassionate Christian care to help you stabilize. We also help you identify your needs, create a personalized action plan, and connect you to your choice of resources to help you achieve your goals. We work with you to determine how we can best assist and support you.

Regina, what are common reasons that women find themselves homeless and seek our help?

RL: The causes are as varied as the women we serve, of course. But we see a lot of interpersonal issues, such as fractured relationships with family, roommates, or friends, a breakup. Financial hardships, like the loss of a job, unexpected medical bills, or divorce, are common as well. And some women experiencing homelessness have faced mental health challenges, substance abuse, crime, violence, or other traumas.

Tell us about the intake and welcome process.

SL: Our Case Managers, Sherrilyn Hill-Norman and Nyasia Luke, understand that coming to a homeless shelter can be difficult, and they don't want intake to be another trauma. Our team is trained to use trauma-informed care approaches to guiding each woman through important questions as she first enters shelter. They take their time with each guest to make her feel safe and heard. From our initial screening through the entire assessment, our goal is to establish rapport and trust. We introduce the guests to staff as they tour the shelter. In our dorms, StepUP modular pods give each woman her own personal space with a bed and storage locker. It helps our guests to feel comfortable and secure while they are living in this community.

How do our case managers partner with our guests?

RL: Our first meeting focuses on determining the barriers to resolving homelessness and what her needs are. Then together we can determine the goals for her time here in the shelter. This is all part of helping each woman create her personalized Individual Service Plan, or ISP.

For everybody, obtaining identification is our first goal since our community partners, services, and employers require that you have a picture ID and a Social Security card or a birth certificate. When they come into shelter, All our guests receive a letter of residency when they come into shelter, and we encourage them to have their mail sent here. Then they can go to get a city ID from Norfolk, and that helps toward getting other IDs. Thankfully, Virginia has a rapid turnaround, but other more populous states have longer waits. Just to get a birth certificate can take months, and Social Security cards have been very slow, but it's getting a lot better.

SL: Later needs may include getting a cell phone, signing up for Medicaid, applying for SNAP food support, or finding work.

RL: Once a woman is document-ready, we work on physical and mental health. Most guests meet with our Wellness Team fairly early so we can get them connected to the medical resources that will benefit them most.





Are finances a key part of each ISP?

RL: Each shelter guest creates a budget plan with her case manager and is encouraged to save.

SL: And if she is employed, her budget might include debt reduction. For guests who come into the shelter with substantial debt, we encourage them to pay that off as quickly as possible, then begin saving.

RL: We have a wonderful partnership with The UP Center to provide monthly budgeting and finance classes. Many of our younger guests, 18 to 24, are learning the differences between their needs and their wants. And Dollar Bank now helps our guests open a free passbook savings account.

How does employment fit into the picture?

RL: Most transitional housing partners require candidates to have a steady income. That could be from a pension, disability, or Social Security, but usually it is from a job. We collaborate with job agencies to help our guests find gainful employment, and we are building relationships with potential employers. Some, like Walmart, come to our shelter regularly to take applications and conduct on-site interviews. We are always looking for more employers who see the benefits of hiring a woman who is working to end her homelessness.

SL: Though many of our guests need a longer time to stabilize or heal,

some women are able to regain their independence fairly quickly. They get their IDs, start working, and find transitional housing within just two or three months.

Tell us about some of our resource-providing partnerships.

RL: The Sentara Community Care Center on campus has made a world of difference for our guests. Many unhoused women have not been able to attend to their health needs, so being able to see a primary care provider here at the Mission is an incredible benefit. Our Wellness Team coordinates those appointments, as well as for the Bon Secours Care-A-Van. And we also refer women to BrightView for substance use disorder care and treatment services.

SL: And mental health grants have helped our guests who don't have insurance connect with counseling, life-skills-building, stress reduction, and therapy through agencies like Glasgow Health, Milestone, and Holistic Life Services. We also have the monthly art therapy paint nights with Fenix Experience.

We work with so many great agencies: the City of Norfolk programs, the regional Continuum of Care, H.O.P.E. Village at the Salvation Army, ForKids, the Keim Centers, CHIP. If you can help us with resources, we're in! Each year we check our pool of resource providers to see if they have added any new offerings. We love it when our guests tell us about a new resource they've used. It's a chance for us

to see if it's a program or provider we can use again.

Fill us in on the great classes our staff have created to engage with our guests.

RL: Women Connect is a weekly 90-minute meeting focused on recovery. Mrs. Hill-Norman is a certified peer recovery specialist, and the guests appreciate the support they experience. It's popular on its own, but they also always have door prizes and a nice spread of snacks. Our Boundaries Class helps women establish healthy limits on how they interact with others emotionally, physically, mentally, and relationally.

SL: Karaoke and Coffee is a hit! Guests, staff, and volunteers get together to sing and snack. Mission Mindfulness has mental and physical health exercises, breathing, and stretching to reduce anxiety. Weekends include a Movie Night





happy to help our guests with questions about faith. There was a time when Bible study and chapel were mandatory, but now we've made it very intentional. Every interaction is an opportunity to share the Gospel, to encourage from a biblical perspective, to pray with our guests. All of our staff can lead Bible study or minister to a guest. Any time a guest asks staff, "Hey, can you pray with me?" we all take that moment to meet her where she is.

What ongoing help and spiritual support do we offer once our guests leave?

RL: We provide two years of follow-up for women housed through subsidized programs like Tenant-Based Rental Assistance. And we recently restarted our Come Back and Visit events where former guests come to the shelter for an afternoon get-together with current guests and staff. Those encourage everyone.

SL: I'm really excited that we've created a directory of congregations that partner with us to provide a church home for women after they move out.

How can our donors best support the Women's Shelter?

SL: We really appreciate all the financial and volunteer support we receive. So many have a heart to help women who are experiencing homelessness. The ministry here can be emotionally and spiritually intense. Our team is dedicated, but has been working long and hard—we still have several positions to fill. So when our supporters pray for our shelter guests, I hope they will also lift up our staff. We are grateful for the prayers!

with Christian films and a Saturday-night Game Hour with board games, bingo, Bible quizzes, and prizes. A weekly Crochet Corner class reduces stress. The Book Club meets in our updated library, where women study a Christian book donated by The 1687 Foundation. And Self-Care Saturdays are like a spa day with pampering like facials, pedicures, make-up tutorials, and reflections on spiritual self-care.

RL: There are lots of faith-forward options, too. There's Chapel, Bible study, and memory verses on Sunday. During the week, Worship in the Garden meets outside for a short morning devotional, worship, and prayer, and later in the day, the Community Bible Study goes through a book of the Bible. Then Recharge Tuesday offers an hour of uninterrupted worship music and prayer.

So the entire staff shares in the spiritual elements of shelter care?

SL: Cynetra Dunlap, our Discipleship Manager, leads many of our Bible-focused programs, but all of our staff are



About 100 homeless veterans



find care and support at The Union Mission each year. If you're a current or retired federal employee or military service member who'd like to help, you can give through the annual Combined Federal Campaign. Overseen by the Office of Personnel Management, the CFC offers an easy way to donate to the Mission and make a real difference for those in need in our community.

- 1 Go to cfcvab.givecfc.org.
- 2 Under Charity Search, choose Union Mission Ministries or write in **CFC #61126**.
- 3 Make your annual pledge.
- 4 Change the world with your generous community support.



In May we started using Virtuous as our customer relations management system, and VOMO for volunteer registration. The transition has gone well so far, but we do want to assure that all of our supporters also have a good experience.

For donation issues, email us at giving@ummnorva.org.

For VOMO questions, email us at volunteer@ummnorva.org.

Immediate Impact! Eternal Rewards!

Find work with meaning beyond the mundane here at The Union Mission. We're hiring for shelter, leadership, and ministry support staff positions! View all our current openings or apply for a position online at unionmissionministries.org/job-opportunities.



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Thank you
for Your
Generosity!



REV. JOHN W. GRAY, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“... But what about the women?” Some of you are wondering. We know that our most recent newsletter stories have focused on the help and hope we’ve been offering to the guests in our Bashford Men’s Shelter. Though we have four times more male than female guests, our Women’s Shelter staff has been every bit as active in getting homeless neighbors back on their feet and moving toward a better life.

So, this issue is all about our wonderful Women’s Shelter and the resources, assistance, and Christlike care that our talented, dedicated staff provide for our female guests.

As fall arrives, we will welcome new women and men who will come to us feeling lost and lonely, hungry and helpless. Most of them will have nowhere else to turn. They will need our assistance to regain their self-worth, faith in God, and independence.

And we will offer them so much more! Hope can rise again with their first meal here at The Union Mission. It takes so little to share the love of the Lord with them through a hearty, comforting meal served with compassion. A meal costs just \$2.94—so every gift can make a real difference. And since every day we serve more than 200 neighbors in need, both women and men, I hope you’ll open your heart (and wallet) to give generously!

In His service,

The Union Mission ENDOWMENT

The Union Mission now offers a new way to help us fund our ministry and fulfill our purpose not just today, but for decades to come.

Our new endowment fund is managed by the highly respected Hampton Roads Community Foundation. As part of a pool of regional nonprofit assets totaling more than \$300 million, Spider Management can leverage high-yield opportunities available only to top-tier investors. Since the bulk of the assets remain invested for maximum long-term return, your gift will provide more income to the Mission than your original investment: a lasting legacy.

To learn more, email us at:

legacygiving@ummnorva.org

Rev. Gray, I want to help The Union Mission provide help and 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 _____

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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.

09-2023

THE 90,000-HOUR INVESTMENT

THE LASTING IMPACT OF YOUR RETIREMENT ASSETS

The average person spends about 90,000 hours at work and changes jobs about 12 times during their lifetime.

As you reflect on your working life, how did you invest your talent and time? Behind a desk? On an assembly line? Did you hold many different jobs, or stay with one company for the long haul? Either way, you probably met interesting people, took on unique challenges, and had co-workers who became close friends. You probably have great stories of first-day nerves, challenging bosses, and interesting watercooler chats. No matter what jobs you held, your retirement benefits can be turned into a blessing for the ministries you care about, both during and after your lifetime. Some ideas include:

1 BENEFICIARY DESIGNATION.
Simply adding The Union Mission as a beneficiary of your Individual Retirement Account, 401(k), 403(b), or life insurance policy can have a significant impact on the work we do and the people we serve.

2 QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTION.
A QCD, a tax-free distribution from your IRA to a charity, enables you to make a difference in lives now. What a gift it is to see your blessing in action!

3 CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY.
A CGA allows you to use your assets to give to a charity while you also receive income during your retirement years.

Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Whether you worked 90,000 hours or 900, the good work you did then can continue in the good work of the ministries close to your heart.

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

To create a will that reflects your values and blesses others, visit www.unionmission.christianwill.org or email us at legacygiving@ummnorva.org. For information or to donate stocks,, contact Helen Sommer at 757-627-8686, x 504.

Comments / Change of Address:

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THE UNION MISSION MINISTRIES

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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. 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.