

*The*  
**UNION  
MISSION**

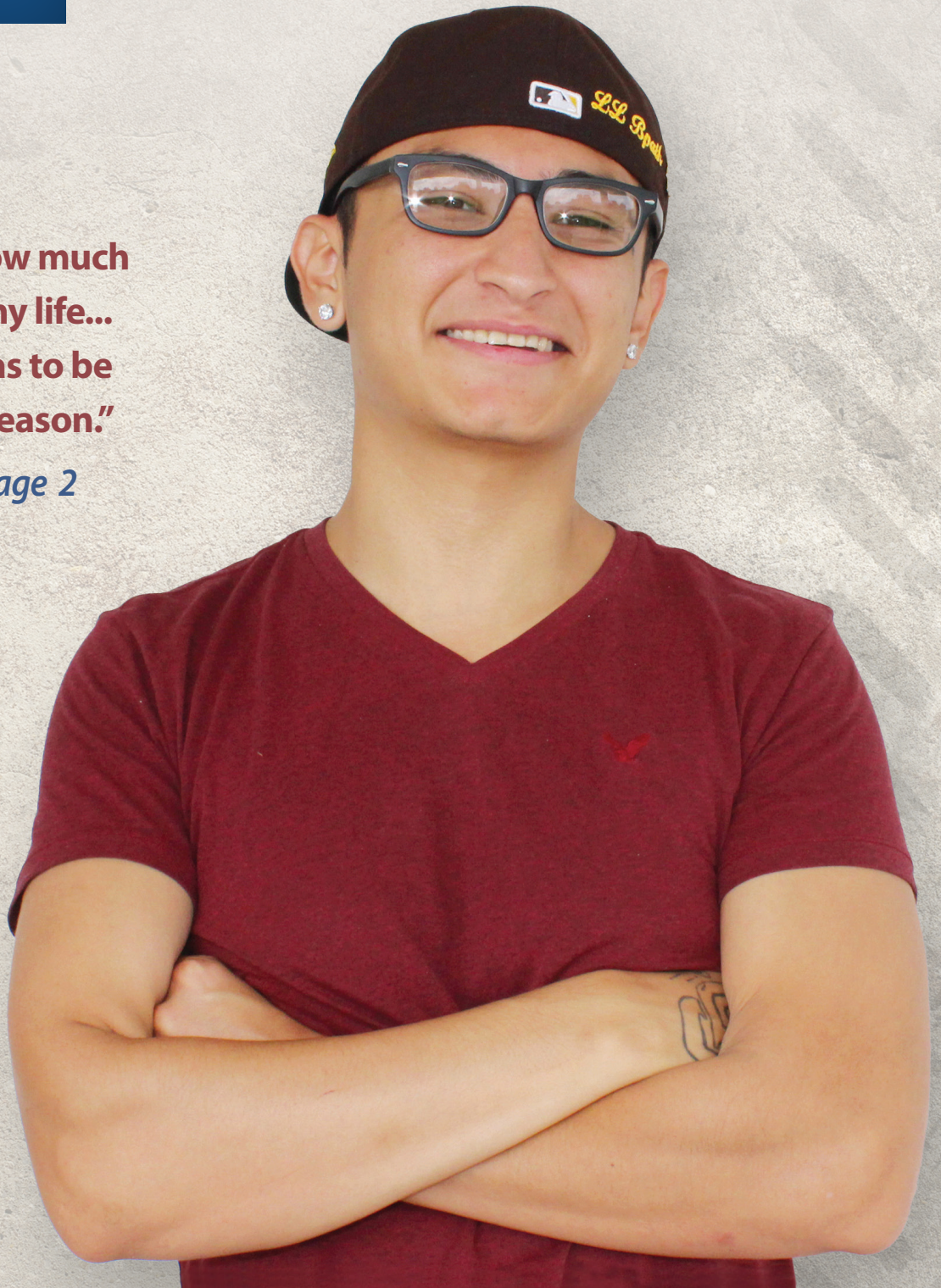
# MISSION NETWORK

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

MAY 2024

**"No matter how much  
happens in my life...  
I'm here. It has to be  
for a bigger reason."**

*Details on page 2*



**INSIDE:** Our David Development Program for Young Men | Peace Along the Path to Purpose  
Giving While Living | Change a Child's Life at Camp Hope Haven | We're Hiring!



When police arrived to arrest him, though he was innocent, Matthew admitted to the charges in a desperate attempt to get clean. “I’m hooked and I need help,” he reasoned. “If I do go to jail, I’ll only do [a couple] years and I’ll be sober and in better shape when I get out.”

But while locked up, Matthew found he was facing a sentence of 43 years for seven felonies including gun charges. He also discovered that his fiancée had cheated on him and that his mother, his hero, had been diagnosed with cancer on top of her multiple sclerosis. Matthew spent a lot of time in solitary confinement for acting out. “I was losing my mind!”

“I never thought I’d beat that case! I thought I would be put away for a long time, or even die in there!” But eventually he was offered a decent plea deal, which he accepted.

Most important, a few months after living at the Mission, “I gave my life to God again!” Matthew was baptized again and shared his testimony of grace and redemption at a Christian youth event at the beachfront. “I found my faith. I found my hope again!”

Plus, he found his father, with his mother’s help. For nearly a year they have been building a healthy, strong relationship, and his dad is teaching Matthew about his Hispanic heritage.

Now more than two years clean and sober, Matthew has found a career-path shipyard job, has moved into his own apartment, and has plugged into a local church. He’s also staying in touch with many of his Mission friends who encourage each other. In his program aftercare check-ins, he’s said how grateful he is for his stay in our shelter. “The Mission is the biggest

## Reconnecting *“I found my faith. I found my hope again!”*

### the Pieces to *Peace*

For most of Matthew’s 26 years, he’s been looking for the missing pieces of his life.

His twin sister was delivered stillborn a few weeks before he was discovered in his mother’s womb. He has often wondered why *he* survived, but “I’m here. And it has to be for a bigger reason.”

Matthew grew up fatherless, but his loving mother determined to do the best she could for her five kids. Life in their part of San Diego was rough and money was tight.

In high school Matthew’s life took a dark turn: to drugs. “I was trying to fill a void,” he says. And after he dropped out, “I became addicted to all different types of drugs,” especially opiates.

In time, Matthew and his then-fiancée moved to Virginia to build a new life together, but before long, their addictions found them again. “I started doing drugs again—massively—and I got really messed up for a long time.”

Life got even more messed up when his drug use led to a mix-up in an armed robbery. He had no part in the crime and didn’t fit any description of the suspects, but one night while high, he was jumped on the streets, beaten, and told to take the fall. And “coming from where I come from, you don’t talk to cops.”

Once Matthew was released, he lived on the streets of Norfolk for a few days. “I had no wallet, no ID. I had nothing to my name but a big bag of all my paperwork and my jail clothes.” His kind-hearted probation officer referred him to The Union Mission. When he first arrived on campus, intake hours were past, but the next morning he showed up at 5 a.m. “If anybody’s going to get into that place today, it’s going to be me!”

Entering our David Development Program, Matthew met with Lamont Harris, who quickly earned his trust. “I have authority issues...but with Mr. Harris, I knew that all he wanted was for me to do better.”

“He doesn’t have to answer his phone in the middle of the night, or deal with my anger outbursts and problems—but he does.”

Here at the Mission, the disordered pieces of Matthew’s life started to move into place. He secured new ID documents and was approved for Medicaid, his first insurance ever. Our Wellness Team got him new eyeglasses. Sentara’s on-site clinic gave Matthew a full physical and mental health evaluation, as well as help adjusting his medications. The Mission connected him to a counselor for his depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

And though Harris had told him to focus on his recovery, not job searching, it wasn’t long before Matthew was working with his new best friend David at a good-paying position surveying the public on community issues. The Mission’s savings plan helped Matthew learn the benefits of disciplined money management.

thing I’m thankful for! They didn’t have to do this for me, for any of us. There is no place like this place in the world—to go into a homeless shelter at the worst point in your life, and all these people want to help you get on your feet and succeed! I know I’m going to be all right!”

Thanks to you, Matthew found his missing pieces—and his peace—here at The Union Mission.



## Our David Development Program

*Lamont Harris directs our David Development Program designed to help our youngest Bashford Men's Shelter guests overcome homelessness. Learn how our program trains them to live productive, meaningful lives.*

### **So, Lamont, give us an overview of the program.**

It's a pathway of resources for all our young male shelter guests, ages 18 to 31. Since it's the first time for most of them to be homeless, we want it to be the last. We want them to overcome whatever brought them to a shelter.

### **What are the most common reasons you see?**

Frustrated families, broken relationships, those are pretty common, especially if the young man is not doing what he knows he should do—working, school, contributing financially. Most of the guys here learn quickly that home isn't the only place with rules they don't like.

But we're seeing more and more guests coming to us with greater difficulties than "adulting"—and younger, like 18 to 23. Some have just aged out of foster care. A fair number are released from jail or prison. A few come straight from the hospital. Some have addictions, not many, thank God. And of the 15% or so who are veterans, most have left the military with "other than honorable" discharges.

So many of our Davids are dealing with the fallout of serious traumas and ongoing mental health issues. They've been through some stuff. It's no surprise that they are angry, anxious, or depressed. Often their conditions aren't even diagnosed or treated. Thankfully, we have a reputation as a place where they can get real help.

### **How do you start to give them that "real help"?**

We meet them right where they are to help them get to where they need to be. Once

you let them know what's expected of them, you can show them where they might have gone wrong. Or when wrong has been done to them, these guys feel like victims of circumstances. I hear a lot of "I didn't choose to be here!" I encourage them: "I understand what happened to you, but you can do this! And we are here for you now."

### **What part does the Christian faith play?**

Developing a relationship with the Lord and His Word, knowing that God created them with a purpose—that is the heart of our program. Many of these young men describe themselves as "very spiritual" and are looking to learn more about God or the Christian faith. They ask questions. They go to the chapels and Bible studies. They are open to the truth of God's love and good plan for their lives.

### **And what other services help them succeed?**

Our Wellness Team can get them scheduled for a full physical and mental health assessment with a physician or counselor to diagnose any illnesses or disorders. Then we can plug them into services to help there.

We work to remove the obvious barriers, like a lack of having a photo ID, birth certificate, GEDs, or benefits they may qualify for. Some have never had a real job, bank account, or apartment before. They need to learn about working and getting paid, bills and budgets, savings, and credit. Job readiness and financial literacy training are key components of the entire David pipeline, as are basic life and relationship skills.

### **Is there any personalized mentoring?**

There is, and much more attention! I share how I've lived through many of the same things they have and how I was a teen dad. I thought I was grown-up when I wasn't yet. I learned a lot of things the hard way, but I still needed some help. God prepared me first-hand with personal and professional experience that helps me get them the right resources for their age and situations.

I work with them through this entire process, and so does Eric Watson, who has joined our David Development Team. He assists them evenings and on weekends and leads our peer-to-peer meetings. Our guys know that whenever they need assistance or prayer, one of us is available, here and now in the program and also after they've moved out.

### **How long do most stay here before moving out?**

For emergency shelter, 90 days is the new baseline. It used to be 30 to 60 days, but many first-time homeless young men need a little more time to stabilize, learn, and take advantage of our great resources.

### **Do those resources include employment assistance?**

Absolutely! Every David is expected to work at least part time unless he has a health condition. Our focus is on helping them find a successful career path that will let them maintain their independence and housing in the future. Over the years we've built strong corporate partnerships with employers, and our Davids have earned a reputation for being hard-working, motivated, and reliable.

*(continued on page 4)*



David Development office is. They can drop by to see me or Eric any time we're there. We currently have five guys upstairs, and we'd love to have up to 10 since we can give them more concentrated attention.

To qualify, they must have \$1,500 in savings, and they are required to work at least part-time, even if they are in school. They still have to keep saving a portion of their earnings. They pay a \$520 monthly program fee that covers their room, board, and expenses, and we continue mentoring them and coaching them in budgeting and money management. For those who are dads, we offer parenting classes and set up child support. All these things help prepare them for living in the real world.

**And how important is the aftercare that the program includes?**

It's critical! In aftercare, we follow up with these young men for two years after they've left the Mission. I'm still their case manager. All the 22 guys we have in aftercare have my cell number. They know we care and will be there for them. We encourage them to keep working, keep addressing the things that troubled them, keep seeking God, keep being a responsible adult. And so many of their lives are heading in a good direction!

**How do you hope to strengthen the David Development Program?**

I'm grateful we have added an assistant and a transitional program element, but I still have greater plans that will take more financial support: dedicated mental health resources, an Aftercare Emergency Fund, some sponsorships for David Development outings.

I'd love to talk with anyone who would like to help us fund any of these areas. Changing a young man's life *now* means changing generations and our community for the future!

Many of them earn a living wage to start, in industries ranging from manufacturing to computers, human resources to security, hospitality to the military.

**How about education?**

Most of our young men are high school graduates, but if not, we can help them earn their GED. We work with just about every college in the area, but many of the guys are choosing to build careers in trade industries. One young man just got his welding certification and is working two great-paying jobs!

**And now you've added a David Development Program Transitional element?**

We saw a need we had to meet! A lot of young men were needing to come back to emergency shelter. Though they had access to our resources when they were here, they did not have enough time to learn how to succeed. So we expanded the program for those who need to be here longer to finish school, to clear probation or legal hurdles, to qualify for disability or VA benefits, to heal, or just to save up.

These young men move into single rooms on the third floor, where our



**My Donation Hasn't Cleared...**

Last month a postal service truck caught fire, destroying all contents. If you mailed a mid-April donation that has yet to clear, please contact us at

**ext. 506 or [giving@ummnorva.org](mailto:giving@ummnorva.org)**

**A Paycheck and A Purpose**

Are you looking for meaningful employment this year?

The Union Mission Ministries is hiring for several positions. Take a look at our current job openings online at

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



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

For the full interview with Lamont Harris, see our David Development Program webpage at **[unionmissionministries.org/ways-to-give/changing-futures](http://unionmissionministries.org/ways-to-give/changing-futures)**.

You can help homeless young men fulfill the promise of their potential at **[unionmissionministries.org/purpose](http://unionmissionministries.org/purpose)**



# Thank you for Your Generosity!



REV. JOHN W. GRAY, JR.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**H**ave you ever wished you could just start over? That things had been different? That you hadn't messed up, or that no one else had messed up your life? That you knew how to make your future better than your past?

Everyone has those moments—but a lot of young homeless men have felt that way for as long as they can remember. Many of them arrive at The Union Mission feeling alone, worthless, like they'll never amount to anything.

But our David Development Program teaches them the truth about who they are. Here in our Bashford Men's Shelter, our young guests, most in their 20s, find both help and hope. They discover that God created them for a purpose. They stabilize from the stigmas and survival to set their futures straight. They learn to stand in God's strength, then move forward with courage and faith to slay the giants that have kept them from a bright, fulfilling tomorrow.

In addition, next month when Camp Hope Haven begins, we'll have the opportunity to share the love of God and the Gospel with hundreds of excited boys, girls, and teens. For many of these young people, our summer camp will be their first introduction to the good news about Jesus, and we pray that all of them will come to know Him as their Savior and Lord.

Our ministry is possible only because of your partnership. May the Lord bless you for your heart to help, your faithful prayers, and 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, 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 to  
transform  
a life!



SCAN TO GIVE ONLINE  
[unionmissionministries.org/Camp](http://unionmissionministries.org/Camp)

*Rev. Gray, I want to help young people find their purpose through The Union Mission!*

**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.

# 3 WAYS

to give



like a

# BILLIONAIRE

If you had a billion dollars, what would you do with the money? Buy a bigger house? Take some amazing trips? Provide for all your family's needs?

## But what if you gave it all away?

That's what Charles Feeney did. With his "Giving While Living" philosophy, the businessman-philanthropist committed to donating nearly all of his fortune to charitable causes. By the time he died last October at age 89, he had given away \$8 billion! Even if you'll never be a billionaire, it is possible to give like one. Anyone can follow Feeney's example and give while they live—making a difference now and for eternity.

### Pursue generosity now.

It's natural to be concerned about having enough time, talent, or treasure. But you serve an infinitely generous God Who promises to meet every one of your needs. You have something to share in this life. Now's the time to be generous with what you've been given to meet the needs around you.

### Plan to give later.

Giving now need not mean that you won't have anything to give later. There are many ways to extend your generosity long after your lifetime. You might include a gift in your will, set up a Donor Advised Fund, or donate appreciated assets like stocks or mutual funds to help The Union Mission Ministries.

### Share your why.

Chuck Feeney usually donated anonymously, but as he aged, he became more public about his giving to set an example for others. You can do that, too. Sharing your commitment to generosity with your family can spark the same passion for giving in your children, grandchildren, and the generations after you.

Whether you're rich in time, talent, or treasure, you can give while you live and make a powerful statement about what matters most to you.

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

To include us in your estate planning or change lives with a legacy gift, contact Helen Sommer at 757-627-8686, x 504.

To create a will that reflects your values and blesses others, visit [www.unionmission.christianwill.org](http://www.unionmission.christianwill.org) or email us at [legacygiving@ummnorva.org](mailto:legacygiving@ummnorva.org).

### Comments / Change of Address:

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PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

No person is denied service based on race, creed, gender, national origin, or disability unless it is beyond the scope of our care.

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 those experiencing homelessness 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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