

Homeless young man's life transformed



It is common to hear the phrase, “it is better to give than receive.”

For **Josh Wargo**, a recently hired residential staff member of Volunteers of America's **Manna House** in Wilkes-

Barre, this often spoken, well-intended statement, has a significantly new meaning.

Josh was first introduced to Volunteers of America in 2007. At that time, however, he wasn't really looking for a job. He was 19 years old and was looking for a safe place to stay . . . Josh was homeless.

The early part of Josh's story is all too familiar. At a young age, he started experimenting with drugs. Before long, experimentation led to a habit he could not break. Within time, his relationship with his family was strained, he was in trouble with the law and he had nowhere to go.

“I can't say enough about the Manna House. My life changed because people cared.”

The Manna House program is a transitional housing facility for homeless young adults. Josh was one of the

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New program to mentor children of incarcerated parents

Johnny's father is in prison. Research indicates there is a 65% chance Johnny will wind up in prison – unless something changes in his life. Thankfully, mentoring children of incarcerated parents can make a significant difference.

Volunteers of America is launching a program in Allegheny County to mentor children of prisoners called “**Mentoring Children of Promise.**” The program will match 300 children with adult mentors.

“We are pleased to join other agencies serving the children and youth who need caring mentors and positive role models,” said **Pat Serey**, chief development and marketing officer and vice president of the Southwestern Region. “These are some of the most vulnerable kids in our community, and we can truly make a difference in their lives now, and in the future.”

Volunteers of America received funding for this program through the **Department of Health and Human Services** under the **Administration on Children, Youth and Families' Mentoring Children of Prisoner's Grant Program** and will be working with the **Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania, Amachi Pittsburgh**, and other service providers to meet this significant need.



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Throw your heart over the fence . . .

. . . and the rest will follow. That quote from Dr. Norman Vincent Peale reminds us what each of us must do to fully commit to something.

You probably learned that concept when you were young. You finished school, prepared to begin your work and career. You went to work and earned a living.

Many of those we serve want a productive life as much as you and me. They simply were not taught what most of us consider basic life skills.

Jesus describes the Prodigal Son as "coming to his senses" and realizing he needed to change. In a manner of speaking, he came to a fence.

When you read about Josh you will see that he was not headed in the right direction—to the point he started using drugs and became homeless. But, Josh came to realize he was not in a good situation. He began to believe there was a better life for him.

He came to a fence in his life—a fence that kept him away from what he could be. He wanted a better life for himself and he understood he had to make a big commitment.

So, he threw his heart over the fence, and sure enough, during the next 18 months, the rest of him indeed followed.

Today, Josh is a changed person. And, he is changed to the point that he is now the one helping others cross that fence.

Similarly, children who have parents in prison have a high risk of eventually going to prison themselves, because in many cases they have not had the opportunity to learn productive basic life skills.

We are beginning a new program of mentoring children of prisoners. The goal is to help these young people see that they don't have to wind up in prison; that they can learn new basic life skills that will give them much more productive lives.

We serve so many people like Josh every day, people who are working diligently for that new life. Some are just now standing at the fence. Some have thrown their hearts over the fence and are working diligently to succeed.

As you are enjoying the blessings of this holiday season, please remember Volunteers of America in your giving. You can be a part of helping those standing at the fence. Please join me with your gift.



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Your support helps keep working families working

Thanks to donors like you, Volunteers of America Children's Center offers working families "wonderful," yet affordable childcare



For working families struggling to make ends meet, the Volunteers of America Children's Center is indispensable. Just ask **Janelle Brantley**, mother of two young boys who attend the Center.

Mrs. Brantley voiced her admiration at a recent celebratory event to honor the Children's Center employees. Nineteen of the 33 staff have five or more years of service—that's a total of 340 years!

"When I was choosing a child care facility for my two sons, I knew where I wanted them to be," she explained to the guests. "The day I enrolled them, I was so excited to see the same teachers I loved when I attended the Center as a child!"

"There are not too many child care facilities that can boast of generations of family members in its classrooms," she continued. "The hardest thing for a mother is to entrust someone with her children while she's working. Knowing my children were with excellent staff allowed me to work and continue my education with no worries."

Brantley added, "I'll never forget all that they have done for me and my children."

You can make a life-changing difference in the life of a child. To put your gift to work today, please donate online at www.voa.pa.org or return your gift in the envelope enclosed in this publication.

Your generous support will help provide strong early childhood education so that young families can keep working!

You can contribute with confidence

You can feel good about the gifts you make to Volunteers of America because **88 cents of every dollar** spent goes to support vital community services for people in need. We take our stewardship — and your generosity — seriously. And we're not the only ones paying attention to our care and commitment.



Charity Navigator — America's premier independent charity evaluator working to guide intelligent giving, has given Volunteers of America a ranking indicating we exceed or meet industry standards and perform as well as or better than most charities in our cause.



The Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance, which strives to help donors give wisely, has evaluated Volunteers of America and determines it meets or exceeds the standards of charitable accountability.

The Volunteers of America Children's Center is accredited by the **National Association for the Education of Young Children**, and has received the **Keystone Stars** highest rating of Four Stars!



MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN A CREATIVE WAY

No community can truly be vibrant if the disadvantaged are left behind. You can help.

Consider giving gifts of appreciated stock, real estate, or other assets. You may get a tax deduction while helping those in need.

Please contact:
Jim Ingolio
at Volunteers of America
(717) 236-1440 or
jingolio@voapa.org
for information on the tax advantages of a planned gift.

Consult your tax advisor regarding these types of gifts and estate planning.



give

Special thanks to scholarship donors!

A great way for businesses to direct its tax dollars



The Volunteers of America **Children's Center** is grateful for the contributions from the following Pennsylvania businesses in 2009/2010. The support provides tuition assistance for pre-kindergarten children whose families are in financial need, allowing them to enroll at the Children's Center.

American Bank
Capital BlueCross
First Niagara Bank
Keystone National Bank & Trust
PNC Capital Markets, LLC
Semper Trust Company
Susquehanna Bank

If the state government said your company can pay its business tax directly to the Volunteers of America Children's Center and still get full credit—would you be interested? The Pre-Kindergarten Tax Credit Program does exactly this!

Through Pennsylvania's special pre-kindergarten tax credit program, a Pennsylvania corporation can direct its state corporate income tax as a contribution to the Children's Center.

For more information, contact **Jim Ingolio**, director of mission advancement, at 717-236-1440 or e-mail jingolio@voapa.org.



Toddlers at the Volunteers of America **Children's Center** love their new, colorful playground. There's no limit to the fun the children can have. Designed to promote physical activity, the children are learning, problem solving, exploring their physical capabilities, developing motor skills and burning loads of energy! The system provides a full range of activities such as swinging, spinning, sliding or overhead climbing.

Funding for the playground was provided by **The Harry C. Trexler Trust, Just Born, Inc., Jerome & Lorraine Aresty Charitable Foundation, and Superior Play Systems.**



Hundreds of deserving children in Central Pennsylvania are having a brighter holiday season, thanks to the generosity of individuals, businesses, churches and local groups. For more than 100 years, Volunteers of America has collected new toys to benefit children who are disadvantaged.

The **Toy Drive** provides hope to children who desperately need it. "It's amazing how much joy a single toy can bring to a child's life," said **Diana Faust**, events coordinator for Volunteers of America.

A large part of the annual Toy Drive is Volunteers of America's toy party. Volunteers help organize the event for children to enjoy an afternoon of food, entertainment, activities and toys.

For this family living on the edge, your generosity has been a blessing

Dear Volunteers of America,

Thank you for all that you have done for my children and me. I am so very grateful for these couple of years that you have brightened up our holidays.

I know that everything we have received are donations from the community and I am so grateful that you have kept my children and me in your heart and thoughts.

You know there are times that I find myself struggling so much that I just feel like giving up. For example, last Christmas I thought to myself, “Christmas tree, what for? If I buy a Christmas tree, I won’t have any money for the gifts, and if I buy the gifts I won’t have enough money to buy a tree to put them under.”

I was just feeling so negative, and the holiday spirit was the last thing I had in me, but the Volunteers of America staff changed my way of feeling. All I really had to do was speak with one of you and my spirits were instantly lifted. You have helped us out with clothing, school supplies and then came all the wonderful holiday gifts. That really topped it, because my children were so happy and when I see my children full of joy and happiness, that is all I need.

Thank you, thank you— you have saved me in many ways and you have touched my life in many more. You have helped teach me to stay strong and have faith, and

“Friends are angels who lift us to our feet when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly.”



that there are others who will reach beyond themselves to help others. My children and I are extremely grateful. I hope that we will be in a position one day to reach out to others.

Forever thankful,
Sophia

Homeless man's life transformed...continued from pg. 1

program’s first residents. For him it was a chance to start over.

“I was feeling all alone, unsure where I would spend the night or even get my next meal. I was lost and it was a dark time in my life,” Josh explained. “I can’t say enough about the Manna House. My life changed because people cared.”

As Josh’s story unfolds, he made the most of the opportunity he had at the Manna House. After 18 months of working hard and staying focused on his goals, he was drug free, working, still taking classes and had secured permanent housing.

“The Manna House was created for individuals like Josh,” said **Mike Nice**, program supervisor. “We take young adults who are at a crossroads in their lives and help

provide some support and direction. Josh made some great choices while he was here and we are proud of him.”

Three years after Josh came to Manna House, Nice reached out to him again. This time, though, it was to offer him a job.

“Josh will earn his degree in Human Services from **Luzerne County Community College** this month,” said Nice. “His story and example will make an excellent role model for current and future residents.”

Josh’s story is far from over. As a resident, he received services. As a member of the staff, he is providing service to those who have experienced similar challenges. He is already making as difference.

Knowing Josh, he is likely to give back much more than he received.

Children in need of loving homes

Will you make a difference in the life of a child?



As a foster parent, you have the ability to change a life.

The Volunteers of America **Foster Care** program provides homes for children and adolescents who are

temporarily not able to live with their families. The program's goal is to reunite families when possible and to provide the best care possible to infants, children and adolescents while they are in placement.

Currently, the Foster Care program serves approximately 90 children in Philadelphia. The children range in age from birth to 18 and may remain in foster homes from several months to several years. The program is comprised of traditional foster care and kinship care which places the child with a relative.

According to **Donna Windham Wright**, foster parent recruiter for Volunteers of America, "Many people find that being a foster parent is a meaningful way to have a lasting impact for a child while finding a new, personal fulfillment in their own life.

"We provide excellent training, support, around-the-clock emergency access, reimbursement, referral services and much more," she added.

If you live in Southeastern Pennsylvania and have love in your heart for a deserving child, call Donna at 215-930-0129 for more information.

Volunteers of America takes stand against poverty

Poverty rates are on the rise and many of Volunteers of America's programs are seeing an increase in the number of individuals and families being served.

To advance understanding and awareness of the complex issues of poverty, the agency hosted a community wide presentation to begin to look at new ways to combat this growing problem. **Dr. Judith Bell**, of Volunteers of America Northern Louisiana, a certified trainer of Dr. Ruby Payne's nationally regarded work on "Understanding Poverty," was the keynote presenter.

Nearly 150 community leaders, nonprofit providers and government agencies attended the presentation which was sponsored by **Citizens Bank** and supported by **King's College** and the **Wilkes-Barre Downtown Ministerium**.

"Judith presented a number of aha moments," said **Bill Jones**, VP/COO of Volunteers of America of Pennsylvania. "To begin to look at those who are impoverished as "survivors" as opposed to "needy", immediately forces you to see the issues through a different lens. It was very powerful."

Jones said "connecting" with those who live within poverty's grasp through relationship building and developing trust are essential to promoting change and helping individuals and families move out of poverty.

In this challenging economic climate marked by increased need and fewer available resources, Volunteers of America remains committed to thinking differently and providing leadership as we continue to meet society's most pressing needs.



Operation Backpack

Norfolk Southern-Harrisburg Division employees contributed back-to-school supplies and funds to the Volunteers of America **Operation Backpack** campaign. Shown with some of the donations are, from left, **Archie W. Glace**, senior general foreman, Enola diesel shop; **Dennis Murton**, Harrisburg division training officer; Volunteers of America **Diana Faust**, events coordinator, and **Alan Garner**, president of the organization.

Volunteers of America's Operation Backpack campaign distributes backpacks and school supplies to benefit children who are from low-income families, are in foster care or are living in shelters.

Your gifts support many services in Pennsylvania

Children, Youth & Families Programs

The Children's Center - Allentown 610-432-8352
Affordable childcare for children 13 months to 10 years old. Playgrounds for toddlers, pre-school and school-age children.

Foster Care - Philadelphia 215-930-0129
Foster and kinship homes provided for abused and neglected children from birth to age 18.

All of Us Care - Pittsburgh 412-782-5344
Program to prevent crime and substance abuse among children and youth ages 5-19.

Caring Alternatives - Wilkes-Barre 570-825-5261
Crisis pregnancy counseling, education and support services provided as an alternative to abortion.

Hartman Home - Wilkes-Barre 570-825-5261
Serves females ages 14-17 who have been severely traumatized through abuse, neglect and/or exploitation.

Supporting Stronger Families - Luzerne Co. 570-825-5261
Assists families with children, ages birth to five, that may be at risk of out of home placements.

Community Enhancement Services

Books-to-You! - Statewide
In partnership with Scholastic, Inc., children's books are distributed free each year to underprivileged children.

Operation Backpack - Statewide 717-236-1440
New backpacks and school supplies are provided to underserved children to give them a jump start for a successful school year.

Emergency Services - Central PA 717-766-2999
Based on referrals from churches and social service agencies, program provides free clothing and furniture to individuals and families in emergency situations.

Toy Drive - Central PA 717-236-1440
Toys donated from businesses, organizations and individuals are given to underserved children at Christmas.

PA Workwear Program - Luzerne Co. 570-829-5100
Work appropriate clothing is provided to help individuals transitioning back into the workforce.

Action Team - Pittsburgh 412-782-5344
Volunteers of America teams up with Major League Baseball Players Trust to promote youth volunteering. Join an Action Team and get in on the action!

Thrift Stores

Clothing, furniture, appliances and household goods at traditional thrift store prices. Community encouraged to shop, donate items and volunteer. Proceeds provide financial support for our programs.

Harrisburg - 2550 Paxton St. 717-558-0400

Mechanicsburg - 675 Silver Spring Rd. 717-766-2999

Wilkes-Barre - 400 S. Main St. 570-829-5100

Elderly and Disabilities Programs

Community Residential Rehabilitation Services - Luzerne Co. 570-825-5261
Housing and rehabilitation services for individuals dually diagnosed with mental illness and intellectual disabilities.

Working Order - Pittsburgh 412-782-5344
Supports entrepreneurship for individuals with disabilities and others seeking to be self-employed.

Dial-A-Driver - Wilkes-Barre and Wyoming Valley 570-825-5261
Specially equipped shuttle vans provide transportation for elderly citizens and people with disabilities to get to medical appointments, grocery shopping and other quality-of-life destinations.

Affordable Housing

For individuals and families living on limited incomes.

Family Apartments
Allentown - Family Apartments 610-432-8352
Apartments for low-income families.

Wilkes-Barre - Garrahan Street Residence 570-829-6542
For young adults ages 18-25 with limited incomes and who may be at risk for homelessness.

Elderly Apartments
For the elderly living on fixed incomes.

Harrisburg - Laurel Towers 717-233-1340
Wilkes-Barre - The Palmer House 570-829-6542

Special Needs Apartments
Independent living for adults with mental health issues designed to foster independence.

Harrisburg - Creekside Village 717-695-2826
Harrisburg - New Song Village 717-561-7270
Harrisburg - Third Street Apartments 717-236-1440
Wilkes-Barre - PlainsView Apartments 570-829-6542

Master Leasing Program - Luzerne Co. 570-825-5261
Offers rental housing assistance program for individuals referred by Luzerne County Mental Health Court.

Homeless Services

Manna House Apartments - Wilkes-Barre 570-825-0542
Transitional living program that serves homeless adults ages 18-25 to achieve independence and housing permanency.

Mental Health Services

Supportive Living Program - Harrisburg 717-236-1440
Serving adults with severe mental illness in Dauphin County to promote recovery and improve or maintain independent living skills.

