Inspire

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA MID-STATES, INC.
Summer/Fall 2019

Changing Lives

41 Programs and nearly 24,000 people served

VOAMID.ORG
@VOAMID
Dear Friend,

I am honored to promote our mission and work wherever I go. As I do, people frequently ask me about our name.

Are you a volunteer organization, they ask?

Well, we are an organization of volunteers – using the definition of volunteers from the year we were founded. In 1896 -- when William McKinley was about to defeat William Jennings Bryan to become President -- "volunteer" meant a person who dedicated their life to serving others. The common understanding of volunteer was that you gave of yourself to help people in need.

That's what Volunteers of America did in 1896, and that's what we do today. We still give of ourselves to help others. But today we give of ourselves with a team of almost 600 paid and trained professionals. We provide critical services through more than 40 distinct programs. Last year, we served nearly 24,000 individuals.

Every day, we meet essential needs. This year, we celebrated the first anniversary of our newest Freedom House in Louisville for pregnant and parenting moms overcoming substance use disorder — but we're not stopping there. We're expanding to Clay County in Southeastern Kentucky, bringing vital services to a beautiful and underserved part of our state. We are in advanced discussions with other communities to serve them as well.

We're also growing our Supported Employment program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, so the amazing individuals we support can reach their full potential working with wonderful employers like Mark's Feed Store and the Louisville Slugger Museum and Factory.

And every day, we are looking for innovative ways to serve veterans, provide affordable housing and make it easier to check your HIV status.

For us, it's all about showing compassion and delivering results. That was true when we put "Volunteers" in our name 123 years ago, and I promise you it will never change: we will always dedicate ourselves to serving others.

Jennifer Hancock
President and CEO

@voamid
HOPE STARTS HERE

@voamid is for stories of hope.
Stories of veterans who have overcome tough times.
Of moms who defeat addiction and start healthy new lives for themselves and their babies.
Of families who find a place to stay together while they find permanent housing.
We tell stories of lives changed.
When you visit @voamid on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, you are visiting a place of hope and compassion, of healing and opportunity.
Please like us, visit us and support us at: @voamid
www.voamid.org

Volunteers of America wants to connect with you.

@voamid  www.voamid.org
FACEBOOK  INSTAGRAM  TWITTER
EVERY KID DESERVES A GREAT FUTURE
YOU CAN HELP

The children we serve are focused on having a great school year, but they count on us for the resources they need. Many of the children we serve have recently been homeless, or lived in a family vehicle or another unsafe and unstable situation. With your help, we ensure they have what they need on the first day of school and throughout the year.

Donation drop-off locations can be found at voamid.org/BTS

Contact Gema Moreno at GemaM@voamid.org or 502-636-4664 to help or learn more.

The students you are helping are receiving services to stabilize their families. Many of these strong and courageous young people are recovering from homelessness or the impact of parents struggling with addiction. Last year, with your support, we helped almost 150 young people have a great start to their school year and begin the journey to living in affordable and stable housing with their families.

Gift cards are the perfect way to support our children.

Will you help us?

- Give a gift card that will be used to purchase supplies for specific classroom needs and school clothes.
- Donate new clothes and underwear.
- Volunteer to help with “Study Buddies,” our tutoring and mentoring program.
Our annual Volunteers of America Luncheon highlights the people we serve in Clark and Floyd counties in Indiana. We heard from New Albany resident Mark Hublar. We serve Mark in our Supported Employment program for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. He was joined by his dad Al as featured speakers. “It’s all about ROI – respect, opportunity and inclusion,” Al said, urging support for our work.

With the generous support of the Commonwealth of Kentucky and partners like Aetna and WellCare, we are about to break ground on a new VOA Recovery Freedom House for pregnant and parenting women in Clay County. We continue to be on the front lines of battling our opioid and addiction crisis.

Volunteers of America provides low-income seniors with welcoming, high-quality housing. We’re so proud of our team at Candleridge Plaza and Maud Booth Gardens in Tennessee for receiving a national Housing Excellence Certificate, and a special shout-out to Lisa Neal, VOA Service Coordinator, for receiving a Visionary Award for her great work.

Kentuckiana Pride 2019 was a huge success and Volunteers of America was thrilled to participate and promote our HIV testing and education services. Volunteers of America hosted 65 colleagues and clients in the parade and we provided more than 50 free and confidential HIV tests.

Luncheon showcases Indiana Services

Louisville Mayor’s Week of Service comes to Volunteers of America

Every year, volunteers join us while answering Mayor Greg Fischer’s call to build a more compassionate city. At our Shelby Street campus, volunteers have helped us rebuild our playground and gazebo, painted inside and out and restored our community gardens. Thank you to our tireless volunteers and Mayor Fischer for your inspiration.

Beaded Treasures is an amazing non-profit that empowers women by building their skills and helping them to become entrepreneurs. Now, as a program of Volunteers of America, Beaded Treasures will have a full-service retail location in Louisville and expand to serve more women and families, including more of our clients.

Nashville Celebrity Golf Tournament highlights Tennessee Programs

Our dedicated Volunteers of America team in Tennessee holds an outstanding celebrity golf tournament every June that features former University of Tennessee and University of Alabama football players. This year, nearly 300 golfers supported our mission and almost 500 people attended our banquet to hear moving testimony from Lester McClain, the first African-American to play college football at the University of Tennessee.

To see more photos and read more about Volunteers of America in the news, go to voamid.org/news
LEILANI UNDERWOOD MAKES A LIFE-CHANGING – AND LIFE-SAVING CHOICE

Leilani Underwood, a Direct Support Professional at Volunteers of America’s Phoenix residential home outside Nashville, works hard to provide for the daily needs of Volunteers of America clients Tammy, Clara and Rhonda. She’s been with Volunteers of America since 2003 and has a quick answer to how she has been doing the difficult work of supporting adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities for 16 years. “I like taking care of people. That’s why I’m here and why I’ve been here so long. Tammy, Clara and Rhonda are like family to me.”

Almost a year ago, Leilani received a new opportunity to care for others. An opportunity that is both challenging and personal. Last Fourth of July weekend, paramedics rushed Leilani’s nephew, Armon, to the emergency room. Doctors told her sister-in-law that Armon’s kidneys were no longer functioning. “The doctors said he had to be put on the kidney donor list and that he had to go on dialysis. They said he was out of options,” Leilani said.

For Armon, it was one more frightening step on a long and difficult journey. Armon has struggled with kidney disease since he was six years old. “My nephew was never able to play sports or have a normal childhood. His condition just kept getting worse. Eventually he took 20 pills a day – he was so used to it he didn’t even need water to take all of those pills. That was just his life. Once he went on dialysis, he was barely able to get out of bed,” Leilani said.

The doctors were honest with Leilani’s sister-in-law, Latarsha, about Armon’s diagnosis. They said there was no solution other than finding a new kidney, and that it could take more than three years to find a compatible donor. They said it was possible he might not survive that long.

About that time, Latarsha was allowed to ask friends and family to see if they were willing to test to be a donor. While they waited, Leilani and Latarsha’s large family did everything for Armon that they could. He had always wanted to see the beach, so the family planned a trip to Destin, Florida. “We were so glad to take him to the beach. It was fun, but it was sad, too. Because all of us knew there was a chance he might not see it again,” Leilani said.

Then, tests came back and Leilani learned that at least one compatible donor had been found for Armon. It was Leilani. Soon, she was undergoing more tests to make sure she was healthy enough for the procedure. “I went in for two days of tests – MRL, cat scan, blood work. They do everything. And then the doctors and social workers make sure you know what a donation involves and that you are certain you want to do it,” Leilani said.

One of the nurses couldn’t believe Leilani was making the decision to donate her kidney to her nephew. “She said to me, ‘I’m sorry – but if it were my nephew, I would have to say no. I would only do it for my child,’” Leilani said. “She didn’t understand that I have seen him be so sick for so long. He might be my nephew, but he’s like my child to me. Everyone is worried about me, but I’m just worried about Armon. I told everyone – I’m doing it,” Leilani said.

Leilani’s recovery time is six weeks. She’s off work during that time and Leilani also has four kids of her own, ranging in age from 13 to 22. On May 30, Leilani and Armon went to the hospital for the surgery. Surgeons started with Leilani, and after about an hour and a half, began transplanting Leilani’s kidney to Armon. The entire procedure took more than four hours, and ended with Armon having a functioning and healthy kidney for the first time in almost 14 years. They performed the surgery that day because Leilani insisted that it be done as soon as possible. She wanted to make sure that Armon received her healthy, life-saving kidney by June 15th – the day Armon celebrated his 20th birthday.

It was a birthday that Armon, Leilani and Latarsha could not even have imagined just a few months ago. He’s now considering going back to school and studying computer science. He’s looking for an apartment – and hoping his mom has the chance to relax and do more now that she won’t have to care for him nearly full-time. Everyone is worried about me, but I’m just worried about Armon. I told everyone – I’m doing it,” Leilani said. “They told me my recovery would take longer, but that’s ok. In our lifetime, Armon’s been in much more pain than I have,” Leilani said.

Leilani has been thinking about her family. “Families are just so important. They are there for you, they check on you. Family makes the difference,” Leilani said.

And she has also been thinking about her Volunteers of America family. “I miss them. Before I left for surgery, I told Clara I loved her, and she said I love you too. Soon, I’ll take them to Hickory Lake to watch the ducks and feed them. That’s their favorite. I can’t wait to get back to them.”

Volunteers of America, KODA and Trust for Life partner to provide “Hope and Healing” by registering more organ donors

Volunteers of America formed a groundbreaking new partnership this year to increase organ donations in Kentucky and surrounding states. Under our innovative initiative, Volunteers of America became the first non-profit in the region to register individuals directly as organ donors.

“Our message is simple: it only takes a minute to save a life, and Volunteers of America is working with our staff, clients, graduates, friends and supporters to give the gift of life by registering as many donors as possible,” Jennifer Hancock said.

Partnersing with the Kentucky Organ Donor Affiliates and Trust for Life, an initiative of the Kentucky Association of Circuit Court Clerks, we have worked to encourage the Volunteers of America family to register as organ donors, with nearly 150 new donors registering through the campaign to date. Register to become a donor today at: www.voamid.org/hopeandhealing
Walt Pierce met Dale Moore nearly 40 years ago, when he visited a group home for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Walt was interested in volunteer opportunities, and originally wasn’t scheduled to meet with Dale but with another resident.

“As soon as I arrived, Dale latched on to me. He grabbed my hand and stayed by my side. We’ve been friends ever since,” Walt said.

Through the Adult Foster Care program administered by Volunteers of America in northern Kentucky, Walt has been more than a friend to Dale. Dale has now lived with Walt for nearly 30 years.

Because of the Volunteers of America’s program and Walt’s commitment, Dale has a safe, comfortable and welcoming home and a dedicated caregiver and companion.

Day-to-day care is essential for Dale, who has epilepsy and cerebral palsy. Walt is Dale’s primary caregiver and helps with all of Dale’s needs, from bathing to dressing to taking him for medical appointments. But Walt is even more focused on giving Dale a sense of inclusion and companionship.

“Dale is no different from so many people. He gets restless or bored easily, but he loves to do things. He loves to get out of the house and be around people. He really likes to go out to eat and go to the movies. He loves to travel and take vacations and that’s one of our favorite things to do,” Walt said.

Dale and Walt take several vacations every year and have visited one of their favorite spots, Gatlinburg, Tennessee, many times. They recently took a trip to Amish country, where Dale and Walt toured a farm in a horse and buggy.

“Dale really enjoyed that trip and being able to be around so many horses. I’m always looking for things he likes to do and have learned so much. He loves boats and boat rides and we’ve had a lot of fun at Port Clinton on Lake Erie,” Walt said.

The care Walt has provided now spans decades. When Walt went to Dale’s group home looking to volunteer, Dale was 12 years old. He will turn 53 in October. With one break when Dale needed heightened medical care, Dale has been living with Walt since 1989.

“People ask me how I do it, but the truth is it’s very rewarding. Dale is a very loving person. That comes through when you meet him and certainly when you spend time with him. He’s always smiling and wants to give you a hug,” Walt said.

The Adult Foster Care program is administered by Jessica Martinez from the Volunteers of America office in Florence, Kentucky. Volunteers of America helps to conduct extensive training for caregivers, provides administrative support and monitors the home and Dale’s care. Walt is a contracted Volunteers of America employee and works closely with Jessica and the Volunteers of America team.

“When Walt talks to me about Dale, you can hear the concern and love in his voice. I know Dale is with someone who really cares about him,” Jessica said. That level of dedication is vital in the Adult Foster Care program.

“Our Adult Foster program is unique. You are really making a lifetime commitment. To do it well takes somebody with a strong sense of wanting to serve, of wanting to provide for someone else,” Jessica said.

“We are very careful about who we choose. We want someone, like Walt, who is very driven by our mission.”

After nearly 40 years, Walt has a simple way to describe Dale: he’s family.

“My family immediately took Dale to heart. My mom accepted Dale right away and they are very close. My nieces and nephews grew up with him and soon we’re going to a big family reunion. My family is Dale’s family,” Walt said.

And after so much time together, Walt often thinks about how he and Dale have changed each other’s lives.

“I’m always thinking about where Dale would be without me. But I also think about my life and what he has meant to me. I would absolutely do it again. No question,” Walt said.
SAVING NO TO VETERANS HOMELESSNESS

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA HELPS LEAD THE WAY TO EFFECTIVELY ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS IN LEXINGTON

This April, the City of Lexington, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, announced that veterans’ homelessness has effectively been ended in Lexington, a tremendous and overdue milestone.

Volunteers of America has been honored to play a leading role in the effort to provide housing to veterans. Our Supported Services for Veterans Families Program provides comprehensive services to veterans and focuses on identifying housing for any veteran who is homeless or at risk of homelessness.

“Our view is clear and will not change – no veteran should ever be homeless. We are so pleased to work to find housing for veterans every day in the Lexington area and to be part of this historic achievement of effectively ending veteran homelessness,” said Jennifer McMinn, Vice President Veteran Services and HUD Housing.

The designation means that Lexington now has resources and infrastructure to make veteran homelessness “rare, brief and non-reoccurring.” Volunteers of America works with veterans and veteran families to identify housing needs early and to connect veterans with affordable housing options. Our comprehensive case management also involves helping veterans connect with VA benefits and employment, education and health care needs.

A vital component of the designation of ending homelessness for Lexington was better coordination of outreach and services among providers in the Lexington area. Volunteers of America helped lead efforts to analyze available services and existing needs and to make the overall provision of services to veterans more efficient and effective.

“We learned that we have the resources to address veterans’ homelessness if we all work together. Volunteers of America works very hard to make sure every veteran is connected to the service and care they need,” said Anne Vandervort, Director of Regional Services-East, of Volunteers of America.

Volunteers of America works very hard to make sure every veteran is connected to the service and care they need.

Anne Vandervort

For much of his life, Tom Shafer had one way of dealing with problems.

“Whenever I had conflict I packed up everything I had and left. I always thought that geographical changes would change me and my life would get better. So, when things got bad, I’d move,” Tom said.

Tom moved around a lot, even living in an RV parked in a friend’s driveway.

Eventually, Tom found the U.S. Army, and responded to the discipline and structure, but after leaving the military he still struggled with drug and alcohol issues. Tom kept trying to get control of his life – going to addiction recovery treatment 13 times – but he could not find a way to stay sober.

“I just felt like I needed to burst out of this bubble I had been in,” Tom said.

Tom received housing and employment help through Volunteers of America’s Supportive Services for Veterans Families program. In partnership with the Veterans Administration, the program provides comprehensive support for veterans who need housing, employment, education or health care assistance. Last year, Volunteers of America helped nearly 2,000 veterans and their families throughout our four-state region.

“If Volunteers of America were not part of my story, my life would not look like it does today,” Tom said.

Today, Tom is thriving. He has been sober for nearly two years, is employed full-time and holds a 4.0 grade point average at Asbury University.

“I’m thinking about pursuing ministry leadership or possibly getting my master’s in social work,” Tom said.

He is also living in the home Volunteers of America helped him find, and is excited to be able to host his parents for dinner.

“My parents used to keep a police scanner and their mind. I can’t even compare who I am today to who I was before.”

With Volunteers of America’s commitment to veterans, Tom was soon in a house of his own and working toward becoming a Peer Support Specialist with an addiction recovery center.

“Getting my foot in the door of my own house was like bursting out of that bubble. For the first time in my life, I’ve fulfilled a lease and feel rooted. Volunteers of America’s help built up my confidence and gave me affirmation that I’m doing the right thing,” Tom said.

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“My parents used to keep a police scanner and worry about me. Today, they have peace of mind. I can’t even compare who I am today to who I was before.”

To learn more about how our Lexington team has eliminated Veteran’s homelessness, go to voamid.org or follow us on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter @voamid.
For Canduce Gray—like so many others—addiction took hold of her life when she least expected it. She was working as a flight attendant, enjoying her job and a lifestyle that allowed her to travel all over the world.

“I could just go to Rome for the day. The job was great,” Canduce said.

But life changed for Canduce after an ear infection forced her to take medical leave from flying and her job. Faced with an unexpected life change, Canduce soon found herself misusing prescription pills. Her struggle turned into an addiction that kept getting worse.

“I went from pills to harder things. Heroin seemed to be my downfall,” Canduce said.

Canduce then became pregnant. She found out she was expecting twins, and was able to stop using drugs while she was pregnant. But it wasn’t long after giving birth to Jameson and Journey that she began using again.

Canduce’s story is similar to that of many of the women we serve in our Freedom House program, which is a national model for pregnant and parenting women working to overcome substance use disorder.

For some, a struggle with addiction might start with a prescription painkiller for something as simple as a toothache. Studies show that opioid addiction causes changes in brain chemistry that are particularly hard to overcome and women commonly relapse despite diligent efforts to stop using drugs.

Freedom House provides comprehensive training that includes therapy, life-skills classes, peer support and Medication Assisted Treatment when appropriate.

The innovative Volunteers of America program recently received groundbreaking recognition by the American Society of Addiction Medicine, the national authority on best practices for addiction recovery treatment. Freedom House became one of only seven programs in the United States, and the only one in Kentucky, to receive national certification as an addiction recovery provider.

Like so many of Volunteers of America’s Freedom House clients, Canduce wanted desperately to stop. When she became pregnant a second time and was still using, Canduce knew she didn’t have any choice.

“I had hit rock bottom,” Canduce said.

She thought about the twins she needed to care for and the babies on the way, as she learned—once again—that she was expecting twins.

“Finally, my dad said, ‘What’re you gonna do? You’ll die and your babies will die and you’ll lose your two kids you have now,’” said Canduce. For her, that was the final wakeup call.

Canduce turned to Volunteers of America for care and healing for herself and her children. With the help of our comprehensive, residential program, Canduce is overcoming her addiction. Today, Canduce lives in Volunteers of America’s transitional housing program where she is able to focus on her recovery and build a foundation for a stable future.

Women who have shared her challenges and successes together surround her. They support each other as they transition into a new and hopeful phase of their lives. Canduce has now been drug-free for almost two years—an accomplishment she thought might be impossible.

“Without VOA I would probably be dead. They loved me back to life.”

Canduce with kids Jameson, Journey, Eden and Emerson.
VOA VOICES

Shenelle Hinton

“You don’t have to be bound by what you’ve been through or where you’re from. There is always hope. You can make it through.”

For much of her life, Shenelle Hinton wanted to be a lawyer. Then she started volunteering and thinking of other ways of giving back. “The way I wanted to help people was through counseling and caring,” she said.

Today, as Program Manager at Freedom House, Volunteers of America’s nationally recognized addiction recovery program for pregnant and parenting moms, Shenelle helps women every day. She lives for every victory of the moms she serves. Shenelle’s office in Louisville is filled with cards and notes from the people she has helped overcome substance use disorder. Some victories may seem small, but tell of new hope – like hearing of a graduate’s pride at refusing drugs when offered. Some tell of lives that Freedom House moms never thought were possible – like a note from a graduate who is about to complete her nurse’s training. But they all make Shenelle’s hard work worthwhile.

And she’s surrounded by adorable babies. “Seeing the moms do it. Seeing the healthy babies. The babies make it worth it.”

Bobby Sturgeon

“People just need a chance. They need the right people to invest resources in their lives. Not everyone has the same story – sometimes people just need a break. I wanted to be a part of that.”

Bobby Sturgeon is a vital partner and dedicated supporter of Volunteers of America. He’s a Lexington entrepreneur who came to know the organization through mutual friend and supporter, Senator Julie Raquer Adams, a strong advocate for the families served by Volunteers of America.

After visiting several programs, meeting clients and attending the Power of 1 Breakfast, he was motivated to become more engaged in our work. “I love the diversity of the programs. From seeing moms with their babies to seeing them in the kitchen where they learn to cook. They are testing for HIV. They are working with military veterans. The diversity of Volunteers of America is really meaningful and impactful. The more we can give of our time and resources to others who need help, the more we can do to address this addiction crisis.”
Volunteers of America is honored to have a diverse cross-section of experienced and passionate leaders serving on our Board of Directors. This year, we thank our outgoing Board Chair, David Fennell for his dedicated and compassionate service to our mission.

“The work we do is a calling, and I have been honored to see it up close. I know that leaders like Chris Ward and all of our Board members are motivated by results. I love working for a data-driven organization that demonstrates tangible outcomes every day. The success stories I’ve seen inspire me – I think they’ll inspire you, too.”

-David Fennell

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Surekha Kulkarni & Gema Moreno

“I believe that strong women make strong families. And strong families make strong communities. I am thrilled that Beaded Treasures is now empowering women and promoting self-sufficiency hand in hand with Volunteers of America. Together, this social enterprise will empower many more women in our community and beyond. The sky is the limit.”

-Surekha Kulkarni

This spring, we were honored to welcome Beaded Treasures to the Volunteers of America family. Beaded Treasures was founded by Surekha Kulkarni and serves families, with a focus on immigrants and refugees, by providing tools and resources to become skilled artisans and self-sufficient entrepreneurs. Now, as a program of Volunteers of America, Beaded Treasures has a full-service retail store in Louisville and benefits from the leadership of Gema Moreno, who has been with Volunteers of America for three years. Gema is a daughter of Nicaraguan immigrants and will engage more Volunteers of America clients in the Beaded Treasures mission.

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Please join us at this free fundraising event and learn how you can make a difference for people who need us most.

Please visit voamid.org/po1breakfast for details.

DONATING WITH VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA IS:
- Tax-deductible
- Fast, easy and convenient
- Free – we'll tow the vehicle at no charge

Donate your vehicle now:
1-800-407-2600
or visit voamid.org to start the process.