HOPE TAKES FLIGHT
Dear Friend:

Who could have possibly anticipated the year we have all faced? In 2020, Volunteers of America has worked every day – just as you have – to meet the new challenges of an unpredictable and ever-changing world.

VOA has overcome every obstacle and we're still serving. But we could not have done it without you. Through a year that none of us could have imagined, you have stood by us. You supported us financially, became virtual volunteers, attended virtual tours and events and answered our call for the urgent help we need to rise to this moment of uncertainty.

We have shared so many wonderful moments this year as our clients, staff and supporters have rallied together to support each other. In this issue of Inspire, we'll be sharing some of those moments – the stories of changed lives that remind us of why we are all so connected and why we care so much about the work of VOA.

The pages of this issue aren't enough to cover everything we have achieved together, but let me share one goal that I've thought about so often. At our Power of 1 event last month, I spoke about human dignity. I noted the words of Pope Francis: “Things have a price and can be for sale. But humans have a dignity that is priceless.”

During this time, when we're all working to stay safe, support each other and treat all people with respect, I keep coming back to the idea of human dignity. I noted the words of Pope Francis: “Things have a price and can be for sale. But humans have a dignity that is priceless.”

During this time, when we're all working to stay safe, support each other and treat all people with respect, I keep coming back to the idea of human dignity. Because that really is our business here at VOA. Whether we are serving veterans confronting homelessness, or moms overcoming substance use disorder, or adults with disabilities looking for value and self-worth, our job is to help give everyone the dignity they deserve – just because we are fellow human beings.

We're proud to continue this critical mission, even during the most difficult of times. And we know we can't do it without you. Thank you for supporting VOA.

Jennifer Hancock
President and CEO

Across 40 programs in four states, VOA is on the front lines of supporting people in need – even during a pandemic that requires extra care and caution. From helping adults with disabilities to providing comprehensive services to our veterans, COVID has not stopped our VOA heroes. On page 8, see how we said thank you – and had a little fun – during Direct Support Professional week.

At VOA, we believe no veteran should ever face homelessness or feel they have nowhere to turn when they need help. On page 6, read how Marchelle and Ken found hope together and became a VOA family.

And, many more stories.

Jennifer Hancock joined VOA Board of Directors member, Rickey Groom, during a Give for Good Louisville performance. Rickey is an amazing VOA program graduate, successful entrepreneur and talented musician.
HOPE FOR FAMILIES,
HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Help VOA Give Hope this Holiday Season

For the list of items we need and families to support, visit voamid.org/holidays, or contact Gema Moreno at (502) 636-4664.

Now more than ever, the families served by Volunteers of America are counting on all of us to raise their spirits and keep them safe and supported during this holiday season.

VOA’s Unity House is one of very few places in our region where families facing homelessness can stay together while we find them stable, long-term housing.

Freedom House is a nationally-recognized model for pregnant and parenting women overcoming substance use disorder.

We’ve been keeping moms, dads and children healthy and united while we maintain COVID-19 safety guidelines. From helping with non-traditional instruction for the children we serve to utilizing more telehealth measures, these are challenging times for VOA and the families we serve.

We are absolutely committed to providing everyone we serve a hopeful holiday season, and hope you will support us by adopting a family.

CHANGE LIVES BY ADOPTING A FAMILY

When you adopt a VOA family, you are giving hope during the toughest of times.

How you help when you adopt a family:
- Support a family with gifts during the holidays
- Supply essential items like socks and personal hygiene items
- Help families feel supported and cared for during the holiday season
Ken had been seeing Marchelle at church services for 20 years, and he always gave Marchelle a hug before he’d leave. “It wasn’t anything but a church hug,” Marchelle said. But, one day she felt different. “When I hugged him, I felt a sense of peace and I just let out a sigh of relief,” she said.

Ken and Marchelle had both experienced pain in their lives before meeting – Marchelle struggled to understand her ex-husband’s alcoholism and Ken suffered from PTSD and depression after a high-stress job in the military and the death of his mother.

But at the time, they did not know the amazing ways their lives would intersect with each other – and with people in need. As a fuel specialist in the U.S. Air Force, Ken dealt with highly combustible chemicals and refueled military aircrafts. He saw small mistakes lead to lives lost. “The plane leaks oil and if someone walks in the oil and walks over to where you’re doing your job, the next thing you know, something goes up,” he said.

After serving, to cope with his PTSD, Ken turned to drugs and alcohol. “When drugs and alcohol became the number one thing in my life, I lost jobs, my place to live, my family, my wife, my children – I lost it all,” he said. Ken gave himself two years to start over. And then he found VOA. “He didn’t let his situation get him down. He had a go-getter attitude,” Jessa Henry said. Jessa was Ken’s case worker while he was in VOA’s Supported Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) program. She worked with Ken to find him stable housing.

When Ken met Marchelle, they had no idea the common, life-changing bonds they would share with Volunteers of America.

“Helping veterans is key. We have to meet them where they are. We can’t force them into things. We have to case manage first – we’re more than just housing,” Marchelle said.

And they are a team united in life as well. Ken proposed to Marchelle in June of 2019 – and they set their wedding date for July 11, 2020. Like so many couples, they did not want to delay their wedding – for anything. Not because of COVID, and not even when Ken received a diagnosis of lung cancer.

As they’ve done since the day they met, they beat the odds and were married in Marchelle’s front yard, with a Facebook livestream for friends and family.

“She was there with me. She gave me the strength to get through it,” Ken said. “Our date was coming up and we weren’t going to let COVID, cancer or anything get in the way of our day,” Marchelle said.

Today, Ken is in remission and feeling good. Marchelle is committed to helping veterans every day. And they are grateful to be living a love story with a little help from VOA.

“When a veteran, I had looked for help and been let down before. Jessa was with me every step of the way,” Ken said. “I didn’t feel like I was trying to do all of this alone,” he said.

The day that Marchelle connected with Ken in church, he was sober and living the healthy life he wanted for himself and she was working to find her next career. Marchelle was thrilled when she got a call back regarding an opportunity with a program serving veterans. She didn’t know she had been hired by the same organization that had helped to turn around Ken’s life – and that Jessa Henry was about to become her supervisor.

Marchelle was excited to tell Ken the good news. “I started breaking it down to him a little more and I told him my boss’s name is Jessa,” Marchelle said. “And I was like, ’Jessa?’ Because I only know one Jessa. I put two and two together and was like, ’Jessa your boss? She was my case worker!’” Ken said.

Now, Ken and Marchelle are a team – Marchelle working every day to help veterans find housing, afford utility bills, receive their VA benefits and start new lives. Ken is able to offer his experience and help Marchelle have a deeper understanding of veteran’s needs.

“Everybody always says soulmate, I don’t believe in soulmate. I just believe that if God brings a person to you, then that’s who you’re supposed to be with.,” – Ken, former client of VOA’s Supportive Services for Veterans and Families (SSVF)
MAKE IT A
BEADED TREASURES HOLIDAY

The holidays are here and VOAs social enterprise, Beaded Treasures, is a convenient and unique way to shop for your family and friends while making a difference with every purchase. Help us to empower underserved women and their families by visiting BeadedTreasures.org to check out our extensive selection of the latest accessories for every season. And with our new subscription service, Empower Box, delivering hand-made products to your loved ones is even easier. We partnered with our Southeastern Kentucky social enterprise, Mountain Market, to create a Holiday Empower Box that’s packed with hand-crafted products perfect for the season. Beautiful products like; Beaded Treasure’s Small Meena Ball earrings and a colorful decorative pillow, a Mountain Market apple and pine goat milk soap, an aromatic velvet whiskey candle, Blanket Creek Pottery plate, a delicious buttermilk biscuit mix, apple cinnamon mix and a sour cream scone mix. Visit BeadedTreasures.org to sign up. Beaded Treasures is hosting virtual parties that are a great way to safely bring your family and friends together to celebrate while supporting VOA. Plus, hosts with six or more guests will receive a $30 Beaded Treasure’s gift card. And as a thank you for your continued support, we are extending our Inspire discount. Use the discount code Inspire at checkout to receive 20 percent off every Beaded Treasures product until you receive your next Inspire magazine—that’s an additional six months of discount. So many choices—give a gift, host a party, subscribe to the Empower Box—Email Gema Moreno at gemam@voamid.org to learn more.

SAYING THANK YOU TO OUR VOA HEROES

VOA is always thrilled to celebrate Direct Support Professionals week — but this year it was a celebration fit for a King. Our full week of surprises included a visit from Elvis himself — and so much more. Our dedicated DSPs are genuine VOA Heroes who have shown even more commitment as we adjust to the challenges of COVID-19. They are the reason we are able to provide around-the-clock, high-quality support to more than 600 people living with VOA in residential care and they are essential to our ability to serve more than 26,000 people every year. During DSP week, we showed appreciation to our DSP Heroes with gift cards, T-shirts and goodie baskets with coffee mugs and energy drinks for our incredible 3rd shift crews working through the night to care for our residents. And what better way to wrap up a week of celebrating than to have Elvis himself serenade our amazing front-line workers? Visit https://youtu.be/JIHRWEDOwyI to watch the video. Thank you to the incredible Suzanne Koehne who helped us celebrate our DSPs. We couldn’t ask for a better Elvis. Follow us on social @voamid to stay up to date with all of the life-changing work our DSPs and VOA Team is accomplishing and help us thank them by sharing with your friends and family.

MORE PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT IN SOUTHEASTERN KENTUCKY

VOA remains always thrilled to celebrate Direct Support Professionals week — but this year it was a celebration fit for a King. Our full week of surprises included a visit from Elvis himself — and so much more. Our dedicated DSPs are genuine VOA Heroes who have shown even more commitment as we adjust to the challenges of COVID-19. They are the reason we are able to provide around-the-clock, high-quality support to more than 600 people living with VOA in residential care and they are essential to our ability to serve more than 26,000 people every year. During DSP week, we showed appreciation to our DSP Heroes with gift cards, T-shirts and goodie baskets with coffee mugs and energy drinks for our incredible 3rd shift crews working through the night to care for our residents. And what better way to wrap up a week of celebrating than to have Elvis himself serenade our amazing front-line workers? Visit https://youtu.be/JIHRWEDOwyI to watch the video. Thank you to the incredible Suzanne Koehne who helped us celebrate our DSPs. We couldn’t ask for a better Elvis. Follow us on social @voamid to stay up to date with all of the life-changing work our DSPs and VOA Team is accomplishing and help us thank them by sharing with your friends and family.

VOA continues to work to expand services in Southeastern Kentucky and was thrilled to be awarded a competitive federal grant that will expand services to families working to overcome substance use disorder. VOA received a $700,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime grant program that will be used to help establish a Family Recovery Court in Clay County. The Family Recovery Court model emphasizes direct supports for families in contact with the court with a focus on family reunification and safety.

Volunteers of America opened a new Freedom House for pregnant and parenting women overcoming substance use disorder in Clay County earlier this year. VOA also recently initiated a new Restorative Justice program in Clay, Leslie, Jackson, Laurel, Knox, Whitley and McCreary Counties that emphasizes community collaboration to keep young people out of the criminal justice system. VOA has been honored to welcome state and national leaders throughout the year, including a recent Freedom House visit by U.S. Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Kelly Craft.
BUILDING HOPE WITH MORE THAN 40 PROGRAMS

WORLD AIDS DAY
On December 1st, Volunteers of America joins people around the world in recognizing World AIDS Day, an annual day of unity to show support for people living with AIDS and to remember those who have lost their lives to AIDS. Every year, VOA FIT, our HIV Services team, marks World AIDS Day with free and convenient HIV testing sites in the Louisville area and this year our team is adding fun, thought-provoking and interactive educational opportunities as well. In addition to confidential testing at VOA facilities throughout World AIDS Day, VOA is also hosting a book discussion of “Full Disclosure,” a young adult novel focused on HIV and how to combat stigma, fear and prejudice. VOA's HIV Services team also hosts an online discussion, "Living Well with HIV and AIDS," featuring a variety of experts discussing living long and healthy lives with AIDS.

VOA is in the forefront of HIV testing in the Louisville area, offering confidential tests in the office – or in your home (resuming when COVID restrictions allow.) Last year alone, VOA administered nearly 3,000 free HIV tests. And scheduling a test, or learning more about our events and services, is just a click away at voamid.org/hiv.

VOLUNTEERING - SAFELY - TO SUPPORT THE PEOPLE WE SERVE

We are incredibly grateful for our compassionate virtual volunteers. Since early March, VOA has put a pause on our in-person volunteer opportunities to ensure the health and safety of our VOA family – but that hasn’t stopped our committed friends and supporters. We have received 2,466 cards of support for our residents and hardworking staff, 291 uplifting posters, 4,113 birthday cards and 2,069 cards thanking our veterans for their service – and more continue to come in. We cannot thank our VOA community enough for the inspiring amount of support we continue to receive during these difficult times. Thank you for everything you do to help VOA continue our mission and change lives. If you are interested in other virtual volunteer opportunities, contact Gema Moreno at gemam@voamid.org or Donna Trabue at donnat@voamid.org.

Our volunteers keep VOA families feeling supported and loved with notes and cards.

What is better than a delicious cup of Heine Brothers’ coffee? When enjoying your favorite coffee also helps to support VOA. Every quarter, Heine Brothers’ Coffee chooses an organization to be their Impact Partner – bringing attention to the positive impact they have on the community. This year, Heine Brothers’ Coffee chose VOA and they are highlighting our work right now. Until the end of 2020, $1 from every purchase of Traveler Blend coffee goes directly to VOA. We are incredibly grateful to be chosen for this partnership and proud to team up again with our 2018 Community Partner of the Year. Please show your support and help the Heine Brothers’ and VOA team continue to change lives. Thanks to Mike Mays and Heine Brothers’ for the amazing support – and don’t forget to pick up your Traveler Blend the next time you need some caffeine.

Jennifer Hancock thanks Heine Brothers’ and Mike Mays.

VOA provides free, convenient and confidential HIV testing and education.

HEINE BROTHERS’ COFFEE PARTNERS WITH VOA
To celebrate Veterans Day, VOA honored our many veteran colleagues with a virtual program to recognize their work and sacrifice, while also presenting a new name and look for the Veterans program.

VOA Honor will now represent the services we provide to veterans and their families in this region. These new visual images exemplify the men and women who provided service to our country, our gratitude and our commitment to them while highlighting VOA’s work as one of the largest providers of veterans’ services in the region.

VOA Honor serves over 2,000 veterans and their families every year throughout Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia and Clark and Floyd Counties of Indiana by providing comprehensive services including employment support, housing assistance and substance abuse disorder treatment.

Are you a veteran who needs help? Do you know a veteran in need? Reach out to VOA at: voamid.org/veterans
Andrea Russell, Senior Program Manager of Men’s Addiction Recovery Services, works on one of America’s toughest problems every day – helping men overcome substance use disorder.

“I don’t ever want to think that I’m not giving 110 percent to the people we serve. I want to show up for each person that walks in this building,” Andrea said.

Understanding the needs – and opportunities for a new future – for men like Ruben is her challenge and her calling.

Growing up in Chicago, Ruben had trouble dealing with the anger he felt. “I went through 12 anger management programs and failed them all,” he said.

Part of that anger was fueled by Ruben’s growing involvement with drugs. His substance use disorder and difficulty controlling his anger led him to a cycle of being in and out of prison. He eventually came to Kentucky, and was ready for a change. “After you are beat up for so long, you can’t help but feel defeated,” he said.

That’s when Ruben’s girlfriend, Ashley, who was also struggling with substance use disorder, was admitted to Freedom House, VOA’s program for pregnant and parenting moms. As Ashley and their son Daniel settled in and began to make progress, she told Ruben about VOA’s program for men — Shelby Men’s Recovery Center.

Ruben was ready. He arrived a day early, and was so intent on recovery that he was sitting on the steps when VOA opened early the next morning.

What Ruben found was entirely new to him – treatment based on routine, discipline and commitment. Ruben woke each day to attend morning meditation, individual therapy, group therapy and then a variety of classes for the rest of the day. “After about a month of being there, it really starts to grow on you,” he said. “You get to know a lot about yourself just talking it out.”

“We help the men we serve tap into what they can work on while they are here,” Andrea said. “VOA doesn’t just have therapists, we have peer support specialists. And a lot of them are coming from the same place as a lot of our clients,” Andrea said.

VOA’s support helped Ruben understand the roots of his anger and classes to help him control it without resorting to violence. “Bad news will still come, I just know how to react now,” he said.

Thinking of his son motivated Ruben on his journey to sobriety. “Every time I got a chance to see him, it made me recommit every day,” Ruben said.

One New Year’s Eve of 2019, Ruben’s hard work paid off and he graduated from Shelby Men’s Recovery Center. Today, he is focused on his recovery and being a father to his children.

“The VOA has changed my life. I’m here, almost 13 months clean,” he said.

For Andrea, success stories like Ruben keep her motivated to do the tough — and essential — work she is doing every day.

“We’re committed to the work and that commitment level shows up in how we treat the clients,” Senior Program Manager Andrea Russell.
FEEL THE POWER OF 1

This year, with your support, VOA has powers that you don’t have to be in the same room to be united.

We cannot continue to serve more than 26,000 people each year without the support we receive at the Power of 1. So we wondered – and honestly we worried – if we could count on our VOA family to log on to one more Zoom call – even one that is so essential to our services.

We could not be more gratified that more than 800 people joined us, celebrated our work and supported the people we serve. At the Power of 1, we heard directly from the people whose lives have been changed by VOA. If you couldn’t join us, please visit https://youtu.be/N1uU3Kqqeog to hear from VOA success stories like:

• Christina, a Freedom House graduate and our VOA Recovery Intake Coordinator. Christina’s life moved from incarceration to reunification with her family and four years of sobriety.

• Sue, another Freedom House colleague who found VOA at our Recovery Community Center in Manchester, where she said for the first time in her life, “I found a place I fit in.”

• Britney, a current Freedom House client whose life was changed by Christina and VOA.

• Tawanda Chitapa, one of our generous and dedicated VOA board members who asked that we “see each other” and build more understanding and compassion.

Please know that we still need your help. To learn more about our services and how you can make a difference in the lives of people in need throughout Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia and Clark and Floyd Counties in Indiana, go to: https://www.voamid.org/powerof1

On the same day as our Power of 1 celebration, People magazine highlighted Freedom House, VOA’s nationally-recognized program for pregnant and parenting women overcoming substance use disorder.

We are so proud of Christina and Britanny and their stories of hope and transformation. They are examples of the incredibly hard work and commitment it takes to beat substance use disorder and we’re grateful to People for highlighting their journey and VOAs dedication to women and families.
**VOA VOICES**

**SUE FOX**

“I looked around and I thought, ‘how did something like this come to Clay County?’” When Sue Fox saw VOA’s Recovery Community Center (RCC) in Manchester, Kentucky, she knew she had found a new home. “All my life I had been looking for a place to fit in, and I finally found it,” Sue said. For Sue, who had struggled with substance use disorder for most of her life, the community support, entertaining activities and connection to resources was life-saving – and it began her on a path to a new, fulfilling career. Today, Sue is a Peer Support Specialist at VOA’s Freedom House in Manchester, Kentucky, helping pregnant and parenting moms and sharing her life story with others to help them overcome barriers. “It’s the best feeling. VOA just touches your heart.”

**KIM CABALLEROS**

As a Senior Director managing VOA teams in Northern Kentucky and Clark and Floyd Counties in Indiana, Kim works every day to improve the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Under her leadership, VOA has been growing the Supported Employment program, which finds fair wage and meaningful jobs for people with disabilities. VOA leaders like Kim have been working diligently to manage the challenges of the pandemic, working to keep residents safe and supported while taking every step possible to minimize isolation and loneliness.

**WALTER MULLINS**

When Walter Mullins tried treatment for substance use disorder for the eighth time, years of struggle were showing. He was barely carrying 120 pounds on his six foot, one-inch body. Finally, he was ready for change. He stayed in treatment for more than a year. Then Walter moved to transitional housing and took a job at the center helping others. From there, he went back to school, earned his degree, became a counselor, and ultimately a therapist.

After a lifetime combating drugs and alcohol, Walter had found his passion: helping others overcome the same challenge. Today, Walter is the Program Manager at VOA’s Recovery Community Center (RCC) in Manchester, Kentucky and an experienced therapist who is thrilled to oversee a gathering place and support center for Kentuckians in recovery.

“For this community, the RCC was really the missing link – after you leave treatment, you need support. I love helping people overcome barriers. We are a place for socialization and getting connected. You can celebrate recovery milestones. This place is exactly where I’m meant to be.”

**DR. JACKIE PAIR**

Dr. Jackie Pair’s extensive work for others is guided by a simple philosophy, “to whom much is given, much is required.” That’s why Dr. Pair, a member of our Tennessee Action Council, is a leader for VOA in Nashville, serving the needs of people with disabilities and our neighbors facing homelessness. She helped organize VOAs Hope for the Homeless campaign, which has become an annual event where Tennessee team members distribute food, clothing and toiletries to Nashville’s homeless population. Dr. Pair also purchases holiday gifts for VOAs Phoenix House in Hermitage, Tennessee, whom VOA cares for adults with disabilities. A U.S. Army veteran who works at the VA, she sees VOA as vital to her commitment to help others. “It’s the best feeling. VOA just touches your heart.”

**WALTER ANDA CHITAPA**

Tawanda Chitapa, the Director of Clinical Value at Norton Healthcare, closed our program. Tawanda emphasized his strong support for the transparency, and focus on results, he sees at VOA. He also reminded our attendees of a very meaningful greeting from all of us to “see” each other by understanding each other with compassion and respect.

**VAL FARSETTI**

Val Fasetti has traveled the world working on innovative answers to some of society’s most challenging problems. Her passion for community building and expertise in sustainable development has taken her from Asia to Africa to South America. In Kenya, she worked on animal welfare and conservation, finding ways to protect elephants while keeping them from destroying local farmers’ crops. She provided medical services in a small village in Belize and supported people with disabilities in Chile. Her work has focused on the intersection between human, animal and environmental health.

VOA is guided and served by a diverse and dedicated Board of Directors. This year at our Power of 1 celebration, Tawanda Chitapa, the Director of Clinical Value at Norton Healthcare, closed our program. Tawanda emphasized his strong support for the transparency, and focus on results, he sees at VOA. He also reminded our attendees of a very meaningful greeting from his upbringing in Zimbabwe: “We see you.” At this momentous time, Tawanda encouraged all of us to “see” each other by understanding each other with compassion and respect.
EMPOWER BOX

SUBSCRIPTION GIFT

Use discount code Inspire at checkout to receive 20% off every Beaded Treasures product until you receive your next Inspire magazine – that’s an additional six months of discount.

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

For more details, visit voamid.org/holidays