Dear Friend:

How do we make it through a year like the one we have all experienced together? I’ve been thinking of so many leaders whose lives and actions embody the core organizational values that guide VOA. Those values are compassion, commitment, diversity, integrity and justice. I don’t believe they have ever been tested, or needed, more than now. Here are some words that I leaned on:

Eleanor Roosevelt said, “You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing you think you cannot do.”

I’ll be honest — we had scary moments during the past year. Please know that at our most daunting time, we counted on you. Your partnership was vital as VOA faced significant budget challenges and tremendous personal risk to our heroes who cared for clients every day.

This issue of Inspire is filled with the stories of how VOA did the things we may have thought we could not do and continued the life-changing work you make possible.

Our VOA team at Unity House, where VOA keeps families facing homelessness together as we find them long-term, stable housing, worked every day teaching and tutoring as many as 30 children. Just like so many of you, they learned all about the difficulties of NTI — but nothing could keep them from supporting our families during this tough time.

In Southeastern Kentucky, where we opened our Freedom House program for pregnant and parenting women overcoming substance use disorder just as the pandemic hit, we have now welcomed our sixth healthy baby. Our staff is resilient and dedicated, and our moms are courageous and committed to a brighter future for their families.

As you learn more about what your partnership means for people in need, I hope you will share the same sense of possibility and hope for the future that I do. This year — with your help — we’ve gained strength, courage and confidence. After an unprecedented year, I know there is nothing we cannot accomplish together. Thank you for supporting VOA.

Jennifer Hancock
President and CEO

Jennifer celebrates the kick-off of Determined Health, a new program to promote health care access and equity, with Director of Community Health and Equity Dr. Janikaa Sherrod and VOA’s Community Health Workers.
THE KIDS VOA SERVES ARE HEADED BACK TO SCHOOL

After a year of social distancing and NTI, let’s give everyone a great start to the school year

Our kids have never had a return to school quite like the one they are experiencing now. The past year was so hard on the families served by Volunteers of America. Our kids were separated from so many friends and faced the challenges of non-traditional instruction and isolation at the same time we were working with them to overcome homelessness.

Let’s give them a great new start.

HOW YOU CAN HELP KIDS RETURNING TO SCHOOL

Many of the children at Unity House have recently been homeless, living in a family vehicle or other unsafe and unstable situation. With your help, we ensure they have what they need on the first day of school and throughout the year.

- Give a gift card that will be used to purchase the supplies specific to each child’s class.
- Give a gift card to purchase school clothes and uniforms, or donate new clothes.
- Shop our Amazon Wish List at https://www.voamid.org/bts.
- Volunteer to help children with their school work.

Roxie and her children Bennyea, Amyea and Bennie came to VOA’s Unity House after being without stable housing for nearly two years. For Roxie, VOA has meant stability and hope.

“It’s an awesome place. They treat us like family and they will help you with anything you need or want,” Roxie said. Her daughters have made friends and VOA is helping her find training and classes to reach her goal of becoming a Medical Assistant. As Bennyea and Amyea prepare to return to school, VOA is working to locate affordable, stable and long-term housing for the family.

Donation drop off locations can be found at voamid.org/bts
Contact Laura Ryan at LauraR@voamid.org or 502-636-4660 to help or learn more.
When Stacey Dreschel’s co-workers were putting together a new guide for copying and scanning, they knew exactly how to get her attention—and put a smile on her face.

“We found out that she was a big fan of Miss Piggy. So when we were making up instructions for the new copier, we thought it would be fun to include a photo of Miss Piggy at the bottom. Stacey keeps those instructions in her work drawer and smiles big and giggles every time she opens it. She appreciated us doing that and we enjoy watching her expression,” said Raeline Bradford, Stacey’s co-worker.

Stacey is a client of Volunteers of America Mid-States program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Clark and Floyd Counties in Indiana. The program operates eleven comfortable and welcoming homes in the area, providing around-the-clock support with an emphasis on providing connection and opportunities to the people we serve.

Stacey is one of us now.
She is part of the team.
- Raeline Bradford

Stacey works three days a week at New Washington State Bank in Charlestown, Indiana. She is responsible for digitally scanning and filing all of the paperwork for bank loans. Before Stacey’s employment, no individual was responsible for the job. “It was a challenge to get it all done,” said Jennifer Draggoo, a Loan Assistant.

Stacey is proud of her work and employment and has become an invaluable asset to the department. Stacey strives to be efficient and completing all of her work before she leaves each day is very important to her. But more than filling a much-needed role, Stacey also improves the morale in the loan department. Stacey always greets everyone in the building with a smile and her love for her work shows.

Stacey, who enjoys painting, has also helped to beautify and decorate the office. Her New Washington colleagues have hung several of her pieces in the office, and Stacey loves to give paintings to co-workers as a gift.

“Stacey is part of the team at New Washington State Bank. Her easy camaraderie with her coworkers represents great progress for Stacey. When she started working, a supported employment staff member from Volunteers of America stayed with her. As time passed, she learned the tasks, what questions to ask and everyone’s role. With her quality work and loan department support, VOA now only checks in on her occasionally.”

“We’ve all become friends and we knew she would be fine. She is one of us now. Stacey is part of the team,” Raeline said.

As in every office, New Washington’s team struggled with the pandemic. As Stacey socially distanced at home, her co-workers were thinking about her. To stay in touch and keep her spirits up, they delivered a care pack made of her favorite snacks and word search puzzles to remind Stacey they cared and were looking forward to seeing her in the office again.

“The best thing about employers hiring people with disabilities is that it allows them to break down any stereotypes they may have. It goes a long way to help them realize—we are more alike than different.” One of the biggest issues for people with disabilities is that there are such low expectations for them, due to the congregation and segregation they have endured. “The more valued role they are able to fulfill, the more people realize the contribution they can make,” said VOA’s Community Services Coordinator David Block.

Raeline emphasized that hiring people with disabilities works well for everyone, and raises the productivity and satisfaction level in the office. When Stacey’s out sick, her coworkers have a simple question.

“Now what are we going to do? We badly need her,” Jennifer said.

Learn more about VOA’s Supported Employment program at: https://www.voamid.org/dd
PARTNERING TO IMPROVE HEALTH OUTCOMES IN WEST LOUISVILLE

This summer Volunteers of America and Humana Health Plan announced a new community outreach program designed to educate and engage residents of Louisville’s West End neighborhoods. “Determined Health” will feature Community Health Workers who provide grassroots outreach designed to connect area residents with high-quality, accessible health care services.

The innovative new program will employ trained Community Health Workers (CHWs) who will engage community residents directly with information about care management and access to services. The goal is to identify hard-to-reach and at-risk residents who have not seen a primary care provider in the past 18 months.

Community volunteer and event coordinator, Danielle Collins, and our community partners at AdventHealth Manchester, Stay in Clay, Project Hope, Manchester Tourism Commission and Daniel Boone Community Action Agency helped make The Good Continues event a success – more than 80 local vendors joined the community at Rawlings and Stinson Park in Manchester for a fun day that was attended by more than 1,000 people. From Food Trucks to kids’ games to music, the Good Continues had something for everyone and a reminder to feel good about the future of the community.

Health care services will then be coordinated with providers and care management teams to achieve successful health outcomes for participants. VOA and Humana’s goals for the program include reducing health disparities in Louisville and improving health outcomes for all program participants.

A MIRACLE NAMED MARK

For almost ten years, VOA has served Mark Hublar in our program supporting adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Clark and Floyd Counties in Indiana, helping with day-to-day needs, providing companionship and helping Mark to be independent and active.

During that time, Mark has shown his leadership and entrepreneurial spirit by starting his own business as a motivational speaker – taking a stand for people with disabilities and telling his personal story of determination and achievement. Now, Mark’s story is being told by his brother Greg in a new book – appropriately titled “A Miracle Named Mark,” with Greg generously donating some of the proceeds from the book to VOA. Greg shares how Mark’s parents, Al and Linda, ignored their doctor’s advice to put Mark in an institution when he was born with Down Syndrome, some of the proceeds from the book to VOA. Greg shares how Mark’s parents, Al and Linda, ignored their doctor’s advice to put Mark in an institution when he was born with Down Syndrome, some of the proceeds from the book to VOA. Greg shares how Mark’s parents, Al and Linda, ignored their doctor’s advice to put Mark in an institution when he was born with Down Syndrome.

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VOA is so grateful to Al and Linda for making that decision. At VOA, we know how much Mark can accomplish – something he and Al proved when they were the keynote speakers at our VOA Building Better Communities Luncheon in 2019. Their remarks were honest, funny and inspiring – and a reminder to all of us about the tremendous potential of people with disabilities and how much can be accomplished with support.
Unity House is where VOA keeps families facing homelessness together while we work to find long-term, stable housing. For nearly 30 years Linda Rice has been visiting Unity House, volunteering for a program she helped found and lead, Study Buddies. Every week, Linda sits down with kids in the Study Buddies room, which is filled with resources like computers, textbooks and school supplies. She helps them with their homework and tutors any children struggling with a subject. But this past year the Study Buddies program was forced to take on more than just homework. Instead of tutoring after school, as many as 30 children at a time were going to school remotely from Unity House. As so many parents know, becoming a full-time teacher is tough. Becoming teachers to so many children in need was a huge undertaking for our Unity House team.

Our VOA team kept the safety of our residents as a top priority and eventually was able to bring in volunteers like Linda to help with Non-Traditional Instruction. “VOA got in there and figured out how we were going to get through this,” Linda said.

Linda came back to a modified Study Buddies program and new faces eager to learn. “With a lot of the kids, when they would first get to Unity House, they would have weeks of not completed work. So we would work with the teachers to try to catch the kids up,” Linda said. Each week, Linda would help kids adapt to the new technology and make up schoolwork when they were behind.

Linda saw first-hand how challenging the new reality was for kids at Unity House, many of whom typically rely on the routine of school for social interaction and support. “I can’t imagine being homeless and trying to learn in that environment. VOA was really good at how they worked with the children and tried to keep some kind of normalcy. I don’t know what kind of experience those children would’ve had without the programs VOA was providing,” Linda said.

“VON host Kentucky Sports Radio brought his popular statewide radio show to Volunteers of America’s Recovery Community Center (RCC) with a simple message. “On my show, people have a lot of different opinions. But we’re here in Clay County today to say that getting vaccinated is the right thing to do.”

Matt and his entire Kentucky Sports Radio team broadcast live from the RCC on June 9 to talk Kentucky sports and an even more important topic – the importance of all Kentuckians taking the Covid-19 vaccine. AdventHealth Manchester provided the Johnson and Johnson one-shot vaccine on-site and event co-host Axis Coffee Shop and Gathering Place provided a free bowl of their famous white chicken chili to everyone who was vaccinated at the event.

The broadcast was one of five throughout the state hosted by Jones to encourage more Kentuckians to protect themselves, their families and their neighbors by receiving the Covid-19 vaccine. Many Clay County and Southeastern Kentucky residents attended the broadcast, with some special guests, including Kentucky State Senate President Robert Stivers, stopping by to catch the fun.

VOA was pleased to be able to continue to promote healthy communities by being part of the broadcast and encouraged area residents to take advantage of the convenient and fun way to get the vaccine. Among residents getting the vaccine were seven residents of Freedom House, where VOA helps pregnant and parenting moms overcome substance use disorder and start on a path to safe and healthy futures.

“We’re so grateful to Matt Jones and his team, Kentucky Health Plan Association, AdventHealth, Axis Coffee Shop, iHeartRadio and all of our Clay County area leader and partners who made this important day possible. Vaccination helps all of us and makes every family safer. I’m so pleased we could partner with Matt and add his voice to this vital public health effort,” said Jennifer Hancock, President and CEO of Volunteers of America Mid-States.

DID YOU KNOW?
In 1905 VOA began running Fresh Air camps for children to get away for a week of fun. Celebrate with us. @voamid #125yearstrong

INSPIRE VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA MID-STATES FACEBOOK | INSTAGRAM | TWITTER: @VOAMID www.VOAMid.org

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UNITY HOUSE: KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER"
In 1896, Maud Booth and her husband Ballington Booth, established an organization dedicated to serving families with compassion and working for justice for people in need. These values live on today as VOA celebrates 125 years of creating positive change.

Today, VOA is proud of Maud’s dedication and her legacy as one of the first female leaders of a social service organization. Her priorities and commitment to social justice helped to set goals and priorities that remain in place at VOA today.

“She had an internal angst about problems that she saw that people were facing,” Maud Booth and VOA history enthusiast Donna Trabue. Maud turned her concern to action at VOA.

“She recognized that when people come out of prison, there has to be an infrastructure of support ready to help them at that time of vulnerability and risk of going back into criminal activity. Something has to be there,” said Donna. Part of Maud’s solution for men exiting prison was Hope Halls.

Hope Halls offered transitional housing and counseling support to help men prepare for new lives, move beyond their past actions and avoid a return to prison.

“Maud Booth could see the potential in these men and fostered them being able to see their own potential,” said VOA Chaplain Donna Trabue.

The men were and still are today given hope in the program as they were in the days of Maud Booth. This hope is given by helping the men see their self-worth.

- Carl Powell

DID YOU KNOW?
In 1898 VOA’s social work programming begins with a children’s outing in Chicago.

Celebrate with us! #125years #125yearstrong

Clients receiving comprehensive services at Shelby Men’s Recovery Center

“Maud Booth could see the potential in these men and fostered them being able to see their own potential,” said VOA Chaplain Donna Trabue.
When Volunteers of America announced that receiving the Covid-19 vaccine would be required for all employees, Stephanie Hoskins was unsure what to do.

“I was starting to have serious conversations with my husband – I love this agency, but just wasn’t sure about the vaccine,” Stephanie said.

As Director of Rural Addiction Recovery Services, Stephanie is a respected and valued VOA team member, overseeing critical – and growing – services in Southeastern Kentucky. But like many people, she wondered about the safety of something developed so quickly.

“I thought about all of the vaccines that had been around forever and you knew were safe. But the Covid-19 vaccine was new,” Stephanie said.

After carefully considering staff concerns, as well as consultation with doctors and infectious disease experts, VOA decided to make vaccines mandatory for all employees due to the risk to clients, many of whom are medically fragile. All the evidence available about the effectiveness and public health benefit of the vaccines clearly demonstrated that the right step to protect the health and safety of both our workforce - and the clients we care for, particularly in the round-the-clock residential settings that our clients call home – was to require staff to be immunized.

As VOA was sharing its policy regarding vaccinations, Stephanie’s life changed.

Despite being careful and socially distanced at Thanksgiving in 2020, Stephanie noticed some symptoms that made her think she might have a sinus infection. Then she lost her sense of smell. At the same time, her sister became sick. As a precaution, they received Covid-19 tests. Both were positive.

Her sister struggled with a high fever and body aches. Stephanie lost her sense of taste and smell for two weeks. Their biggest concern became the health of their mother, Barb, and their dad, Bobby. He had a heart and kidney condition and was receiving dialysis. As a high-risk patient, for two weeks. Their biggest concern became the health of their mother, Barb, and their dad, Bobby. He had a heart and kidney condition and was receiving dialysis. As a high-risk patient, they prayed that their dad would not test positive for Covid-19.

Bobby was experiencing complications from surgery on his leg and returned to the hospital in December. That’s when Stephanie’s family received the news that he was positive for Covid-19.

Bobby and her family then experienced a setback that so many others faced during the pandemic – the inability to be with a loved-one who is quarantined with a highly infectious disease. They couldn’t enter Bobby’s hospital room to be with him as he recovered from surgery and confronted Covid-19.

“You want to do more, but you can’t even go in to see him. That’s one of the hardest parts,” Stephanie said.

When Bobby started to have trouble breathing, he was given plasma treatment, which improved his condition. Stephanie and her family became more hopeful.

After all, their dad had always been the rock of the family – the person everyone counted on.

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Is it possible to bring together University of Alabama and University of Tennessee alums and fans – happily — in one place? What if you throw in some University of Kentucky and Florida and Vanderbilt fans as well? The answer is yes – if they are having a great time and supporting a tremendous cause.

Volunteers of America’s team in Tennessee has brought together college football greats, college football fans, golfers and supporters of our Tennessee programs for eleven years for the VOA Tournament of Champions. The golf event is a celebration of our service to veterans, seniors and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the state of Tennessee and the funds raised are vital to VOAs continued support of families in need. Because of the generosity of our donors and partners, the Tournament of Champions activities now last a full weekend, and include our Inspire concert and Golf Dinner in support of the tournament and our work. This year, the tournament required morning and afternoon flights of golf at Nashville’s Hermitage Hill golf course, with more than 200 players – many of them University of Tennessee and University of Alabama football greats – enjoying a day of golf, friendship and generosity to VOA.

One football legend who has played in the tournament ten years is Jim Bunch from the University of Alabama. Bunch was an All-American and all-SEC player who helped lead Alabama to two national championships under coach Bear Bryant. Bunch would not miss the Tournament of Champions. “It’s an honor to be a part of the event. VOA does so much – from helping people with disabilities to taking care of our military and being there for people who deserve our help. It’s fun being part of the process and watching people joyfully give. And it’s great to see some former teammates and some guys I played against too,” Bunch said.

With the help of leaders like Jim Bunch, this fun, informative and celebratory weekend entertains, informs and empowers VOA to continue to provide essential help for families who rely on our care and service.

“Tennessee families who receive VOA services are a small, but significant part of our work, and we are proud to support them,” said Randy Brothers, Tennessee Director of Development. “We are grateful to all who support our mission, and this event is a great way to bring people together to make a difference.”

A new and growing part of our Tennessee Tournament of Champions weekend is the Inspire concert, a music-filled celebration of serving Tennessee families. This year the legendary Texas Troubadour Theatre hosted talented Nashville performing artists including Jonell Moser, Claire Cunningham, Slim Gambill, Ciera MacKenzie and so many more. Thank you to the Music City legends who made our weekend rock.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

In 1940, Maud Booth became Commander in Chief of VOA.

Celebrate with us: [streamed #125yearsstrong](#)
Who are the voices of VOA? They are veterans and adults with developmental disabilities. They are families facing homelessness, moms and dads struggling with addiction, friends who need answers about HIV. They are donors and volunteers who lend a helping hand. They are the voices of our community, coming together.

Kacie Cleveland

For Kacie Cleveland, recovery at Freedom House began with belief.

“The more and more I achieved, the more I believed in myself. I thought ‘I’ve gotten more done here than in a whole lifetime,’” Kacie said. Kacie came to Freedom House when she was pregnant with her son Joseph Zane, known as JZ. Kacie had recently been released from prison and was ready for a new life. The discipline, support and full-time schedule of programming changed everything for her.

“I made plans. I had goals. When I made an appointment, I kept it. I started thinking differently about everything,” Kacie said.

The road to recovery Kacie began at VOA eventually led right back — as a Peer Support Specialist at Freedom House helping women working to overcome substance use disorder just as she had. After nearly two years working for VOA, Kacie was recently promoted to the key role of Marketing and Outreach Specialist, where she is responsible for promoting Freedom House and making sure women in need and referral partners are aware of VOAs overall services.

“I’ve slept where they slept. I’ve showered where they showered. I know all about this and I know people can do it,” Kacie said.

Patricia Cummings, a former Board of Directors member and donor of Volunteers of America, wanted to find a way to support the VOA team and keep them healthy and safe. As a career social worker, Patricia knew that a focus on self-care and wellness would help the VOA team continue to serve people in need and led her to an innovative — and generous — idea.

Patricia’s wellness scholarship now helps to fund a range of services, programs and purchases. From gym memberships, to new textbooks to funding life coaches, the Patricia Cummings Wellness Scholarship is helping VOA staff invest in something we all need now more than ever — peace of mind.

This creative program began in September 2017 and has now helped more than 350 staff feel supported and healthy.

“As a retired social worker, I remember the stress of working in human services. The VOA staff are drained at times and not focused on their own wellness. This is my way of thanking them for the powerful and significant work that they do.”

Dr. Janikaa Sherrod

Dr. Janikaa Sherrod is passionate about health equity. And she is looking forward to creating real change as VOA’s Director of Community Health and Equity.

In this new VOA leadership role, she will oversee “Determined Health,” a program that will connect residents in West Louisville neighborhoods with high-quality health care, monitor health outcomes and address health inequity.

“I’m excited to see the change we talk about. I want to change the narrative. Everybody — no matter who they are or where they live, deserves access to the basic necessities. I’m passionate about what I do, and don’t like that so often in the community people hear promises but then people don’t follow through. We need the work we do to be sustainable,” Janikaa said.

Her experience as a community leader and connector will be key to a program designed to create long-term change through grassroots, door-to-door contact with residents. Determined Health will feature trained Community Health Workers who meet with residents and help them to access health care providers and community resources.

“When we start to see a reduction in health disparities, when we look at mortality rates in chronic diseases and close the gap between white and black residents, when we see people going to primary care providers instead of the emergency room and when people are seeing their basic needs met — we’ll know we are actually making change,” Janikaa said.
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8:00 a.m. EST Program
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