

VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 1 | FALL 2020

CONNECTIONS

THE DIFFERENCE **YOU** ARE MAKING FOR YOUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED



**Your
support is a
safe haven**

*How you helped Michigan's
most vulnerable survive a
global pandemic.*



Volunteers of America®
MICHIGAN

Where would we be without you?

How you made it possible for those in need to make it through a global pandemic

Back in March, we were faced with a very scary reality. Being in the midst of a global pandemic and had no idea what would happen next. For homeless veterans, aging seniors, and stressed families who were already struggling before the coronavirus pandemic, they had no idea how they would make it through.

Michigan was hit extremely hard during the COVID-19 Pandemic. A majority of those that we serve are among the most susceptible to the virus. The men and women living in senior housing communities and in the Detroit Veterans Housing Program are having difficulties.

To minimize the risks for clients and staff, the strictest of measures for health and safety are being followed. Things have changed; social distancing at all locations, personal protective equipment for residents and employees, food pantries have been started for residents, appointments are done by phone, and plexiglass shields have been put up.

As you see, much has been done and continues to be done to ensure the utmost safety for veterans, seniors, staff, and supporters. However, it comes at a cost. The demand for services was increasing, and it began stretching our resources to the breaking point.

You showed up during one of our scariest moments. You gave love and light during these uncertain times.

It's not over yet, but we know that you are with us, doing everything you can. Together, we can get through anything. Thank you for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of your community.

With you by our side, even with the most difficult of days, anything is possible.

You fed the hungry

When food was running low, you filled food pantries

At the onset of the pandemic, seniors and veterans were nervous about how they would get food. Things were changing so quickly, and many were worried about their health. When the grocery store shelves started to become bare, their worries intensified.

With quick action, food pantries were created at senior housing communities and for homeless veterans in Detroit. **YOUR** support gave your neighbors a chance to breathe a sigh of relief. **YOU** blessed your neighbors by giving them items and food that they would have otherwise gone without. **YOU made that happen.**

When things got tough, you stepped up to help. You ensured that seniors and veterans were able to make it safely through this pandemic. You are a true inspiration.

Your generosity and kindness changed lives, and for that, you should be forever proud!



You sent a hero home

You helped a veteran reunite with his family after 20 years

Nobody ever imagines or wants to be homeless. It is sadly the fate for many brave servicemen and women. Mr. Biggs, a veteran of the United States Army, became homeless after many life struggles.

He found the Detroit Veterans Housing Program when he had no place else to go. Then COVID-19 came and disrupted everything. It was decided that it would be the best for Mr. Biggs' health and safety if he went and stayed in a motel during the pandemic.

It's lonely living in a motel. Despite visits from staff with food and supplies, living alone without the ability to go out into the world was difficult. Mr. Biggs longed to be with his family that he hadn't seen in almost 20 years. The problem was, they were all the way in Pennsylvania!

With lots of planning, staff were able to get him safely to his family. His belongings were packed and shipped, and he boarded a plane home.

You helped Mr. Biggs along on his journey. It was you that provided a warm bed for him to sleep in and a meal when he had no place left to turn. Your kindness allowed him a safe place to stay during the pandemic.

You helped him to get where he needed to be with his family.

You provided a place of refuge

How you gave shelter to seniors in a pandemic

Marge was one of the first residents to move into Partridge Creek Senior Village. The opening came at the perfect moment. Marge was feeling unsafe where she had been living. But, due to finances she had no other place to go.

The day that she got the call that she could move in she was relieved and beyond excited!

"I feel safe here. That to me is everything... Every day I say thanks to God... I really appreciate my home here."

Your kindness has given Marge and other seniors a safe place to call home. During uncertain times, having a place of refuge makes scary days a bit easier. **You have given them comfort of a safe place when the world has been turned upside down.**

Thank you for being a blessing to seniors.





You are ending generational poverty

You made it possible for Lequilla and Maia to live their dream and support their families

Meet Lequilla and Maia. These two moms do EVERYTHING together. They have been colleagues, raised children together, and are inseparable best friends. Lequilla and Maia are now embarking on a new journey in the medical field with the support of, not only each other, but also **the support of caring people like you.**

Maia has always wanted to become a nurse. She is passionate about helping others and giving back to the community. Due to cost, working towards her dream seemed impossible. Being a single mother, paying for classes was difficult. Until she heard about the Health Profession Opportunity Grants Program (HPOG).

After attending an orientation, Maia knew that HPOG was the best option for her. With the financial assistance, becoming a nurse would be possible! She also knew that her best friend, Lequilla would benefit from the program. Lequilla also had dreams of becoming a nurse.

By the grace of God, both of them made it into the program! Together, they are able to be study buddies, encourage each other, and are there through ups and downs. **“Everybody needs a friend that pushes them when they don’t want to. I think that it’s great to have a friend that shares resources. I love our friendship. Never a competition. We do everything together.”**

With your help, Maia and Lequilla are not only living out their dreams, they are now able to do more for their children. **“HPOG helped me to provide for my family. I am a single parent, so I have to be able to financially support my son. Now I am able to do that without an issue.”**

YOU have given these women the chance to step out of the cycle of poverty. It is with your care and generosity that they now have an opportunity to give back to their community just like you have done for them.

It is because of YOU, that the dreams of these best friends are coming true!

Thank you!



Lequilla (left) and Maia (right) graduating from their Practical Nursing Program.

You make Christmas wishes come true



Give the gift of hope to a veteran, senior, or struggling family



Tamika's three daughters, Heaven, Ar-Reon, and Neveah

Life was turned upside down for Tamika when one of her twin daughters, Neveah, was severely burned. Little Neveah needed hospital treatments and multiple surgeries because of the seriousness of her burns. Tamika lost her job because she had to take so much time off to care for Neveah.

Since then, Tamika hasn't found a stable job. She is a single mother raising three children, Neveah, Heaven, and Ar'Reon. Not being able to afford anything for her daughters for Christmas leaves Tamika feeling like a bad mother. She fears they will wake up on Christmas morning only to be disappointed. **“My kids are awesome, and I feel horrible when I can't give them things, because rent and bills come first.”**

This Christmas, your passion for helping others can bring peace of mind to families that are already dealing with so much. You are the only way that homeless veterans, poor seniors, and struggling families will know they are not forgotten this season. **You can make the difference and donate today.**

With your help, those that are experiencing possibly the worst time of their lives will have the opportunity to feel loved and supported. Your neighbors desperately need your help. Your generosity will give holidays meals, warm winter clothing, and gifts to those that would otherwise go without. You can be an angel and give the gift of happiness and joy this Christmas.

Will you be a Christmas miracle for children like, Neveah, Heaven, and Ar'Reon?

Give the gift of **Hope**

Your generosity can provide the answer to someone's prayers this holiday season. It is your chance to bring tidings of great joy. You can be a Christmas angel.

YES! I want to give the gift of hope this holiday season!

To donate online visit us at www.voami.org

Enclosed is my tax deductible gift of \$250 \$100 \$50 \$25 \$_____

I would like to make this a monthly gift annual gift one time gift

Check Enclosed Credit Card: Visa Mastercard Discover Amex

Name on card: _____

Card Number: _____

Exp: ____/____/____ CVV: _____ Billing Zip code: _____

Billing Address: _____

Signature: _____

Homeless with no place to go

How your support changed Kenneth's story

Kenneth served our country proudly in the United States Army. After his service, he had a difficult time acclimating back into civilian life. To ease his mind, he started self-medicating. A journey towards sobriety is filled with many ups and downs. **“The first thing you learn in the military is that we do NOT surrender. The first thing they say in recovery is that you NEED to surrender. It was confusing to me.”**

Kenneth has now been sober for over 20 years! He worked hard and continues to work hard for his sobriety. Kenneth's life hasn't been without other challenges. He was without work, unable to pay his rent, and he had run out of options; **he was homeless with no place to go.**

That's when you stepped into his life. Kenneth found the Detroit Veterans Housing Program (DVHP) and the resources that were available helped him to change his life for the better.

While staying at DVHP, he started a group to support veterans. One of the goals of the group was to let veterans help other veterans with resources. Little did he know, but he had built a lasting community within DVHP.

Now, a few years later, Kenneth has his own place and continues to help veterans. He is part of *Best for Vets*, a local organization that works to assist those that bravely served in the military. Recently, Kenneth was honored with a Veterans Leadership Award for his dedication and commitment to helping veterans.

You were able to help Kenneth when he needed it most, and because of your generosity, Kenneth is paying it forward. That just goes to prove, you never know what a little kindness can do!



Giving back never felt so good

How Madeline inspired the spirit of giving in others

Madeline knew that she wanted to do something to give back to the community. After researching various options, she found the perfect fit helping students succeed through Operation Backpack®.

She shared her goal with her father-in-law, and he suggested she reach even higher by getting other family and friends involved. Madeline knew that if she was going to make the biggest impact possible, she would need help from others. It was then that she set out to contact everyone she could.

The results were nothing short of **AMAZING!** Madeline's dedication to uplifting the community really paid off. With the help of her caring friends and family they made sure that children started the school year prepared and ready to learn.

“People want to help those around them. It makes you feel good. Now I know how easy it is to help, even if it's just one person, I am more encouraged to do it again and again and again and again!”

Many thanks to the generous community members that supported homeless families this school year. It is because of people like you, that children are able to learn, grow, and excel. **THANK YOU!**



Did you know?

You can continue your impact by leaving a gift in your will for Volunteers of America Michigan.

- Please send me information on how to continue my impact by leaving a gift in my will.
- Please call me to discuss leaving a gift in my will for Volunteers of America Michigan.
My phone number is: _____
The best time to call is: _____
- My employer offers matching gift funds. Enclosed is the appropriate form from my Human Resources Department.



Thank you for keeping hope alive in your community!
Your gift is tax deductible as a charitable contribution. All gifts received are used where most needed to help care for people in need throughout the year.

Making the world better

Learn more about our Chairman of the Board, Michael Barry

Why did you join Volunteers of America Michigan's board? I believe that it is important to share your skills and talents to help others. I found that VOAMI does so much for so many of those most vulnerable and in need and that I could help VOAMI be successful by sharing my financial, organizational, and leadership skills. That I could be part of helping to make the world better.

What was your experience during the Coronavirus Pandemic? The pandemic became just one more obstacle in the way of reaching those in need. I believe that the pandemic highlighted the fact that there needs to be a wider net to support the most vulnerable.

Who inspires you? My children inspire me to be a good role model as a person who cares for others and shares with the community.

To learn more about Chairman of the Board, Michael Barry, visit us online at

https://www.voami.org/news_and_events/meetmichaelbarry

THANK YOU!

We knew that 2020 might be a difficult year, but we never could have expected this. It has been scary, and much still continues to be uncertain. Those who were already facing difficult times are having an even harder time now.

Whether it was sewing masks for seniors and homeless veterans, sending well wishes through video or written word, or donating to the Neighbors in Need food pantry, **YOU** made sure your neighbors were taken care of.

Your continued support of your neighbors and the community is truly inspiring!

We're in this together – even when we're apart.
Thank you, so very much.

May God bless you.



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