

The  
**UNION  
MISSION**

# MISSION NETWORK

*Food, Clothing, Shelter ... and so much more!*

MARCH 2023

**"...I didn't know  
that this place  
offered so  
many benefits!"**

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**INSIDE:** A Home Instead of a Hole | Family Ties and Will Power  
Dicing and Dreaming at Disney | From Hunger to Hope this Easter | Join Our Staff



## DARIUS RECLAIMS HIS DREAM

**I**t's been a long time coming, but I'm thankful!" Darius says.

"It" is a three-bedroom blue-gray house with white shutters, a fireplace, and a nice yard in Florence, S.C. Darius signed his mortgage papers and moved into his very own home last December.

But just three and a half years ago, his dream seemed impossible. Darius had been an industrial pipefitter at power plants, paper mills, and even The Pentagon after the 9/11 attacks. He'd always planned to return home, but moved to Norfolk to work in the shipyards.

Though he was making good money and had saved up enough for the down payment on his own house, Darius began experiencing tremors in his right hand and muscle weakness. One night at work, he could not braze a pipe overhead. "Every time I tried to get my hands up, torch in one hand,

metal in the other, I'd just lose it."

And his condition worsened with time. "I was constantly seizing. It was just like being seasick. I couldn't get a glass of water up to my mouth. I couldn't eat, I couldn't sleep, I couldn't think, I couldn't write, I couldn't do nothin' right."

One day Darius passed out. He recalls an ambulance attendant saying, 'He's back with us,' then woke up in the hospital after emergency brain surgery. "The surgeon said that so much fluid had built up on my brain that he couldn't believe I was still alive!"

While recovering on disability with the shipyard, a bad roommate situation forced him to move. "When my FMLA ran out, I was living off of my bank account, and all my savings didn't last long!" He never really had to live on the streets—"The Norfolk Police brought me over here."

"I was at the end of my rope when The Union Mission took me in. I was homeless. I didn't have an income. All I had was the clothes on my back."

Here, Darius joined a spiritual enrichment program, where Rev. Adrian Wyrick "adopted me. I guess he's my mentor." His doctors told Darius if he survived the next year, he was likely to live a fairly normal life. "Well, that was a long year!" but they were right.

But returning to pipefitting work seemed ill-advised, and eventually Darius found a part-time job in the meat market at a local Food Lion. He immediately began to rebuild his savings. And as part of Reclaim, the Mission's transitional housing and life-recovery program, he and Director Michael Marshall reset his goal of home ownership in South Carolina. In time, on Realtor.com he found the property he wanted to purchase, and in fall 2022 his offer was accepted. "In three years I went from purchasing a hole in the ground to purchasing a home!"

Darius is forever grateful to the Mission. "Without this place I don't know what would have happened to me. The Mission has been so good to me! They clothed me. They fed me. They gave me shelter, counseling, helped me get my disability! The spiritual side is out of this world! The Union Mission gave me a new birth, a new life... with a fresh start to a bright future."

The Mission got Darius' house set-up started off right with a bed, a mattress, and a Home Tote full of useful household items. He's working part-time at a Food Lion near his house, and his family is delighted to have him home and spending time with his grandkids.

"It's been a journey," Darius says, but cites something he heard from Joel Osteen: "Why not enjoy your life as it is? Even in the trials and in the tribulations of the journey, you can find joy!"

**For more about Darius' & Kyle's journeys,**

# Finding a Future

## in *Food*

***“A lot of things are falling into place.... Some force is definitely guiding me.”***



**K**yle discovered his calling in the kitchen. “I was just trying to find a craft in life, and then I realized it. I’ve been working in kitchens for so long, I might as well take it as far as I can. That’s what started the journey.” And he’s already moved all the way from the dish pit to Disney!

“I used to think that you can make money doing anything.” In high school and his early 20s, Kyle worked in national chain restaurants busing tables or washing dishes, but he noticed that the cooks and chefs were having a lot more fun. Kyle thought, “I really need to get onto the line.”

Once he did, Kyle discovered he had a real talent for cooking. Wherever he worked, “I really got behind the chefs and learned to work with food.” He worked his way up the culinary ladder, being promoted to more responsible jobs in bigger restaurants. “I figured I should go as far as I could with my culinary sense.”

But “a lot of food we have around here is Americanized, and I really just wanted to learn to be true to the cuisines.” As a sous chef at a fine-dining trattoria known for its respected executive chef and rustic Italian cuisine, “I decided to enroll myself into culinary school. I wanted

to learn to cook it all myself, to cook authentically.”

At ECPI, Kyle began the first of two 15-month culinary arts studies he would complete. He excelled in his hands-on classes, which covered everything from knife cuts to nutrition, broths to butchery, meat curing to wine pairings, and various international flavor profiles. He also thrived in his externship at Esoteric, an acclaimed farm-to-table gastropub at the Oceanfront. In his two years under the executive chef’s mentorship, Kyle mastered the things he was taught in school and made everything from scratch. “It’s been a big part of my experience: a place to understand the kitchen, tune up my skills, and get better.”

In school and trying to work as much as he could, “by the time the next payday came, I had already exhausted all my money.” By summer 2022, rising costs made it impossible for Kyle to keep his apartment. He asked his mom for advice. She recommended that he check out The Union Mission.

“I didn’t think I would end up in a place like this”—a homeless shelter—“but then I didn’t know that this place offered so many benefits!” As part of the David Development

Program for young men, “it was really refreshing to stay for free. I could just save up and get back on track. That helped me a lot!” Living at the Mission also enabled Kyle, now 29, to earn not just his diploma, but his culinary certificate and his A.A.S. in culinary arts from ECPI.

In January, Kyle moved to Orlando, Fla., to join the prestigious Disney Culinary Program. His ECPI career counselor recommended him for the opportunity to spend six months to a year cooking for the Disney resorts. Kyle impressed the interviewer, and it felt good to be recruited. “They only take but so many people. I am lucky to be one of the ones.”

He’ll be working in the restaurants within the Animal Kingdom theme park. “They have some great chefs that I can learn from! I just want to keep growing. I’m really looking forward to continuing my journey.”

That goes for Kyle’s faith, too. His mom and sister encourage him to commit his life to Christ, and “a lot of that resonates with me,” but “I’m still working it out.” Still, he concedes that “a lot of things are falling into place,” and he knows it cannot be a coincidence. “Some force is definitely guiding me.”

# Join Our Team: Caring Like Christ



## REV. ADRIAN WYRICK II

### WELLNESS PROGRAM CHAPLAIN

“This is a place where real ministry happens. The opportunity to meet the needs of those marginalized is realized within our walls. We are fortunate enough to be the hands, eyes, arms, legs, and mouthpiece of Christ on earth, and that requires that every effort is made to show compassion, love, and acceptance such as Christ does to each guest and to every co-laborer in this ministry.”



## SHERRILYN HILL-NORMAN

### CASE MANAGER / WOMEN'S SHELTER

“To me, Caring like Christ means to give of yourself unconditionally without judgment, to inspire hope and be empathetic, to show the love of Christ Jesus. I'm given an opportunity to give back, to pray freely, to share my testimony, and to impart to our guests strongly that this shelter is only a stepping stone to stability, empowerment, and independence. I love to see the growth and maturity in the ladies we serve.”



## WALTER MULLEN

### SHELTER MANAGER / BASHFORD MEN'S SHELTER

“I feel that, as Proverbs 31:8-9 says, I speak for those who are not heard in their homeless plight. They are not familiar with procedures and processes that are in place that one must follow in order to get assistance. I defend the rights of the individuals who have, but are not officially diagnosed with a mental health disorder. [I also attempt] to model how a Christian gentleman conducts himself...and spread the love of Christ.”



## REV. DIANA JOHNSON

### HOPE HAVEN RECEPTIONIST / CAMP REGISTRAR

“My circumstances for coming to Hope Haven were unusual. I believe it was not through my choice, but through God's choice, that I am here. I love being a part of the Mission to bring hope to those in need. The best part of working here is seeing the light of Christ shining so brightly through the Camp Hope Haven staff and donors I meet, and I love to thank our supporters for their service to God through their donations.”



## RANDY PARHAM

### FOOD SERVICES TEAM MEMBER

“It brings joy to my heart to know that I'm making our guests happy. Working with the staff, the teamwork, love, and the support that they give...I enjoy it all. There's so much love here at The Union Mission. I can fit in all over with the team.”

## Come work with us!

If you're looking for meaning beyond the mundane, maybe you should work at the Mission. We're hiring both shelter and ministry support staff!

### WOMEN'S SHELTER

Shelter Manager, Days (FT)

Shelter Manager, Overnights (FT/PT)

Operations / Housekeeping Staff (FT)

### DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Database and Reporting Coordinator

Grants Admin. / Project Manager

Communications Specialist, Digital

Learn more about these current positions or apply online at

[unionmissionministries.org/  
job-opportunities](http://unionmissionministries.org/job-opportunities)



In March we are starting to use Virtuous, a more robust and interactive customer relations management system. If you are registered as a volunteer or donor, you may receive emails from Virtuous or VOMO with instructions on how to begin setting up your profile. If you encounter any challenges with your donations or have any questions, just email us at [giving@ummnorva.org](mailto:giving@ummnorva.org)



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# Thank you for Your Generosity!



REV. JOHN W. GRAY, JR.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!  
In his great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope  
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*

“As I begin to think of Resurrection Sunday, 1 Peter 1:3 resonates in my spirit. Through Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice on the cross, we can be freed from the power of sin, and through His glorious triumph over death, we can rest in the promise of eternal life in Heaven with Him.

What a hope this is! It’s this ultimate hope that we want to share with our homeless shelter guests. So many of them have arrived dejected and desperate, helpless and hopeless.

You’ve heard me say it time and time again: Hope often begins with a meal! Here at The Union Mission, our guests find support and solace to meet their most basic physical and emotional needs: a hot, hearty dinner, safe shelter, whole-person wellness services, and staff who genuinely care like Christ for them. And as they do, they open their hearts to the truths of God’s love and God’s Word. And often, they find the true hope that we’ve found: an eternal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Our shelter guests are able to build a better life and a brighter future only because of your faithful giving and compassion. In this holy Easter season, thank you for remembering our homeless neighbors here, and thank you for giving so generously to help them live in victory!

In His service,



## From hunger to hope... It all starts with a meal!

You can provide physical and spiritual nourishment this Easter and beyond **for just \$2.78 per meal.**

For about \$70, you can help 25 men and women feel the love of Christ through a hot, hearty holiday meal. And our emergency shelter guests receive so much more than food. Here at The Union Mission, homeless neighbors in need find a safe haven and a warm bed, clean clothes, life-skills training, wellness support, counseling, housing assistance, and Christian staff who truly care. Your generous financial support gives them the opportunity to discover a better—and perhaps even eternal—life.

**Give generously today  
and transform lives!**

[unionmissionministries.org/Easter](http://unionmissionministries.org/Easter)

*Rev. Gray, I want to help the guests in your shelters resurrect hope!*

**I've enclosed:**  \$25  \$50  \$75  \$100  \$150  \$\_\_\_\_\_

I would like to commit to a **monthly gift** of \$\_\_\_\_\_. My first gift is enclosed.

**Method of Payment:**  Check  VISA  MasterCard  American Express  Discover

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ CCV Code \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

*Please make your check payable to The Union Mission. To make an online donation, go to [donate.unionmissionministries.org](http://donate.unionmissionministries.org).*



Please complete this slip and return it to The Union Mission with your generous gift. Your gift is tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. We will send a receipt for your records.

# Family

A BOND LIKE NO OTHER

As wonderful as every child is, there's something different about your own children or grandchildren. It's a special bond!



Stock Photo

We can also foster similar relationships with the causes we believe in and the organizations we trust. When the mission of particular charity resonates with you, you might decide to volunteer your time, become an advocate, or donate money in support of its work. When you do, the relationship grows and commitment deepens as their mission becomes your mission, too. Many people who share the mission of The Union Mission Ministries have gone so far as to include a gift to our organization in their will. Those individuals:

### Commit out loud.

When someone notifies us that they have planned an in-will gift to The Union Mission Ministries, they make a statement of their dedication to our mission and to those we serve. They communicate a long-term commitment to our family that helps us know how to plan wisely for the future.

### Create impact.

Every dollar you give to a charity you care about is an investment that lasts. There may be tax savings and benefits associated with your gift, but even more than that, your investment ensures that people's lives will be changed for good.

### Build a legacy.

Everyone wants to know their life counts for something. When you leave a charitable gift in your will, you design a legacy that will long outlive you. Romans 7:4 says that when we live and die in faith, "we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God."

Adopting The Union Mission Ministries as a member of your extended family and heritage through your will can enrich your life with deeper meaning as you enjoy the benefits and fulfillment of your future gift right now.

## IT'S EASY TO INCLUDE THE UNION MISSION MINISTRIES IN YOUR WILL!

To create a will that reflects your values and blesses others, visit [www.christianwill.org/umm](http://www.christianwill.org/umm) or contact Helen Sommer at 757-627-8686, x504 or [legacygiving@ummnorva.org](mailto:legacygiving@ummnorva.org).

### Comments / Change of Address:

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EMAIL 

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PHONE 

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No person is denied service based on race, creed, gender, disability, or national origin.

Photos are representative of actual Mission clients.

If you would like to donate much-needed supplies, please see [unionmissionministries.org/ways-to-give/give-goods](http://unionmissionministries.org/ways-to-give/give-goods). Thank you!

In the event contributions exceed expenses, extra funds will be used to feed, shelter, and care for the hungry and homeless throughout the year.

Financial information about this organization and a copy of its license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 919-807-2214 or 888-830-4989 for NC residents.

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