

*The*  
**UNION  
MISSION**

# MISSION NETWORK

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

SEPTEMBER 2024

**"If it weren't for the  
Mission...I'd probably  
be thinking about  
suicide again."**

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**INSIDE:** I'm so Thankful for this Place | Heart for Service  
Camp Hope Haven Wrap-up | Ladies Auxiliary

I'm so thankful for  
this place!



## His NFL dreams dashed, Fred found new life at The Union Mission.

Whenever the Atlanta Falcons are on TV this football season, Fred will be watching with more than a little longing. “That could’ve been me,” he’ll think.

But Fred never got that chance. Four years ago, while driving to a tryout with the NFL team, he fell asleep at the wheel and lost control. His car went over the guardrail, and flipped multiple times.

Grateful to still be alive, Fred thought he could make it to Atlanta for the tryout. But then he realized he couldn’t move his legs. His right leg was pinned in the wreckage. His left leg was . . . gone. It had been severed in the crash.

His life then took some major twists and turns. At first, good ones: He fell in love and got married. When his wife gave birth to twin boys, she went to stay with her mom for a while, “and she never came back,” says Fred. Fred couldn’t find steady work. He had trouble getting disability insurance. He struggled with anxiety, depression, and PTSD.

One night in late 2022, Fred decided to end it all. He wrote a suicide note, leaving what little money he had to his ex and his twin sons. His gun was loaded

when the phone rang. It was his best friend. Fred answered and said, “What’s up?” The friend could immediately tell something wasn’t right, and asked, “Are you okay?” Fred cocked the gun. The friend heard it, and switched over to a video call. He said, “Dude, you look like death.”

The friend talked Fred down from the edge, saying, “Something told me to call you at that moment. I didn’t know why. But now I do.” Fred emptied the gun, put it in a bag, and buried it deep in his closet.

Things got better . . . briefly. Fred found a work-from-home job. But he was in constant pain — mentally and physically. He smoked pot to numb it all. He eventually lost that job and, unable to make rent, was evicted. He fell into depression. He couldn’t find any place to stay, so he slept in his car in a Walmart parking lot.

That’s when he heard about The Union Mission . . .

### FINDING HOPE

When Fred first called the Mission, there weren’t any openings. He kept calling, and one particular staffer kept encouraging him to be persistent.

“He told me he had been through a process like I was going through,” Fred says.

“He said, ‘I’ve been in your shoes. But I went to the shelter and turned things around. Now I work here at the shelter. Now I’m giving back.’”

Those conversations buoyed Fred. He felt hope again.

When he came through our doors early this year, he immediately felt like things were falling into place. Thanks to friends like you, his immediate needs were met with meals, clothes, and a bed.

Our team helped him get doctor’s appointments and meds to address his physical and emotional pain. We also helped him pursue Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

And even though he’s still separated from his wife, he maintains a relationship with his twin sons, now 2. He calls them every night.

Fred is optimistic about his future, and he’s grateful for the Mission’s help — and yours.

“If it weren’t for the Mission, I’d probably be out on the street somewhere,” he says. “I’d probably be thinking about suicide again.

“So I praise God for the Mission. I’m so thankful for this place. It’s heaven-sent, for sure. Truly, I love this place.”

For more about Fred’s journey, see [Stories of Hope](https://www.unionmissionministries.org) at [unionmissionministries.org](https://www.unionmissionministries.org).

# A Heart to Serve

People come to The Union Mission for all kinds of reasons. Dedicated kitchen volunteer Glyndon or "Gigi" shares her story with us.

I truly love The Union Mission. They care deeply for the homeless. As for me, I believe everyone deserves to be treated kindly. Everyone needs to know that they are cared for and that someone is pursuing them. That's why I'm here. I'm watching out for them, too.

In 2016, I was searching for my twin brother, Cullen, all over Kansas City. Despite his schizophrenia and drug use, he's still my twin brother. He was my best friend growing up. I did resent him as a young person just because I didn't understand the sickness that he dealt with. I just thought he was destroying our family. He ended up on the streets and homeless. I began searching for him and putting flyers out all over the city.

I came across a mission similar to The Union Mission which was my first experience with a homeless shelter. I'm so glad God brought me to that mission in Kansas City because I didn't even know a ministry like that existed. They recognized him with the pictures that I had on the flyer and gave me updates when they last saw him. I thought to myself, "What an amazing organization!"

I retired medically as a [U.S. Marine Corps] staff sergeant after a spinal injury in 2011. I was a part of some great tours like OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom) and others.

With caring for a young daughter, that spinal injury was definitely a struggle. I didn't want to do anything else in my life except be a Marine. I

went through a severe bout of depression. The same year of my injury, my three best friends were killed in action in Afghanistan. My absolute best friend who was scheduled to come home from deployment ended up dying alone. It rocked my world and put me in such a dark place. I didn't want to wake up. I knew I didn't have a choice because I was a single mom. Quitting was not an option. Bella, my daughter, kept me going through those times. I thank God that He took care of me during that time and provided for our needs.

If you believe in something and you truly care about it, your actions speak loudly. I believe that my passion for the Mission is contagious. The Union Mission is not trying to put a Band-Aid on a wound, they're really trying to get to the bottom of the issues and fix those issues. My heart is here. God willing, I want to always continue this service. Serving here keeps my head in the game. If I could do this every day for the rest of my life, I would be a happy person, personally and spiritually.

I lost sight of God and went down a bad path [after losing so many friends in Afghanistan.] Ironically, searching for my brother actually helped me rebuild that relationship with God. I thank God every day I wake up now. I feel that doing something purposeful for someone or with someone is extremely effective. I have been dealt with so graciously by God, why would I not want to give back?



# A Summer of FUN and Faith!

CAMP



At Hope Haven, 350 campers enjoyed a fun and exciting week learning about Jesus Christ's love for them. They have enjoyed carnival night, petting zoos, swimming, bible study, nature walks, games, push-up contests and Princess Night. Seeds of grace have been planted, and more than 50 young people have chosen to accept Christ. Your gifts and prayers have helped change young lives for eternity!



## Join our Ladies Auxiliary!

From September through the end of May, these dedicated volunteers help out with special monthly service projects. Work is completed both on-site and off, and past projects include collecting needed items, addressing cards and envelopes, preparing and serving shelter meals, packing Housewarming Home Totes, or helping out at our Union Mission Thrift Store. Members also pray for our staff and guests. Though most of the ladies in the group are retirees, women of any age may participate. And membership is free!

If you'd like to learn more or join the Ladies Auxiliary, contact Christina at 757-627-8686, x 415 or [volunteer@ummnorva.org](mailto:volunteer@ummnorva.org).



## Combined Federal Campaign

About 100 homeless veterans find care and support at The Union Mission each year. If you're a current or retired federal employee or military service member who'd like to help, you can give through the annual Combined Federal Campaign. Overseen by the Office of Personnel Management, the CFC offers an easy way to donate to The Union Mission and make a real difference for those in need in our community.

- 1 Scan the QR code below or go to [cfcvab.givecfc.org](http://cfcvab.givecfc.org).
- 2 Under *Charity Search*, choose *Union Mission Ministries* or write in *CFC #61126*.
- 3 Make your annual pledge.
- 4 Change the world with your generous community support.



## Caring Like Christ

If you're looking for meaningful Christian employment, you may want to join our ministry. We have openings in both of our shelters and in our support departments. Take a look at our current staff needs at:

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



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# Thank you for Your Generosity!



REV. JOHN W. GRAY, JR.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Each September at The Union Mission Ministries, we look back on the summer and look forward to the fall.

In August we concluded another successful year of Camp Hope Haven. With 350 campers over the course of the summer, our Virginia Beach campus was abuzz with excited girls, boys, and teens sharing a week full of fun and friendship. More important, they saw God's love in action and heard the Gospel message—and about 50 of these young souls decided to follow Jesus or rededicated their lives to Him! And our summer staffers felt the joy of ministry to others and service to the Lord. We join you in rejoicing that your partnership made this a summer that changed so many lives, now and for eternity.

And for this new season, The Union Mission is preparing to provide safety and solace for those who will come to us hungry, hurting, and helpless. Some will have lost their job, family, or apartment. Others will be fighting medical, monetary, or mental health challenges. Most, with nowhere else to turn, will need our help to get back on their feet. And all will need hope.

That hope begins with their first meal here at the Mission. A hot, comforting dinner served with compassion opens the door to the practical help and spiritual hope that our homeless guests truly need. Your heartfelt giving makes a real difference in the lives of our neighbors in need. May God bless you abundantly as you bless others!

In His service, 

## Just \$2.99 can change a Life



For the cost of a hearty, healthy meal, you can put a neighbor in need on the pathway to help, wholeness, and hope! You can provide:

- 15 meals = \$44.85**
- 50 meals = \$149.50**
- 115 meals = \$343.85**

**Please give generously today!**



[unionmissionministries.org/meals](https://unionmissionministries.org/meals)

*Rev. Gray, I agree that hope begins with a meal—and I want to help!*

**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](https://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.



# Is Giving on Your Bucket List?

Though British centenarian Jack Reynolds started his bucket list late in life, he attacked it with gusto, Guinness World Records, and giving to charity. At 104, he became the oldest man to get his first tattoo—then at 105, the oldest to ride a roller coaster; at 106, the oldest to ride a zip line; and at 107, the oldest to guest star on a TV show. When Jack died at 108, mourners praised how he used each event to raise money for a cause close to his heart—making an impact in the here and now.

If generosity is still a “someday” item on your own bucket list, there’s no need to wait!

### SHARE YOUR RETIREMENT EARNINGS.

Your retirement assets can provide a great way to start giving now while stewarding your money wisely. It’s sensible to protect your earnings to ensure they will last as long as you need them. But what if you could use them now to bless others while also saving on your tax bill? Consider making a Qualified Charitable Distribution from your Individual Retirement Account to The Union Mission Ministries. Your retirement assets can change lives.

### SHARE YOUR TIME OR TALENTS.

If your retirement funds are tight, consider volunteering with a ministry you love. Your investment will pay lasting dividends in the lives you impact for good.

### We can give generously now because God gives generously always.

As 2 Corinthians 9:11 says, “You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us, your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.”

## IT’S EASY TO INCLUDE THE UNION MISSION MINISTRIES IN YOUR GIVING!

To include us in your estate planning or change lives with a legacy gift, contact Helen Sommer at 757-627-8686, x 504.

To create a will that reflects your values and blesses others, visit [www.unionmission.christianwill.org](http://www.unionmission.christianwill.org) or email us at [legacygiving@ummnorva.org](mailto:legacygiving@ummnorva.org).

### Comments / Change of Address:

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EMAIL

PHONE

No person is denied service based on race, creed, gender, national origin, or disability unless it is beyond the scope of our care.

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 those experiencing homelessness 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.

## THE UNION MISSION MINISTRIES

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