

# The Good Samaritan

## “I finally feel home”: How one traumatic moment changed Laurie's life



Home.

Merriam-Webster defines it as “one's place of residence.” It's a word many of us take for granted. It's not only something we should all live in, but experience with those we love the most. Laurie, a client in one of our permanent supportive housing (PSH) apartments, has longed to find that feeling all her life.

She grew up in a large household with five siblings. She was a “daddy's girl.”

“If he wanted to go somewhere, I wanted to go. If he was working on something, I wanted to help him,” Laurie said.

That all changed when Laurie turned 18, when her father physically violated her.

“It all started with my dad,” Laurie added. “He destroyed my sense of safety, purity, protection, and our relationship ... that started the framework for all the decisions I made in my life and how that traumatized me.”



Laurie moved out and tried to make it on her own.

“I dealt with a lot of dysfunction and abuse,” she said. “These family experiences brought me to SVDP because I didn't feel at home in my own hometown. I felt like an outsider, always pushed out, always ostracized.”

As a young adult, Laurie was anything but settled. She moved from state to state and married five times. She has four adult children. When she was a single mother, there were times she slept on a pullout couch or did her laundry in the bathtub.

As she has reflected on her life, Laurie realizes that the lack of love she received from her father led to her looking for love in all of the wrong places.

“I became a nomad,” Laurie said.

In 2013, Laurie moved to Louisville and stayed at several local shelters. At one point, she was sleeping on a bench under Joe's Crab Shack near the Waterfront.

“When you're out homeless, your thoughts are on survival. ‘What food am I going to be able to eat today? Am I going to get hurt, robbed, killed, or raped while I'm sleeping?’ A lot of stuff that will put stress on you,” Laurie added.

At the end of her rope, she looked up.

“I said, ‘God, I've been out here homeless for two and a half years and never asked You for help once. I'm so

sorry. You're my Father and I'm your child and I didn't come to You. I'm laying it at the foot of the cross ... all my problems, needs, wants. I can't do it anymore and I need your help,’” she said.

Shortly thereafter, Laurie visited the Open Hand Kitchen to eat. A volunteer who lived in one of our PSH units told her about the opportunity.

In Aug. 2015, Laurie moved into one of the scattered-site PSH units before moving onto our Special Works Campus a little over a year ago.

As a national best practice, PSH provides a stable, affordable, and long-term housing solution with mental healthcare and social services for those with disabilities. The people we serve in PSH are our most vulnerable. Everyone in PSH has at least one disability. We currently have 97 total PSH units, which includes roughly 300 people who are experiencing stability.

Laurie has a good “support system.”

“My experience here is I feel like everyone has open arms. They're just very sweet,” Laurie said. “I finally found the peace or sense of security I've been looking for my entire life.”

Laurie, who had a stroke several years ago and uses a rollator, received a free cleaning of her one bedroom apartment from Sumak Wasi Cleaning (pictured).

“My physical disabilities prevent me from doing the cleaning that I really want to do. This service, to me, is a Godsend,” Laurie added.

Home. It's a word Laurie doesn't use lightly. It's a word she is living.

*“I finally feel at home. St. Vincent de Paul has made me feel more at home than anywhere I've ever been. They're so friendly and treat us like Mathew 25, ‘Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers, you do to me.’”*



St. Vincent  
de Paul

LOUISVILLE

[svdplou.org](http://svdplou.org)

## The Good Samaritan

The monthly newsletter of  
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Send correspondence to PO Box 17126,  
Louisville, KY 40217-0126

Visit us at 1015-C South Preston Street,  
Louisville, KY 40203-2733

Jennifer Clark  
CEO & Executive Director

Pam Evans

Sr. Director of Advancement  
[pevans@svdplou.org](mailto:pevans@svdplou.org)

Nicky Peck

Volunteer Engagement Coordinator  
[npeck@svdplou.org](mailto:npeck@svdplou.org)

Tony Nochim

Communications & Public Relations  
Coordinator

Send comments or change of address  
notifications to [tnochim@svdplou.org](mailto:tnochim@svdplou.org)

## Our Mission

We house, feed, and support those in  
need with compassion and dignity.

## Support SVDP

To find out more about our work or  
make a donation, visit our website.

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St. Vincent de Paul Louisville

# Not one for the spotlight



Volunteer Charlie Jones is the last person who wants to be in the spotlight.

He's faithful, goes about his business, and prefers to remain in the background.

"I just like to serve," Jones said (pictured second to the left).

Every Thursday morning for the past seven years, Jones drives a handful of residents to Kroger for their weekly grocery pickup.

As a former Command Sergeant Major in the U.S. Army, Jones enjoys the camaraderie with our SVDP clients on the five-mile roundtrip.

"I'm retired military," added Jones, who served in the Army for 30 years. "I led a pretty tough life, so I thought I better give back ... But I just enjoy helping people."

It started out small. Jones drove a couple of clients in his pickup truck. After word spread, he now uses our SVDP van to ensure he has enough room.

"It's a good group of people," he said.

On one occasion, they took a trip to Walmart. Jones says eight went in, but only seven came out. With his military background, Jones made sure no one was left behind. Rain or shine, hot or cold, he knows many of their mannerisms.

"For the longest I can remember, one of the residents, Jeffrey, gets four 12-packs of Cokes. Do you realize that's seven a day? You learn all of his characteristics. But I like interfacing with people," he said.

Jeffrey, who has lived on our Special Works Campus for more than 25 years, is thankful for Jones' commitment and dedication to volunteering.

"He's only been good to us," Jeffrey said (pictured third to the right). "We're very grateful to have Charlie. He's a good guy."

At 86-years-old, Jones doesn't like to sit around. He wants to be out in the community, serving.

"I stay busy," Jones said.

Jones serves at the Open Hand Kitchen with the Dixie Kiwanas Club. He also picks up bread and desserts from various grocery stores or ministries and brings them to SVDP's feeding programs. Not to mention he and the Dixie Kiwanas Club host an annual Christmas party for our residents. They cook chili and raffle off gifts. It tends to be one of our residents' favorite events of the year.

**"I think St. Vincent de Paul has name recognition everywhere of doing good. I look at some of the people this organization serves, and without St. Vincent, they would either be homeless or a lot less fortunate than they are now."**

A Louisville native, Jones is a graduate of Bellarmine University. He has two sons, three grandsons, and two great-granddaughters.

If you would like to get involved, visit [www.svdplou.org/volunteer](http://www.svdplou.org/volunteer).

## Community Corner: Dine with SVDP at a Top 20 Steakhouse



This Valentine's weekend, share a meal and a sweet treat that truly comes from the heart.

We are partnering with Le Moo on its "Charity Night Programs," where you can dine to donate to our organization.

On Sunday, Feb. 15 from 5 to 9 p.m., you can eat at Le Moo and a percentage of the proceeds supports our mission to house, feed, and support those in need with compassion and dignity.

"Belle Noble Entertainment Group is delighted to have the chance to make a meaningful impact on our community by hosting St. Vincent de Paul through our Charity Night Program," said Julie Hinson, Corporate Engagement Director.

**According to USA Today, Le Moo was recently named one of the Top 20 Steakhouses in America.**

"This initiative has been both engaging and highly successful for numerous local charitable organizations at Le Moo, Grassa Gramma, and The Village Anchor," Hinson added. "Since the program's inception, we have proudly

contributed more than \$550,000 to local charities, a testament to the power of collective giving."

**When guests arrive, they should mention SVDP at the door to ensure they receive a gold coin. You will give this coin to your server so that a portion of your bill will go to support our organization.**

Though guests can walk in, Le Moo prefers you to make reservations. You can also do carryout (mention SVDP).



Le  
Moo is  
located at 2300  
Lexington Rd., Louisville, KY  
40206. For more information,  
visit <https://lemoorestaurant.com/louisville-steakhouse/>.

## UPCOMING EVENTS AT ST. VINCENT DE PAUL LOUISVILLE

# SAVE THE DATE

## You're Invited! Le Moo Charity Night

Sunday, February 15

## Roses & Rosé

Sunday, April 26

Our thanks to  
Louisville Metro  
Government for  
their support



## February Podcast

SVDP Board Chair Tyler Ward

This month's podcast focuses on Tyler's story and the importance of the Board's impact for the future of SVDP.  
[>>> www.svdplou.org/svdp-podcast](http://www.svdplou.org/svdp-podcast)

## Stock the Shelves

As part of our monthly initiative, we are asking for **for shelf-stable desserts** to bring some love and a little extra sweetness to families. This includes Brownie, Cake, or Cupcake Mixes; Graham Crackers or Vanilla Wafers; Candy Hearts or Gummies; Rice Cereal Treats; and more.

[>>> www.svdplou.org/stock-the-shelves](http://www.svdplou.org/stock-the-shelves)





## Single mother receives a kidney transplant

Demishia's birthday present came early.

As Demishia was going about her normal morning routine, she received a long-awaited phone call at 5:30 a.m. on Dec. 3, 2025.

The man on the other line said, "We have a kidney."

"I was very surprised. I was like, 'Wow,'" Demishia said.

Demishia was getting ready to drop off her 9-year-old daughter, Kira, at the bus stop.

She and her mother, Ruby, packed their bags, jumped in the car, and drove to UofL Health – Jewish Hospital as fast as they could.

Five to six doctors were awaiting Demishia when she arrived. The surgery took four and a half hours.

"I feel good. I'm still in the healing process," Demishia added.

In general, the average wait time for a kidney transplant is three to five years depending on where you live and blood type. Demishia, a client who lives on our Special Works Campus and turned 47-years-old on Jan. 31, received a much-needed kidney transplant.

"I feel very grateful because, let me tell you something, doing dialysis three days a week takes a toll on your body," she said. "When you come home, you feel nauseated. Your back hurts and you feel real, real tired. You don't want to do anything," she said.

In 2019, the overwhelming stress in Demishia's life made her body sick. Within a year's time, she went through a rough marital separation. Her ex-husband was on drugs. They were evicted from their apartment.

Shortly thereafter, Demishia became sick and saw the doctor, who told her that all of this "stress" caused someone who had no prior

health complications to experience double kidney failure.

As Bessel A. van der Kolk says in "The Body Keeps the Score", "We have learned that trauma is not just an event that took place sometime in the past; it is also the imprint left by that experience on mind, brain, and body. This imprint has ongoing consequences."

One of those traumatic "consequences" was double kidney failure. The stress in Demishia's life took such a toll on her body. She had to quit her job of six years. She and Kira ended up in a local shelter for 14 months. Not to mention the pandemic was spreading.

For more than six years, Demishia went to dialysis three days a week for about four hours. After deciding to go on the kidney transplant waiting list in Sept. 2025, doctors told her she had to quit smoking. She did so "cold turkey."

Demishia's mother, Ruby,

is a former nurse and cares for her. She also has a nurse that visits twice a week.

"It was a happy day. I don't think anyone could steal my joy right now," Ruby added.

Demishia would like to give herself a year or so to make a full recovery and regain her energy before returning to the workplace.

Demishia and Kira live in one of our permanent supportive housing (PSH) units.

For the past five plus years, Demishia and Kira have experienced stability, safety, and support.

"It helps me a lot. It helps me to get my mind together. It's so much better," Demishia said.

After a kidney transplant, it helps to be able to have a home to come back to for rest and recovery.



Demishia, left, received a kidney transplant and is with her mother, Ruby.