

The Good Samaritan

Shameka Parrish-Wright shares how SVDP supported her family's success

As Shameka Parrish-Wright will tell you, generational poverty is a pit so deep it's nearly impossible to climb out of.

"Every day I had to fight to make sure we can get through the day," Parrish-Wright said. "And so because of that, that struggle means you make decisions that are decisions of poverty, decisions that come because you don't know what your options are."

Poverty means nothing is permanent. The only constant is change.

"My mom struggled with poverty," Parrish-Wright added. "She lost her parents very young, and so we moved around a lot. I went to 17 schools, four colleges. I've lived in four states. We moved because, simply, even if we were in a one-bedroom, sometimes she just couldn't afford to rent."

As a teenager, Parrish-Wright's life was shattered. She was raped by her stepfather. The result was her first child and entrance into the foster care system.

"I feel like my innocence was taken from me by my stepfather," she said. "I had no ownership on what happened to my body."

As a young adult, Parrish-Wright did everything society told her to do—she got her GED, attended college, and worked full-time. But when poverty runs generations deep, even doing everything right doesn't guarantee a way out.

"Every time I was homeless as an adult, I simply did not have enough money to pay rent," Parrish-Wright added.

In 2002, she wanted to leave the evictions on her record in the rearview mirror.

"I had come down to Louisville several times over the years," Parrish-Wright added. "And mapped it out, had all the plans, load my kids up, put my stuff in storage, and drove down to Louisville."

Unfortunately, poverty isn't confined to one place. Shameka and her kids experienced homelessness twice. In May 2014, they became a part of our Homes with Hope Program. This is housing that includes case management.

"That is the first time that my family has seen consistent stability," she said.

For the next four years at St. Vincent de Paul, poverty couldn't compete with stability.

"So, participating and joining in with St. Vincent de Paul really changed my family. Because my kids not only had us being able to secure housing, but they had a community with the afterschool programs, with the summer program. We even started a cooking program," Parrish-Wright said.

Or something as simple as her two boys learning how to wrestle.

"They got to go to do things. They got to grow," Parrish-Wright added. "They became student of the month several times at the center. We

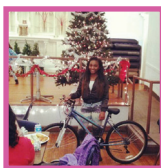
built relationships with some of the people who were there as staff. They got to join in, and they got to feel that community I had wanted when

I was a young child and a young adult. They got to experience that. And I'm telling you, the success we've seen in our family can be accredited to that."

This stability and support have been a generational game changer in the home.

"I never saw any of that," she said. "I just wanted them to survive and live, and now we get to see futures. We get to see careers. We get to participate together because these are the gifts that keep giving. I think when somebody makes a donation, they don't know where it goes, but my family is proof of how far those donations go and continue to go. And now I'm able to give back."

(continued on page 2)





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The Good Samaritan

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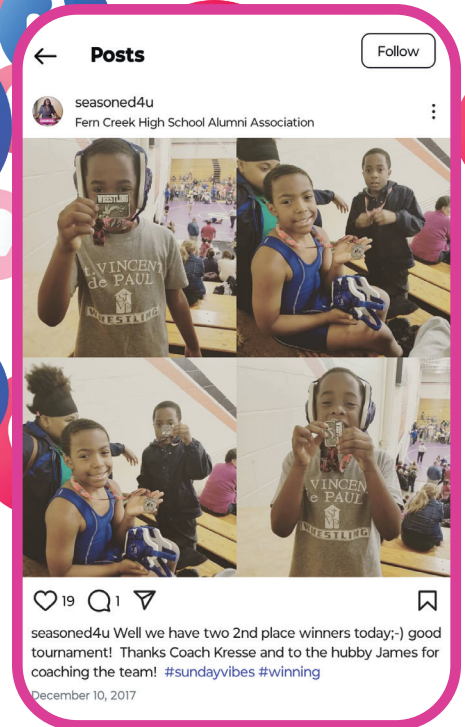
St. Vincent de Paul Louisville



In 2019, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recognized the transformation that stability and support brought to Parrish-Wright's family (see top center photo on page one).

Today, Parrish-Wright is a source of stability for her family and community. She's the Louisville Metro District 3 Councilwoman and Executive Director of VOCAL-KY, an organization that assists low-income individuals.

"The second time being introduced to a lot of the amazing programming that St. Vincent de Paul had is the reason why I'm

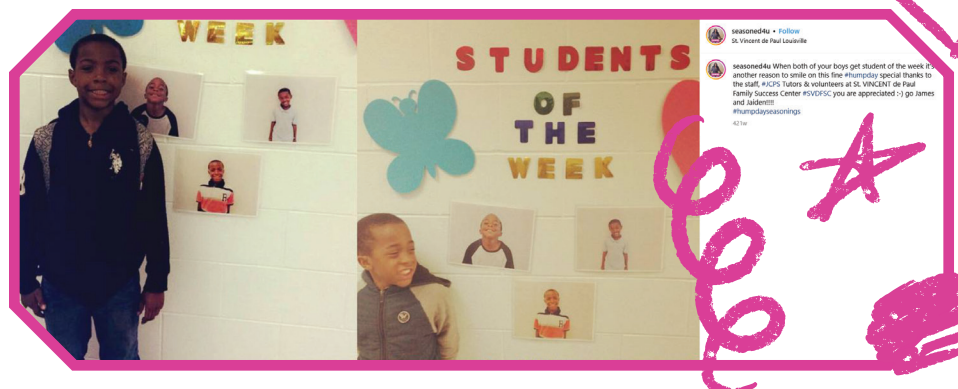


sitting here today as an elected Louisville Metro Councilwoman," Parrish-Wright said. "It started with that work and being supported by St. Vincent de Paul."

Parrish-Wright's parents never owned a home, but now she does. Her older kids joke they're the "struggle kids," while the younger ones are the "mortgage kids."

Married 18 years, she's a mother of six and grandmother of four.

Parrish-Wright was the keynote speaker at our seventh annual Roses & Rosé brunch (see page four).



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RAISE THE WHITE FLAG: SHERYL HOWARD SURRENDERS

Sheryl Howard was done digging. “Everyone’s bottom is different,” Howard said. “Up until that point, I always made excuses about what I was doing.”

After a physical altercation with a man, essentially over drugs, she landed in the emergency room. She admitted to Seven Counties representatives that she had an addiction to drugs.

“I wanted to raise the white flag. I’m so glad that I surrendered. God helped me to overcome it and I had the support of family and friends,” Howard added.

That support included our St. Jude Program, which was a program focused on helping women with substance use recovery. (This program is no longer a part of our present services, as we have shifted our resources).

“The day that I moved into St. Jude, it was actually my 35th birthday, which was Jan. 13, 1999,” she said. “The program taught me to be a more responsible adult ... it helped me to become a better mother” (she has one daughter).

When the new St. Jude Women’s Recovery Center opened the next month, Howard was the first resident to move in.

“It just filled me up with so many emotions because the building and everything was brand-new and just to know where I came from—from the streets. I was filled with so much gratitude to know that people donated their time and money to believe in people like me, that we could turn our life around. I was so grateful, and I still am.”



That is one of the reasons, even 26 years later, that Howard is a Program Aide at our Domestic Violence Transitional Housing Program.

“My primary reason is to give back,” Howard said. “Though it’s a different program, it’s still serving people ... some of the clients that walk through the doors here, I can still see myself in them because of the lifestyle I lived prior to getting sober. It all kind of goes hand in hand.”

Howard’s decision to do drugs had nothing to do with any childhood wounds. She had two loving parents.

“My childhood was great. It was basically peer pressure, just wanting to belong with a certain group of people at school or in the neighborhood,” Howard added.

Howard has been sober for more than 26 years. She asks supporters continue to “not give up” on the clients we serve.

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LOUISVILLE**



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August 25 - 30

Give for Good

September 18

Clubs & Cocktails

September 21 and 23

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This podcast shares stories of people, partners, and programs in the Louisville community and across the country who care about our mission.

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A Derby Style Brunch to Remember: 7th Annual Roses & Rosé Blooms Bright

We would like to thank the 250 guests who attended the seventh annual Roses & Rosé on Sunday, April 27, at The Olmsted. The event celebrated the caring women in our lives with Kentucky Derby themed attire, rosé wine, mimosas, a silent auction,

Vendor Village, wine pull, and keynote speaker Shameka Parrish-Wright.

"We look forward to giving back to the community, understanding what it's about, and having a little fun with friends," said attendees Lecia and Rob Slavens (see top center photo).

All proceeds from Roses & Rosé benefit our Domestic Violence Transitional Housing & Rapid Rehousing Program. With your support, 38 meals were purchased for those currently in the program. The dinner was held on April 28.

Mercy Academy senior Lily Sumner won the first annual Rose Award for showing exemplary commitment to serving those most in need (see bottom right photo).

Thank you for making this event so memorable! Download event photos by scanning the QR code below.

We would also like to highlight the following sponsors for making this event possible:

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