

The Good Samaritan

Thankful to Be Together Again: Siblings Reunited Through SVDP

This holiday season, Chris and Tamara could not be more thankful.

"It's a miracle," Tamara said. "Before I came here, I was feeling hopeless. I feel like God arranged this. So many things had to line up. It's just incredible."

"I got my sister back," Chris added. "She thinks I'm saving her. She doesn't realize she's saving me."

Siblings who were states away and hadn't talked in 13 years are now reconciled through St. Vincent de Paul.

"We're sticking together through the most difficult time of our lives," Chris said.

Though both are experiencing homelessness for the first time, their paths were very different.

"We grew up together, very close family. The family kind of just fell apart and scattered into the wind when my mom died in 2012," Chris added. "She was the backbone of the family."

After working at Kroger for several years and renting a condo, Chris decided to try the "van life" after watching some YouTube videos. He bought a Ford Econoline and lived in it for three years. He retrofitted it with a full-sized bed and computer desk. His goal was to travel across the country.

"I had just been diagnosed with heart failure, atrial-fibrillation

(AFib), a few other things. I had good health my entire life," Chris said. "I checked out on a lot of levels because of the medical diagnosis, depression, alone in the world, family all gone."

Eventually the money ran out and vehicle broke down. He abandoned his van and walked on foot.

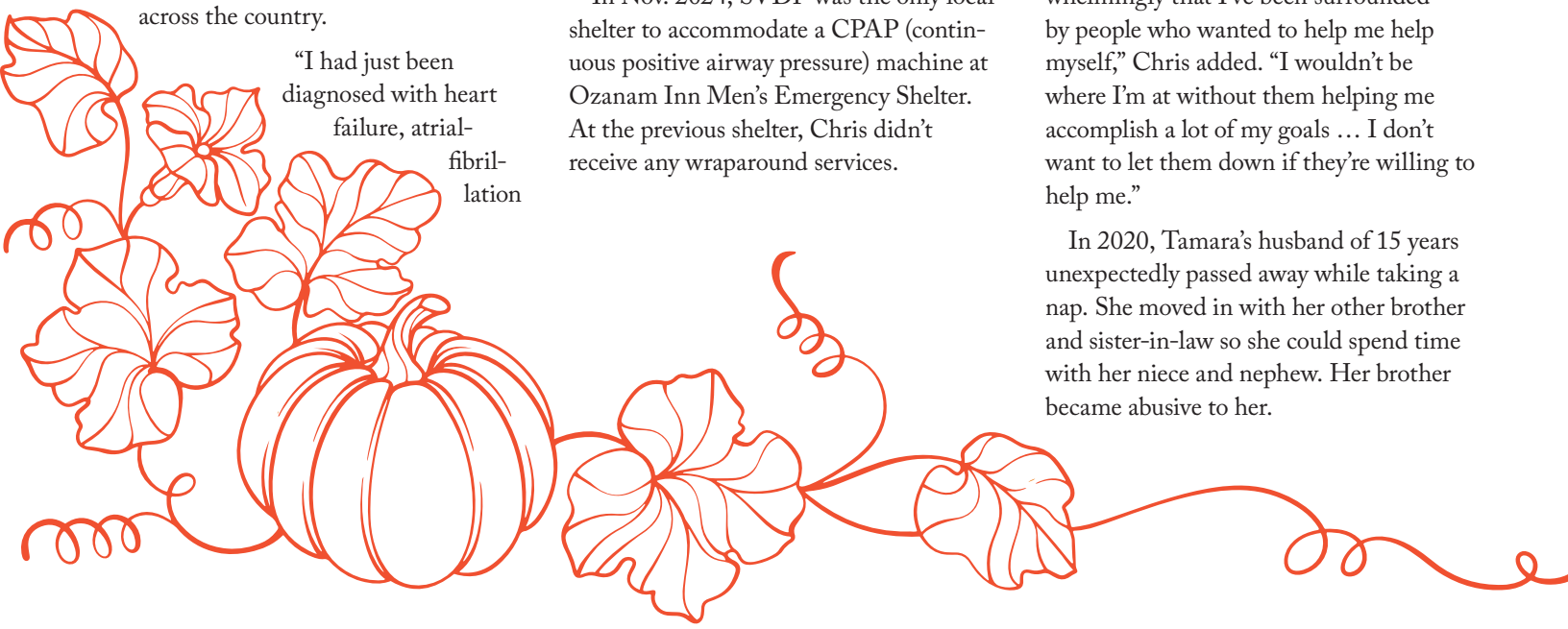
In Nov. 2024, SVDP was the only local shelter to accommodate a CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine at Ozanam Inn Men's Emergency Shelter. At the previous shelter, Chris didn't receive any wraparound services.

"St. Vincent de Paul is a place full of elite people on the frontline advocating for homelessness. They've put together a support network. The best of the best," Chris added.

He's grateful to the SVDP staff for guiding him in the right direction.

"Since I've been here, I've felt overwhelmingly that I've been surrounded by people who wanted to help me help myself," Chris added. "I wouldn't be where I'm at without them helping me accomplish a lot of my goals ... I don't want to let them down if they're willing to help me."

In 2020, Tamara's husband of 15 years unexpectedly passed away while taking a nap. She moved in with her other brother and sister-in-law so she could spend time with her niece and nephew. Her brother became abusive to her.





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The Good Samaritan

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St. Vincent de Paul Louisville

Around this time, Tamara received misinformation through some family members that Chris had died.

"It hit me really hard, and I was in a bad place," Tamara said.

She sent a last-ditch email to an "old email" to see if he was still alive. They were able to not only reconnect, but reconcile.

The Mental Health & Substance Use team told Chris about our Domestic Violence Program, encouraging Tamara to call 2-1-1 Metro United Way to secure a bed. After paying her way from Florida to Louisville to flee her domestic violence situation, Tamara has been in our DV Program since August.

"Everybody here is great. This place is special," Tamara added. "It's a safe refuge with a fountain of knowledge and a wealth of resources."

The siblings are sticking together.

"We're both going through one of the most difficult times in our lives than we've ever been in, but it's not hopeless," Chris said. "We feel like we're where we're supposed to be and doing what we're supposed to be doing. That this is the way. Now we have an opportunity to move forward with our lives together."

Chris and Tamara are close to securing permanent supportive housing.

"This place is going to allow us to achieve everything we need to move on with our lives," Chris said. "We will never forget this period of our lives, but we don't want to come back."



Holidays at
St. Vincent
elle

From Gratitude to Giving Back: One Volunteer's Story



The Open Hand Kitchen holds a special place in Becky Duncan's heart.

It was 20 years ago this Thanksgiving when Duncan volunteered there for the first time.

"I had tears in my eyes because I could have been (in their shoes) if my family didn't help me out," Duncan said. "I felt so much gratitude that it just made me want to continue to come."

Duncan's life was much different a few months prior to that Thanksgiving in 2005. At 23 years old, Duncan had gall-bladder complications and was prescribed Lortabs. It led to an addiction to drugs that just "spiraled from there."

For the next several years, Duncan was in and out of jail for calling in prescriptions.

"My parents were like, 'We love you, but we're not getting you out. We'll come visit you, but you're on your own.' Obviously, I was mad at the time, but it was the best thing they could have ever done," Duncan added.

It was the wake-up call Duncan needed. She has been sober since May

17, 2005. She credits "drug court" and the relational support she received as the difference makers.

In August 2005, Duncan was released from jail. Through her friend, she heard about a volunteer opportunity at the Open Hand Kitchen on Thanksgiving.

"I was wanting to just give back because I felt like people helped me along the way," she said. "Sometimes the right person can make a huge difference in your life."

For the last two decades, Duncan has served a special meal at the Open Hand Kitchen nearly every year (pictured with her best friend and her friend's kids).

"It's very rewarding to me because I feel very fortunate that I had a family that when I got out, they were there to help me," Duncan said. "But I feel like other people, they can't get ahead. For me, it's just trying to make somebody's day and make them feel important."

In 2021, Duncan's record was expunged. It's a part of the story she shares with those in the Open Hand Kitchen.

"I want people to know there's hope. That no matter what you've been through, there's a way out," Duncan added. "I tell people my story while I'm there because I overcame all this stuff. I was a felon. I went to jail. Now, I do well in life."

Thanksgiving is her favorite holiday.

"This is the highlight of my day. I love spending time with my family, but I love the opportunity to help somebody who just needs a smile," she said. "And I think I just want people to know that they're not less than anybody who's sitting at home with their family. Some people just have unfortunate circumstances."

If you would like to help during the holidays, visit www.svdplou.org/holidays.

UPCOMING EVENTS at ST. VINCENT DE PAUL LOUISVILLE



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December 13

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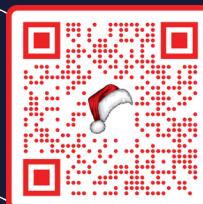
Stock the Shelves

As part of our monthly initiative, we are asking for **Thanksgiving-themed foods** such as Boxed Stuffing Mix, Boxed Instant Mashed Potatoes, Boxed or Bagged Cornbread Mix, Boxed Macaroni and Cheese, Canned or Dry Gravy Mix, Canned Green Beans, Canned Sweet Potatoes, etc.—in November. For more information, visit www.svdplou.org/stock-the-shelves.

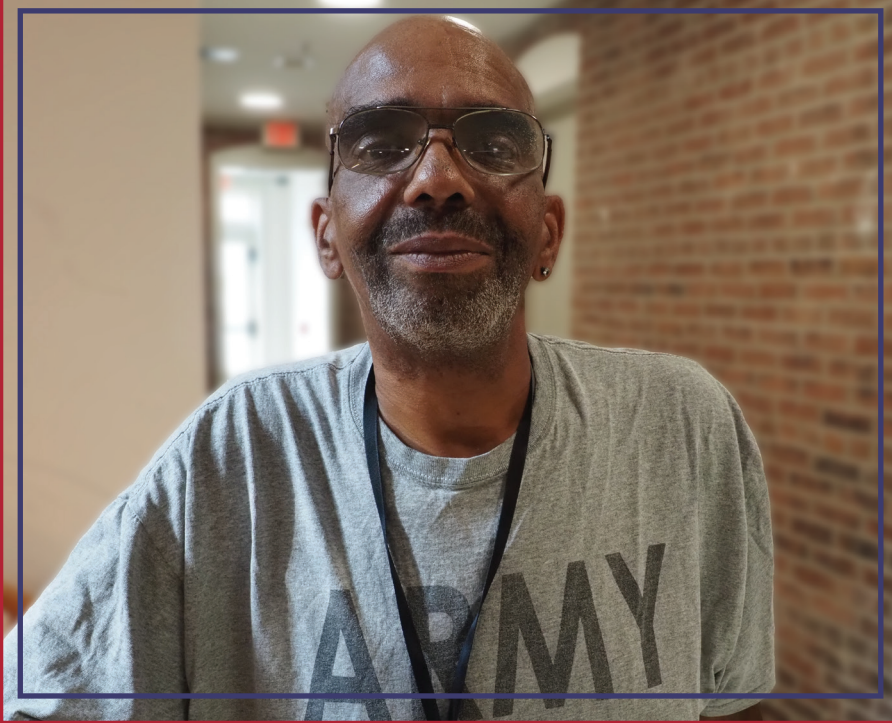


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Honoring Veterans: Phil Finds Hope and Camaraderie at SVDP



Phil arrived humbled and hopeless.

"It was like my favorite song, 'The End of the Road,' but it's not the end," said Phil, who is 60 years old. "I realized this was the beginning, but I was down and a little bit depressed because of the problems I was facing."

At the time, Phil was married and an associate pastor in Columbus, IN. After facing some personal problems, Phil moved to Louisville.

In May 2024, he moved into a private room in one of the campus apartments on our Special Works Campus. At Waypoint, he pays a monthly rent for his room. There is a shared bathroom and community kitchen.

"This place has given me hope again," Phil added. "I was feeling hopeless until I met some of the guys because they were

so content, happy, and didn't want to move."

The camaraderie on our campus has changed Phil's perspective and kept him going in this season.

"You would think my journey, everything crashed then. But I got here, and I sat outside on the picnic table. I didn't know anyone for two weeks. By my third week, I started talking to Tim and Mark (Waypoint residents)," he said. "I believe God puts people in a place for a reason for a season. What are the chances that Tim came from the same hometown as my parents and the more we opened up, it turns out that my father and his mother used to work at the same bowling alley ... that's what helped me transition. It was hard at first because it's being like the new kid in the school."

Phil is one of roughly 40 Veterans we support through either transitional

housing or affordable housing on our campus.

A Veteran in the Army National Guard from 1982-86 who also worked overseas for a security company during the Gulf War, Phil is facing his past and now helping others do the same. He hosts a weekly Bible study for the residents.

"I found my niche. I'm so used to talking to people. When I started sitting outside, I got to meet some of the guys from the shelter and ladies. We'd talk. I got to meet different people," Phil said. "It felt good to be able to talk to someone who is going through something and I can relate to a part of it because of what I've went through, especially when it comes to substance abuse."

Through our Mental Health & Substance Use Program, Phil has attended one-on-one counseling sessions and the weekly Veterans group, where they have coffee and donuts. He has met with two of SVDP's Mental Health Clinical Services Coordinators—Ariel Perkins (a Veteran) and Pam Scott.

"I realize since I've been here, and the struggle with myself ... I learned to find me," Phil added. "I let Ariel know what's been haunting me when I went overseas. Now I understand that it's not good to keep stuff in. If it wasn't for Ariel and Pam, I truly thought I would have lost it. I'm opening up to Ariel and it feels so good. I see things differently now."

When Phil leaves, he would like to return to work or volunteer at SVDP.



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