

The Good Samaritan

A mother and daughter start a new life at St. Vincent

When it rains, it pours.

Within a year's time, everything seemed to unravel in Demishia and her daughter Kira's life. Demishia was going through a rough marital separation. Her ex-husband was on drugs. They were evicted from their apartment. She received news that she had double kidney failure, which came as a shock because she had no prior health complications. She had to quit her job of six years. They ended up in a local shelter for 14 months. Not to mention the pandemic was spreading.

Many people would throw in the towel, but not Demishia. She persevered.

"I just did. The Man upstairs. Just through prayer. Just making it day by day. Thinking positive. I never had thoughts of giving up," Demishia said.

They came to SVDP at a time when they needed stability, safety, and support. Since fall 2020, Demishia and Kira have lived in one of our permanent supportive apartments on our Shelby Park campus.

"You all do a lot of great things for people to start a new life," Demishia added. "I feel like I started a new life when I came to St. Vincent de Paul because if I went somewhere else, I probably wouldn't have a chance."

They live at East and West Family Apartments, which serve homeless families and have 6 two-bedroom and 4 three-bedroom apartments each. These are permanent supportive housing units in which housing assistance, such as long-term leasing or rental assistance, and supportive services are provided to assist a houseless person with a disability in achieving housing stability.

Their two-bedroom apartment is affordable, and utilities are included in rent.

Demishia is less stressed financially and doesn't have to "worry about being broke."

"We love it here. There's a lot of help here," she said. "I'm not sure where I'd be without St. Vincent de Paul. I'm happy and blessed."

Demishia and Kira access meals at the Open Hand Kitchen and groceries from the Food Pantry. They also receive case management.

Kira, an incoming second grader, has been involved in the Family Success Center. The FSC supports families and individuals so that we can enrich their family life by providing year-round educational and social development opportunities for at-risk children. This includes after-school and summer programming to elementary and middle school students.

The first week Kira attended our after-school program, a staff member taught her how to shoot a basketball. She enjoys "learning, playing, and eating" at the FSC, and told us, "Everybody is respectful and kind."

With Demishia having dialysis three days a week, her mother, Ms. Ruby, travels from Detroit to help with Kira and things around the apartment.

"I am overwhelmed," Ms. Ruby said. "I have never seen anything like it before. St. Vincent de Paul is so helpful with so many things that I could never even imagine ... I was just in awe."

It's also about the little things. The playground next to their apartment. Mr. Paul, who oversees Paul's Garage and the Clothes Closet, gave Ms. Ruby and Kira Kentucky Derby hats (see picture). Kevin Hyatt, the Open Hand Kitchen Supervisor, gives Kira extra desserts. They call him "Uncle Kevin."

"In here, within St. Vincent de Paul, what you all do is what makes the difference," Ms. Ruby added. "People on the streets would not be able to survive if it wasn't for this."





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The monthly newsletter of
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St. Vincent de Paul Louisville

A Cinderella Story



Britt sits at his kitchen table overlooking Spalding University's lacrosse team practice on its sports fields. He has come a long way in the last two years.

"I've really been blessed. It's not one of those Cinderella stories. My story is not done yet. I take it one day at a time," Britt said. "I'm not really where I want to be, but I'm not where I used to be, and I'm so grateful for that."

A former client at Ozanam Inn Men's Emergency Shelter, Britt secured housing and moved into his two-bedroom condo in April. It was recently renovated and fully furnished. Still, that's small compared to the opportunity to start a new life.

"St. Vincent is really a blessing," Britt added. "This place gave me more than a bed or a condo, it gave me a purpose. It helped me to learn that responsibility and accountability are a part of life."

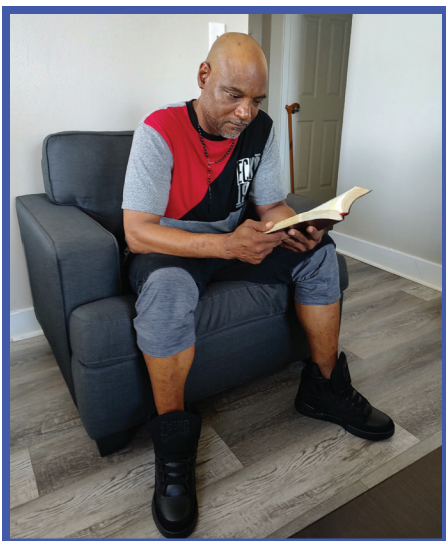
A Louisville native, Britt's road to recovery was full of detours and delays. At home, he grew up in a dysfunctional environment. He was molested at the age of 8, his dad was a pimp, his stepdad was on drugs, and his family moved a lot. While

his mother did her best, Britt's formative years were trying to please his father and get attention anywhere he could.

"A lot of it was trying to seek the approval of my real father," he said. "My mother instilled positive values in me, but there were a lot of things that didn't get instilled. I really thought that fulfillment was in chasing women, in sex, in drugs, and in money. To me, that was the king of the mountain. At some point, when I got there, I never felt as empty as I've ever felt in my life. So God let me know that's not where a successful life is at."

On the field, Britt excelled in sports at Doss High School, and was offered a scholarship to play running back for Georgetown University. That dream was short lived when injuries and off-the-field issues caused him to drop out of high school his junior year. Years later, Britt would get the highest GED score in Kentucky history.

"I always took myself as being a dummy because I was the only one in my family that didn't graduate or amount to anything. They all had trades or career jobs. It made me feel like a black sheep," Britt said.



During his young adult years, Britt had a difficult time learning responsibility. His record is rough—he had stops in prison for fraud and two separate charges of assault, struggled with substance abuse for more than three decades, sold drugs, stole from dope dealers, and has been evicted.

“Sometimes you can lay in a pile of doody so long that it seems like it’s a pretty nice place to be,” Britt added. “Then, somebody comes by and says, ‘Hey man, it stinks. It smells. Don’t you know you’re lying in that?’”

However, it was the path Britt was used to taking for so many years.

“Knowing it and doing something about it or overcoming it are two different things. In other words, I could always dictate my next use, but I could never dictate my next recovery,” he said. “In between all of the darkness, God would give me moments of epiphany.”

In March 2023, Britt was staying in a local homeless shelter. He described it as squalor conditions. It was infested with bed bugs and mice running around. A couple of months later, Britt was at the Open Hand Kitchen when Kitchen Supervisor Kevin Hyatt told him about Ozanam Inn.

“St. Vincent took me when no one else would. St. Vincent put meaning in my life. I’m very grateful for more than just the things, but the compassion and the people that I met there,” Britt said. “Without St. Vincent, I’d hate to think where I’d be.”

About a year after securing a bed at Ozanam Inn, Britt was given a Housing Voucher to move into his two-bedroom condo. This is through our Collaborative Housing Initiative (CHI), which is one of our off-campus housing programs. CHI provides permanent supportive housing to 46 homeless individuals and families where at least one member of the household has a disability. Britt, who has battled kidney failure, goes to dialysis three days a week.

CHI enrolls participants who have barriers such as low income, past or present substance use problems, a criminal record, or a history of victimization. CHI units are scattered-site housing units in various locations throughout the city. Currently, there are 46 total units providing a minimum of 63 beds, but we often provide 80 to 100 beds when serving larger families.

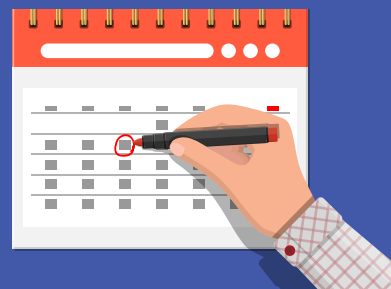
We provide case management to each household, establishing an individualized case plan, connecting them to needed resources, and helping clients set goals that will allow their household to achieve self-sufficiency. We also provide administrative support and a housing specialist to coordinate with landlords.

Your financial generosity is what allows individuals like Britt to experience a Cinderella story on the other side of a long road to recovery.



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Scramble: Tuesday, September 24

Clubs & Cocktails

For event information, please contact
Makenzie Greenwell at (502) 272-2134 or
mgreenwell@svdplou.org.

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Homeless Initiative grant

\$262,500

This funding allows Ozanam Inn Men's Emergency Shelter to remain open 24/7.



Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

\$181,000

This grant continues to allow us, in addition to the Homeless Initiative, to provide staffing and services to single men at Ozanam Inn.



External Agency Fund (EAF)

\$44,000

This funding aids our Domestic Violence Transitional Housing & Rapid Rehousing Program (\$14K) and Family Success Center (\$30K).

Grants Awarded for 2023-24



Summer at St. Vincent de Paul Louisville is soon to be in full swing! Our Family Success Center is hosting seven weeks worth of summer programming from June through July. Last year, we had roughly 55 students attend our summer programming.

Kasian, an incoming third grader, attended summer programming last year. Her grandmother, Tonya, was thankful she could stay active during the summer.

"This kid doesn't sit still, so there's no way I can keep her attention and her entertained every day," Tonya said. "She's very active and she needs all she can get from these programs. We need more of this in the city. This has a lot to do with why kids are getting into what they're getting into."

Kasian's mother is a single parent, and Tonya is grateful that summer programming is free for their family.

"I'm in Kasian's life because her mom is a single parent," Tonya added. "When it comes to paying bills and making meals, this is very helpful that the FSC's after

school and summer programming are free. I like the friendliness of the staff and the way they handle the kids. The fact that it's free is a bonus when you're already struggling to make ends meet. It's a lifesaver."

The "Backpack League" summer camp, which is in partnership with JCPS and Evolve502, is from June 20 to July 12 for incoming 1st-8th graders. This is the second year we will host the Backpack League on our Shelby Park campus. The four-week summer camp is Monday through Friday at the FSC.

"As we expand each year in numbers and in programming, we can say another Backpack League and summer program will be even more exciting for our participants," said Kendra Hayes, FSC Program Manager. "We have new vendors and enrichment programs that will keep them engaged and ready to have some fun this summer. We look forward to serving and implementing our programs for our surrounding communities."