

The Good Samaritan

Annie Smith goes from homeless to store manager in 4 years



At 50 years old, Annie Smith overdosed on the streets of Louisville.

A mother of three, Smith had struggled since her teenage years with alcohol and drugs. She had checked in and out of various treatment facilities, but nothing seemed to help. Nothing seemed to work. Nothing seemed to curb her craving.

"It's hard for me to even picture me sleeping outside like I used to. I can't believe I let myself get as low as I did," Smith said. "I tried to get help a bunch of times and it never worked because I was going for other people. I think you really have to do it for yourself. You just have to be tired of living that life, and I was."

In fall 2018, Smith arrived at St. Vincent de Paul Louisville's St. Jude Women's Recovery Center. The 30-day program was named after St. Jude, the patron saint of hopeless causes, which seems fitting in Smith's road to recovery.

Thirty-eight years into substance use, it wasn't too late to reclaim her life and wasted time.

"St. Vincent de Paul helped me learn to live again. This place definitely saved my life," Smith added. "It gave my kids back their mom. It gave my grandkids back their 'grannie.' My mother is my best friend and she finally gets to have

a relationship with me ... thank God she's still alive to see me sober. That she knows that I did it."

Smith was then asked to stay on another six months at St. Jude to be a house manager.

"I swear that's what saved my life," she said. "When I walked out of St. Jude, I was nine months sober."

"Annie did well and was ready to recover at St. Jude. We are lucky to have her," added Pam Scott, SVDP's Clinical Services Coordinator.

Towards the end of her stay at St. Jude, Smith was given an opportunity to apply at our Thrift Store at Dorsey Plaza. She was hired on as a full-time producer, which was primarily hanging clothes, but she worked hard and worked her way up.

"It made me feel like I could make it, finally. When you're down so far, and you don't even have a driver's license

to apply for a job, you don't even know where to start or how to get to the first step. Then, when things start falling into place a little bit, you're like, 'Maybe I can do this,'" Smith said.

Within a year, Smith was promoted to store manager.

"Through hard work, I have achieved more success than I thought was possible. I went from being homeless to being the store manager all in four and a half years. This is all because St. Vincent de Paul gave me the opportunity," Smith added.

Smith never missed a day, despite the four-hour round trip to work.

"It's a two-hour bus ride out to our store—one way—and she did that for probably a year and a half, and we were open at 8 o'clock," said Patrick Watts, SVDP's Director of Stores.

When another coworker moved to New York, she donated her car to Smith.

Today, Smith has seven grandchildren, two of whom she is the primary guardian.

"I try to remember every day how bad it was," Smith said. "Drug addicts and those who are homeless don't mean to be that way. It just hurts my heart for them. I always try to tell them there are other places they can go."

When you donate or shop at our two Thrift Stores, 100% of the net profits help fund our programs. For more information, visit www.svdplou.org/thrift-stores/.

HOW TO HELP SUPPORT OUR STORES

DONATE



We rely on the generous support of our donors for all we sell

Please bring us your gently-used clothing, household items, and furniture

USED ITEMS



SHOP



100% of the net profits help fund our programs and services for those in need

This advances our mission to house, feed, and support those in need with compassion and dignity

SUPPORT





ST. VINCENT
de PAUL

LOUISVILLE

The Good Samaritan

The monthly newsletter of
St. Vincent de Paul Louisville

Send correspondence to PO Box 17126,
Louisville, KY 40217-0126

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

Dave Calzi
CEO/Executive Director

Pam Evans
Director of Development
pevans@svdplou.org

Donna Young
Director of Conference Affairs
& Volunteer Services

Tony Nochim
Communications & Public Relations
Coordinator

Send comments and change
of address notifications to
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.

svdplou.org



svdplouky



svdplouky



St. Vincent de Paul Louisville

Open Hand Kitchen celebrates 40 years of service



Juju may not know where he's going to sleep at night, but rest assured he knows where his next meal will come from.

He walks to St. Vincent de Paul Louisville's Open Hand Kitchen every day to eat.

"I feel like once I come here I don't have to worry about where I'm going to get my next meal. I don't have to worry about feeling unsafe on this campus. It's sacred ground here," Juju said.

That "sacred ground" feeling Juju gets may be because the Open Hand Kitchen started serving out of St. Paul Catholic Church. In October 1983, it was gifted to SVDP and the building was converted into a community kitchen.

Fast forward four decades later, on the Open Hand Kitchen's 40-year anniversary, and it's still a staple to clients on campus and those in the Shelby Park and Smoketown neighborhoods.

Debbie has walked to the Open Hand Kitchen from her nearby apartment for the last decade. When asked where she

would go if SVDP wasn't around, Debbie said, "I wouldn't know. This is the only place I know to go. It helps out a lot."

The Open Hand Kitchen provides two hot meals a day every day of the year to all who come through its doors. If you're hungry, we'll feed you, no questions asked.

"It helps me out tremendously, more than you can imagine," Juju added. "There's nothing but love here. I feel this is a place I genuinely feel love without any ulterior motives. I feel they're genuinely helping the community and anyone in need."

Over the last year, we experienced a 44% increase in those we serve averaging almost 10,000 meals per month.

In comparison to the rest of Jefferson County, Shelby Park households receive four times more SNAP benefits (59%) and three times more are below the federal poverty line (52%).

"This is a different side of Louisville I hadn't seen before," said Hymella Ashby, an Open Hand Kitchen cook.

It's a side of Louisville that not everyone wants to see, whether it's seniors, teenagers, toddlers, or veterans in need to eat.

Former Marine James Brown was stationed in Afghanistan and Iraq. He is a part of our Veterans Transitional Housing Program in the basement of Ozanam Inn Men's Emergency Shelter.

"St. Vincent de Paul is very generous in feeding people," Brown said. "I come all the time for lunch and dinner."



"This is the only place I know to go. It helps out a lot."



Open Hand Kitchen History

The genesis of that generosity was in October 1983, when the Open Hand Kitchen had lines of more than 100 people waiting to be let in for lunch and dinner. SVDP provided 12,000 free meals in its first month of service.

Within the first decade, the Open Hand Kitchen became the largest agency in Kentucky to feed those in need, with more than 25,000 meals being served each month. Early on, volunteers from churches throughout Louisville served meals Monday through Friday.

The basement initially housed the kitchen, dining area, and offices. In September 1995, renovation work began on St. Paul Catholic Church so that the Open Hand Kitchen could move to the main body of the church for all kitchen functions.

Open Hand Kitchen Process

At the Open Hand Kitchen, the kitchen staff prepares lunch and dinner for roughly 150 to 200 people each meal. They begin cooking at 9 a.m. for lunch at 12 p.m., and again at 2 p.m. so that dinner is ready at 5 p.m.

"I don't cook any differently when I'm at home. I can cook for large groups because my family's so large," Ashby said. "I like feeding our guests and making sure they get two good meals a day."

The kitchen staff wants to make sure its guests are eating a quality meal.

"I try to cook it like it's a home-cooked meal, like a Sunday dinner. That's what my mom taught me. I just want to make

a good meal," said Kevin Hyatt, the Open Hand Kitchen Manager. "I enjoy giving back ... and putting a smile on somebody's face. I like to cook."

Each meal is nutritious and typically consists of a meat, vegetable, starch, and salad to hit on the main food groups.

The Open Hand Kitchen is primarily run on donations. As you can imagine, they go through a lot of food every month (see graph below).

With 62 monthly meals to prepare for, the Open Hand Kitchen has 62 volunteer teams totaling 400 people. These groups range from schools, businesses, SVDP conferences, churches, neighborhood friends, nuns, and individuals. Several teams have served together for decades.

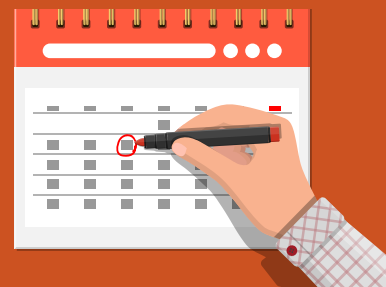
"St. Vincent de Paul is a very good organization who helps people in need and those who are willing to help themselves," said Dennis Cowhig, who has been serving at the Open Hand Kitchen for 15 years. "If I can help someone do better in their life, then put me down for that."

"When I retired, I just wanted something to do to help people out," added Jack Sullivan, who also volunteers. "I know ... this is something to get them through bad times and hopefully onto a better life."

If you would like to volunteer or donate to the Open Hand Kitchen, visit www.svdplou.org/get-involved/.

Save the Date

UPCOMING EVENTS AT
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL LOUISVILLE



Come Join Us!

Thanksgiving Meal

November 23

Santa Shop

December 10

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

Our thanks to Louisville Metro
Government for their support



WE SERVED 111,576 PEOPLE FROM 10/22-8/23





Family Success Center welcomes new Program Manager



The kids have a nickname for Kendra Hayes (pictured above left), the new Program Manager at St. Vincent de Paul Louisville's Family Success Center (FSC).

"They call me principal. That's so funny," said Hayes, a mother of two teenage daughters. "I guess they call me that because they see me handling and doing everything at the FSC."

By starting just before summer programming and then promptly launching into SVDP's after-school program, Hayes hasn't had a lot of downtime.

"Kendra hit the ground running with summer and after-school programming, meeting vendors, making schedules, and managing her staff," said Julio Anthony, SVDP's Associate Director of Community Support. "With her background in youth development, she has been able to implement her own style of grace and purpose. The summer is typically the most demanding season, so she stepped up to the plate and picked up where I left off. We are blessed to have her."

Hayes sees so much potential for the FSC to come alongside parents and



students because the ripple effect of a strong family is a flourishing society.

"I just want the kids to feel like this is a place that they would want to come to," Hayes added. "I'm stern with them, and I do have the whole mother tone and look ... I was worried that they wouldn't feel comfortable around me, but they give me a hug every day and say, 'See you tomorrow.'"

Hayes is a native of Louisville's West End and has worked at JCPS since 2013, mainly in a preferred substitute teacher role in special needs. She worked at Title I schools—which are schools with high numbers of children from low-income families where the state ensures they have equal opportunity for academic achievement—such as Central and Western High Schools, as well as Engelhard and King Elementary Schools.

She now picks up students at Engelhard Elementary for our after-school program Monday through Thursday.

"I want to create a safe zone for children," she said. "I'm excited I can implement things that will come to life and make a difference in the kids' lives."

Hayes was planning on becoming a 4th grade teacher at a private school this upcoming school year, but found out about this position while working with Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) at the FSC site earlier this year.

"I just felt like this was the perfect fit and what I was looking for," Hayes said. "Anything dealing with being creative, coming up with programs, and utilizing my ideas motivates me for this role."

One of Hayes' ideas is to start "Girls of Greatness," which would focus on helping girls through the different stages of womanhood. She wants to influence students in the little things in hopes that she changes the trajectory of their lives.

"I'm not in our kids' households, but I can evaluate and see how they act here to know what they may be around daily," Hayes added. "Some of our kids might not know how to deal with this or deal with that, or how to act, or how to say 'I'm sorry,' or how to say 'thank you,' so there are certain things I feel like I can get them in the mindset of doing so that they grow over time."