

# messenger

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Volunteers of America of Indiana

## THEODORA HOUSE CELEBRATES 5-YEAR MILESTONE

Volunteers of America of Indiana hosted an Open House on August 27, 2009 to celebrate the 5-year anniversary of Theodora House, its women's residential reentry center. Congressman Andre' Carson, of the 7th Indiana Congressional District was the featured speaker, joined by the Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Correction, Edwin Buss and Deputy Mayor of Indianapolis, Olgen Williams. The facility's multi-purpose room served as the venue for nearly one hundred colleagues, friends and neighbors to gather to mark this milestone. Tours and light refreshments were provided.

A leading provider of gender-responsive reentry services, Volunteers of America of Indiana has championed the establishment of strategies that address the unique needs of women and their children upon release. The award-winning Healing Families program, located within Theodora House, provides targeted interventions to families separated by incarceration, providing assessment, individual, group and family counseling and trauma treatment.



*Congressman Carson addresses the crowd as CEO Tim Campbell looks on*



*Congressman Carson greets Shannon Schumacher in Kids Korner*



*A large crowd gathered in the multi-purpose room to hear remarks.*



*Commissioner Buss tours Theodora House with Steve Runyon and Debi Marshall*

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*Volunteers of America is a national, non-profit, spiritually based organization providing local human service programs and opportunities for individual and community involvement.*



## TIME FLIES

by Tim Campbell, President/CEO

You've heard the old expression, "Time flies when you're having fun". There is much truth in that old saying, as time really does seem to fly by. Just five short years ago, staff at Volunteers of America were preparing for the grand opening of Theodora House, our transitional residential facility for women returning

from the criminal justice system. Theodora House also serves as our corporate headquarters for the Indiana affiliate.

An amazing amount of study and planning went into the Theodora House project, long before the site was secured and the renovations started. We learned that women were (and still are) the fastest-growing population in the correctional system, and that most services available for female offenders did not address critical areas of need for these women. On average, seven of every ten women in corrections have a history of victimization, yet trauma recovery classes were seldom offered. Most have children under age eighteen and will regain custody of those children upon their release, yet family reunification efforts and parenting skills classes were absent from most programs. Even substance abuse treatment was not universally available, despite three-quarters of women in corrections having a substance abuse disorder.

Theodora House, and the accompanying Healing Families Program, has attempted to change all that. What began as a transitional home for 38 women in the fall of 2004 has blossomed into a comprehensive treatment center for up to 104 women. In just five years, we have added significantly to our service array. In addition to case management, employment placement assistance, substance abuse treatment, and life skills programming, we now offer trauma recovery classes, a summer camp for the women we serve and their children, and aftercare case management support to our clients for up to one year following their departure from Theodora House. We now take the Healing Families Program behind bars, to the women housed at the Marion County Jail.

The community has embraced Theodora House, and for that, I thank each of you! But there is so much work yet to be done. Our goal is for each woman served at Theodora House to gain the necessary skills to become an independent, contributing member of our community. With your continued support, we can achieve that goal. When we do, everyone wins – our client, her children and family, the employer who will hire her, the overburdened criminal justice system that will not see her again, and the fellow taxpayers who will welcome her contribution to the betterment of the community. You know, time really does fly, and I can hardly wait to see what the next five years brings!

### OUR MISSION

*Offering Hope... Restoring Dignity... Transforming Lives...  
Volunteers of America of Indiana is a faith-based organization that provides life-changing services to enhance the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual needs of individuals by providing counseling, rehabilitation, job placement, and residential services. We serve individuals transitioning from the correctional system, the elderly, chronically addicted, and mentally ill.*

### CORE VALUES

COMMITMENT   INTEGRITY   CHARACTER   EXCELLENCE   SERVICE

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## “Later is Greater”: Jason Bradley’s Story

Jason Bradley lives in Indianapolis. He is happily married to his beautiful wife Tina, has a great job and life is going very well for him. This new life, however, is a far cry from the old life he had in Buffalo, New York several years ago.

To the casual observer Jason’s childhood years in Buffalo were quite normal. In fact, Jason described his early childhood as “beautiful, with a lot of love in the house.” However, all was not as it seemed. “I looked up to my uncles,” Jason pointed out “I wanted to be just like them.” But the young and impressionable Jason later understood that some of those relatives whom he admired so much were involved in criminal activity...as he described it “pimps and gangsters.” It was many years later before the impact of those early years would reveal itself.

Jason was 30 years old when he committed his first crime. He robbed a bank! “I could hardly believe how easy it was!” he exclaimed. He had developed a fascination with the life his uncles led. “To me it was glamorous!” Before long Jason was pulling off local bank heists on a regular basis. “It became addictive to me; I was so good at it, I took it on the road. I went from city to city robbing banks.” Jason would wear various disguises, from wigs to mailman or security guard uniforms. He lived a double life. He had a full time job and lived at home with his first wife. Hitting two banks while on his lunch break and going right back to work was something Jason did with ease. Jason thought of himself as a “Robin Hood” kind of bandit.

“I enjoyed giving the money away to people who needed it! It would make me feel better about what I was doing. It made me feel like God, feeding my people.”

Jason’s bank robbing days ended one day when he was making his get-away after a hold-up. He dashed into a nearby store to change out of his latest disguise. The store clerk was in a back room having lunch so Jason quickly changed clothes and proceeded to pretend to be a customer. Within minutes the bank was surrounded and police officers swarmed all nearby businesses. Jason acted as calmly as possible as the cops searched the store, all the while hoping that they would not notice the duffle bag filled with cash at his feet. Employees from the bank were called into the store one-by-one but were unable to identify Jason as the robber. After brief questioning, a veteran federal officer, who was assigned to Jason’s case, determined that Jason was indeed the suspect that law enforcement had been searching for over the past eight years. Jason’s luck had run out.

Sixteen years in a federal penitentiary was Jason’s sentence. “I had a lot of time to think about what I had done and I was determined to change.” Jason chose to serve his sentence without visits from family or friends. “I didn’t want anyone to see me locked up,” he said. He studied and received a Bachelor’s Degree and volunteered his time teaching and counseling other young men in prison.

Prior to his release into the community, Jason was sent to Volunteers of America to complete his sentence. He remembers vividly the cold winter day when he arrived at Brandon Hall, the Volunteers of America work-release facility for men. “I had slippers on and my feet were cold.” He recalled

the entire process, the pat down, the breathalyzer test, the paper work. “But what stands out in my mind was how warm the building was and I remember thinking to myself, this is a new beginning.”

Cliff Graham was Jason’s case manager at VOA. “As a client, Jason was compliant with our program. He participated at a level to be emulated by all clients,” said Cliff. “Even as a criminal, I was never a follower,” Jason said, “so I buckled down and tried to learn as much as I could from the VOA staff.” His greatest challenge however, was finding a job. “I did not have any form of ID so it was hard for me.” Jason said. He was visibly moved as he recounted with gratitude the enormous effort put out by his case manager to help him to get his birth certificate so he could apply for a drivers’ license. “We ran into so many obstacles, but Mr. Graham made phone call after phone call to help me get my birth certificate until finally he found someone who could help.” Jason remembered also the efforts to get him a job made by Robert Franklin, VOA Employment Specialist.

“All the classes were helpful to me, even the drug addiction classes because we were all struggling with emotional issues of one kind or another.” Jason likened his love for money to an addiction. “I had no respect for that money, I would just blow it! A man that goes to work everyday and earns an honest paycheck will value that money much more.”

Jason felt confident when he was released from Volunteers of America. It had been seventeen years since he had seen his parents and he was ready to face them. Today, Jason still works at the same job he found while at VOA. He has since been promoted and is held in high regard by his co-workers. He is frequently called upon to speak at local groups sharing his story and motivating others.

“VOA was the only family I had. They were patient with me and I could not have made it without them.” Jason and Cliff would always end each conversation they had with the words “it will get greater, later”. Today, those words have proven to be true.



## THEODORA HOUSE WELCOMES TWO NEW ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Theodora House welcomed two new advisory board members at the quarterly meeting in July. Linda Algie, Independent Sales Director for Mary Kay, and Missy Supan, Account Manager for Allegra Print & Imaging are the newest members. Ms. Algie and Ms. Supan are both long time volunteers and supporters of Theodora House.

The Advisory Board, composed of local community members, meets quarterly to learn about updates on programs, events at Theodora House, and to share information.

Other members of the board are: Major Darryl Pierce, Commander, Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department, downtown district; Pastor Tom Pollock, Metropolitan Baptist Church; Leah Orr, Community Leader; Eric Hoch, HOCCS; Kathy Infanger, Marion County Prosecutor's Office; and Kathy Lee of Cline, Farrell, Christie, Lee and Caress.

## HOPE HALL COMPLETES EXPANSION



Hope Hall, located in Evansville, Indiana, completed an expansion of its existing facilities. This expansion allows for an immediate increase in bed capacity of 20 clients, with the potential to increase even more as need and demand arises. Since opening in June 2004, Hope Hall has consistently increased the number of clients served and with the expansion should continue that trend into the foreseeable future.



## DISCIPLES OF CHRIST MEMBERS VOLUNTEER AT THEODORA HOUSE

From July 26 through July 31, 2009 community members throughout the country were in Indianapolis for the General Assembly of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ. Volunteers from the meeting served at Theodora House. The Disciples of Christ meeting brought close to 10,000 people to the city and had 100 to 250 participants volunteering in the community each day. At Theodora House, youth volunteers from Central Florida and northern Indiana brought color and brightness to the first floor hall ways with a painting project. Special thanks to all the Disciples of Christ visitors and volunteers who chose to serve Volunteers of America and other agencies in Indianapolis!



## VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA HOSTS NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

From June 5-8, 2009, more than 350 of Volunteers of America's leaders and care providers from across the United States came to Washington, D.C. united under the theme "Moving Forward in Faith and Service." Attending from the Indiana affiliate were: Tim Campbell, President/CEO; Steve Runyon, Chief Operations Officer; Debi Marshall, Division Director of Women's Services; and Shannon Schumacher, Division Director of Clinical Services. In addition to the conference workshops and meetings, local staff were able to find time to visit Capital Hill to share information about the agency with local members of Congress. Additionally, during this year's annual meeting, Shannon Schumacher graduated from the inaugural class of the Volunteer's of America Executive Leadership Program. Debi Marshall and Steve Runyon are members of the upcoming series which began in June, 2009.



*Shown Left to Right: Tim Campbell, Shannon Schumacher, Debi Marshall & Steve Runyon*

## SUMMER CAMP 2009 A SUCCESS



Volunteers of America of Indiana, Inc., in partnership with Target®, hosted its second annual summer camp for vulnerable children, who have a parent involved in the criminal justice system. The summer camp is a continuum of the agency's award winning Healing Families Program and is one of many ways that Volunteers of America uses to provide interventions to these very high risk children and families. Summer Camp 2009 was held on three consecutive Mondays in June –the 8th, 15th and 22nd. An average of 21 children and 11 adults were served each week by camp staff and volunteers. The activities this year were really great with Comedy Sportz volunteering their time, Clay Works doing pottery with the kids, and Silly Safari's bringing their animal show back for a second straight year! Through the generous grant of our corporate sponsor – Target, we were able to provide the kids and moms with t-shirts, gas cards for the caregivers, healthy snacks, big bubble activities, picture frames, pictures, pottery and games as well as the entertainment. A breakdown of the population indicates 14 boys and 14 girls attended the camp, ranging in age from 1-17. One of the many highlights included a military father, who took some leave time, to bring his children here from Kentucky to spend time with their mother. It was neat to be a part of that family memory!



## BACK TO SCHOOL BLAST A BIG HIT!

Backpacks filled with school supplies were distributed to the children of Theodora House and Brandon Hall residents at the annual Back to School Blast parties, where Volunteers of America residents and their families come together for family fun and school time assistance. With generous donations from Family Bible Church, Overcoming Church of Christ, Saint Philips Episcopal Church, Southeastern Church of Christ, and Zeta Phi Beta, school supplies were collected for over 50 children! The Theodora House Back to School event was supported by youth volunteers from Central Christian Church in Pueblo, Colorado, First Christian Church in Greenville, North Carolina, First Christian Church in Loveland, Colorado, and First Christian Church in Rochester, Indiana who were in Indianapolis for the General Assembly of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ. The volunteers assisted in creating decorations, developing family activities, setting up the party, running activity booths, and serving ice cream to families.





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