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messenger

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Volunteers of America of **Indiana**

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA OF INDIANA RECEIVES FAMILY STRENGTHENING LOCAL OFFICE OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

Volunteers of America of Indiana was presented with the first-ever Volunteers of America/Annie E. Casey Foundation Family Strengthening Local Office of Excellence Award on June 7, 2010 in recognition of its work to build stronger families and end the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Volunteers of America of Indiana received a \$20,000 award in recognition of its programs, practices and policies aimed at improving child well-being by strengthening entire families. The award is new this year, raising up one local Volunteers of America office that supports its client and staff families through six agency wide domains: leadership commitment, financial commitment, human resources policies, community leadership, program implementation and financial education.

Volunteers of America of Indiana is a leader in offender re-entry, prison-impacted families and trauma-informed services in the state, which play key roles in their family strengthening efforts. Volunteers of America Indiana has embraced the family strengthening mission in a variety of ways ranging from altering their strategic plan to reallocating existing funds and raising new ones to ensure that incarcerated

mothers and fathers have every opportunity to reconnect with their children.

Beth Lovell, Director of Family Strengthening with the Volunteers of America National Office states, "Volunteers of America Indiana has the prestigious distinction of becoming the first winner of the Volunteers of America Family Strengthening Office of Excellence Award. Volunteers of America Indiana has shown their commitment to improving the outcomes of children by serving whole families. This local office rose above all others in a competitive competition due to their phenomenal parent and family programming, and commitment in

strategic planning, fundraising, and allocation of resources. They have a long history of supporting their clients' quest to parent effectively, and are pioneers in understanding that a healthy parent-child bond can play a key role in successful re-entry, and ultimately in improved outcomes for children."

For nearly 60 years, The Annie E. Casey Foundation has worked to build better futures for disadvantaged children and their families in the United States. Volunteers of America has partnered with the foundation since 2002. Both organizations hold a shared vision that "children will do well when parents do well, and parents do well when they live in supportive communities."



Pictured L to R: National Board Member Curt Zaske , President/CEO Tim Campbell & Shannon Schumacher

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STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY – ONE FAMILY AT A TIME

by Tim Campbell, President/CEO

Our workplace here at Volunteers of America of Indiana is much like yours. Customer service is paramount. Staff are diligently focused on providing the very best programs and services possible for our clients. In this age of “doing more with less”, our team of skilled professionals manages to make a real difference in the lives of our at-risk neighbors. Offering hope, restoring dignity, and transforming lives is not just our mission phrase, it’s our approach to serving every client every day.

Once in a while, we have an opportunity to take stock of our progress in meeting our customer service goal. That was certainly the case in June, when Volunteers of America of Indiana was selected as recipient of the first-ever Annie E. Casey Foundation Family Strengthening Local Office of Excellence Award. This recognition is a testimony to the tireless efforts of our entire team of professionals.

Almost all of the clients we serve have a family, and those family members are often the silent victims of the homelessness or criminal justice system involvement our clients face. History has

an uncanny way of repeating itself, and our hope is that the families of our clients will not fall into the same traps that ensnared their loved ones. We reach out to the families of our clients, especially the children and their caregivers, to provide the supports necessary for success. That includes offering rent and utility payment assistance to eligible families through the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program. It means providing Family Coaches to work with at-risk families and guide them through the rough spots they encounter. It also includes offering summer camps for the children of our clients, and providing back-to-school supplies and school uniforms for those who cannot afford them.

It’s wonderful to be recognized for our outstanding work in strengthening families, and we are honored to receive the prestigious Office of Excellence Award. We realize that healthy families lead to healthy communities. Yet, despite the progress we have made thus far, our work is far from done. Daily we see the great need for this work. We invite each of you to join us in working to strengthen the building blocks of our communities—families. Together, one family at a time, we can make a healthier and better future for these children.

OUR MISSION

Offer Hope... Restore Dignity... Transform 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.

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Troy Bellamy: Getting it Right this Time!

Although Troy Bellamy (not real name) spent 30 years on the wrong side of the law, he never made much progress as a criminal because he always got caught. Troy was recently released from Brandon Hall, the Volunteers of America Indiana half way house for men. "Every day I have to keep myself in check," Troy said. "You can't be a criminal for 30 years then decide to quit the next day." Every day is a struggle for Troy who was very open and honest as he talked about his 30-year crime spree, the price he has had to pay, and the challenge he now faces as he tries to stay out of trouble.

Forty-three-year-old Troy Bellamy has always felt more comfortable in the "hood." "It's where I grew up," he said. Both parents worked long hours so Troy was left on his own quite often. "I did what everyone else did. I would steal anything that wasn't bolted down. I would get into fights and worry about the consequences later." By age 12, Troy was lured into drug dealing. "For me, it was like winning the lottery."

One day after stealing a handgun and ammunition from a sporting goods store, Troy was caught and sent to Juvenile Detention. This did little to deter Troy from a life of crime. "It was like a reunion for me. All my friends were there." Shortly after his release, Troy was back on the streets and spent the next several years in and out of jail.

By age 21, Troy committed his first major felony. He shot a man and was subsequently convicted of involuntary manslaughter. After completing his sentence, Troy resumed the same lifestyle. "I realized that I had no skill and I couldn't think of what else I could do besides sell drugs." Troy thought about working at McDonalds for minimum wage, but chose instead to continue to hustle on the streets. While out on parole, Troy again got involved in selling drugs, was caught by the authorities and sent back to prison.

Troy was assigned to Volunteers of America in 2010 to complete his sentence. This was Troy's second stint at VOA and he was growing tired of being locked up. Troy Bellamy was counseled by VOA's Uta Edmonds. "From our first meeting, Troy made a point of communicating openly with me. He wanted to be there for his wife and kids. He did what was required of him and would seek counseling to deal with difficult family matters."

Although Troy had completed a number of educational courses in prison, he had difficulty finding a job. "I looked good on paper," he said. "But every time they ran a background check, my criminal history made me stand out like a sore thumb." Troy had previously been making plans to attend a training course through a local union group where he would learn to operate heavy equipment. Troy expressed gratitude to Uta Edmonds and to Volunteers of America for making it possible for him to participate in the training in order to qualify for the union apprenticeship program. Troy never missed a class! On April 1st he was offered a job through that organization and has been working there ever since. Troy states, "I have found a new hustle...and I work less at it than I did at hustling on the street. Plus, I have a whole lot more fun doing it."

Troy's confidence was increasing, yet he was still concerned about his impending release. On one occasion while out on a work pass, Troy ran into one of his buddies from the "hood" who offered to "front" him 100 pounds of pot. The temptation to make quick cash that would be enough to last Troy until he could establish himself was overwhelming; however Troy realized something was different this time. Troy recalls sitting on the edge of his VOA bunk bed and staring blindly at the floor, with memories of both his stints at Volunteers of America flooding his mind. He then remembered the

words of Cliff Graham, VOA team leader, as he was led in handcuffs into the building for this most recent period of confinement. "You must really like it here", Cliff said. Troy knew he had to make a decision fast. His buddy was expecting a phone call. It was at *that* moment that Troy Bellamy decided to make a change. He knew what he had to do. He decided in that instant that he would rather be penniless than have someone continue to control his life, directing even the most minor decisions of when you eat and when you sleep.

It has only been one month since Troy's release from Volunteers of America. Going to work every day is a whole new life for him, but at least he doesn't have to keep looking over his shoulder. "I am no good as a criminal," Troy said. "I try but I keep going to prison. So I am going to try something else. I am going to try working. I can always go back to prison. I know how to get there...I have been there many times." "I have a foundation now. Thanks to VOA and the Bureau of Prisons. Although I don't know what tomorrow brings, I know one thing for sure. I am going home to study for a test that I have in the next couple of days so I can get my certification as a crane operator." Troy is **determined** to get it right...this time!



SUMMER CAMP: Creating Lasting Memories

As in years past, Healing Families once again held a summer camp for the children of the residents based in Indianapolis. This year, the campers ventured away from the comfort of Theodora House and moved to Martin Luther King Park for three full days of fun!

A generous donation to Volunteers of America allowed us to hire a camp coordinator, Terry O'Neal for this year's event. Terry did a fantastic job of "thinking like a kid" and planned many activities that not only kept them busy but led to lots of smiles and laughter. Terry was joined by a great group of volunteers who generously gave their time and talents to make this camp a success.

The kids were treated to a visit with the one and only Blue from the Colts, who threw the football with them and signed autographs. There were visits from the fire department, a magician, Silly Safaris, and many outdoor activities such as sack races, wheel barrow races and playing in a bounce house.

Staff and volunteers who attended the camp were able to witness a mother and son reuniting after several months apart. One volunteer commented, "It was an emotional moment for sure. It was a hot week and everyone was very tired every night, but returned each day anxious to see the little faces as they arrived and hear what they would have to say that day. The kids may have tired us out, but they also brought smiles, laughter and tears into the hearts of many. It's hard to know who received the greater blessing from the experience. In the end, we were all blessed!"

Hope Hall in Evansville, in coordination with their new Healing Families Program also hosted a three day summer camp for resident's children at Sarto Retreat House. **Camp Ignite** was jam-packed with educational and therapy-based exercises, as well as physical exercise. Of course the itinerary included good old fashioned fun, which consisted of face-painting, a visit to the Evansville Zoo, water games and visits from the Evansville Police Department and Fire Department. The kids really enjoyed the sirens! **Camp Ignite** had 18 total attendees, which is a huge success for the first year of the event.



SHANNON SCHUMACHER RECEIVES LEADERSHIP AWARD



National Board Member James Pierce presents Shannon with the leadership award

On June 6, 2010 at the National Conference held in Seattle, Washington, a local Volunteers of America of Indiana staff member was presented with the National Leadership Award for Excellence in Program Management.

Shannon Schumacher, the Division Director of Clinical Services was selected as the recipient of the award in this category. Shannon has been in this

role for the past six years with our affiliate. During that time she created and implemented the *Healing Families Program*, a locally and nationally award winning program, to help restore and stabilize families whose parents are re-entering the community after incarceration.

Nominator, Kimtoyia Sam states in her submission, “*Shannon has proven to be a supervisor that leads by example and is not afraid of getting down into the “trenches” “with those that she supervises in order to best serve the client. Her passion for clients is contagious as she strives to live our mission to Offer Hope, Restore Dignity and Transform Lives.”*

Shannon remarks, “I am extremely humbled and honored by the award. To me, the most important part was that the wonderful people I work with

at VOAIN took the time and effort to nominate me. I was moved to tears hearing the very kind words my VOAIN family wrote about me when I was presented with the award in Seattle. Program Management is not a solitary activity. I see my role in managing programs as communicating a vision of how the program will positively impact our clients, based on research and social work principles. I was not chosen for this award for my good work alone, I was chosen for this award because of all the collective work of the dedicated and talented employees at VOAIN who, literally and figuratively, live and breathe our mission every day.”



VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA OF INDIANA RECEIVES GRANT FROM NATIONAL ENDOWMENT

Volunteers of America of Indiana was recently notified of the receipt of a grant of \$42,380 from the Volunteers of America National Endowment for the purpose of establishing a part-time Chaplain position which would support the ministry work of our local affiliate. This funding will be received over a two-year period. The agency is currently accepting applications and hopes to have a new part-time Chaplain on board in early fall.

NAP Tax Credits Available Again!

Volunteers of America of Indiana received Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) tax credits for the 2010-11 fiscal year in the amount of \$6,510. Help us double this amount to \$13,020 in donations for our Healing Families Program counseling services by making a tax-deductible contribution of \$100 or more, making you eligible for a 50% Indiana state income tax credit. It is easy to do and will really make a difference to us *and* you!

Example: **\$500 donation to VOA = \$250 NAP credit to you**
 \$100 donation to VOA = \$50 NAP credit to you

Your NAP tax credit amount is always one-half of your donated amount. Simply contact our Development Office at 317-686-5807 to get more information and to complete the NC-10 Form that is submitted to the Indiana Department of Revenue. We do everything for you – please help us help our clients through this unique tax credit opportunity!

NAP credits are sold on a first-come, first-served basis until they are gone. You are encouraged to make your donation before December 31 to be eligible for the tax credit on your 2010 taxes. Cash, check, and credit cards are accepted, as well as stock donations. NAP contributions can also be claimed as a federal income tax deduction.





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Volunteers of America of Indiana
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317.686.5807
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*Consult your tax advisor regarding these
types of gifts and estate planning.*

