



Volunteers of America®

GREATER NEW YORK

EVERYDAY MIRACLES

Helping people to live safe, healthy and productive lives.

Operation Backpack 2011 Sets Record!

Our most successful Operation Backpack ever has ended, breaking the 8,000 mark for new, filled backpacks distributed to children in shelters. The whole community joined in — from caring individuals to entire summer camps, from small local businesses to major national corporations, contributing money, supplies, advertising, delivery services, and plain old hard work.

In 1999, we began a small effort to collect school supplies for children in our shelters, who had often been starting school with just a few pencils and supplies donated by caring VOA staff. The drive grew, and in 2003 it was re-branded “Operation Backpack” to reflect an ambitious goal: to outfit every child in a New York shelter with a new backpack filled with grade-specific supplies for school. Now, we are the go-to nonprofit giving backpacks to kids in all the area shelters — not just our own programs, but other providers’ homeless and domestic violence shelters, too.

A devastating consequence of homelessness is its impact on a child’s education. For a child who is homeless, it can be defeating to start school without basic supplies, looking and feeling different from classmates. Operation Backpack helps remove that stigma, sending a message to these children that we believe in them.

It has been a busy summer, and I am pleased to share good news of our work at Volunteers of America-Greater New York with you.

Our most successful *Operation Backpack* ever has distributed a record-breaking 8,000 brand-new, filled backpacks. We have expanded services for homeless veterans to help the men and women who served our country, in their time of need.

You may recall Nikki, a young lady featured in our 2010 Annual Report. After aging out of foster care, she was living in her car, homeless, with no support system, before she came to our NJ youth program. We are thrilled to report that Nikki was accepted into Rutgers University, where she will begin studies in engineering this fall.

Looking ahead, we are planning a major drive for our *Staten Island Early Learning Center*, which helps prepare children with developmental delays to start kindergarten. The building has gone 30 years without a renovation, and we want to bring it up to a new standard that we think these children and their dedicated teachers deserve.

We couldn't deliver services like these without your generous support. For the vital role you play in these and countless other everyday miracles, please accept my sincere thanks.

Warmly,



Richard Motta
President & CEO

Nikki, Rutgers University '15



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MINDING THE ESTATE

Volunteers
of America®



Did you know that the Tax Relief Act of 2010 made significant changes to estate tax law? Estate taxes were set at new levels for 2011 and 2012, and the threshold for gift tax liability was raised to \$5 million. The possible expiration of these provisions in 2013 could make this


one of the best times to make a charitable gift. In light of these ongoing developments, it is a great time to check in with your attorney and financial planner about your estate plans.

Ordinary life events may also require that you update your will.

- Changes in your family (marriage, births, divorce)
- Changes in your assets or their value
- Changes in the lives of your beneficiaries or trustees
- Changes in your personal situation (retirement or relocation)
- Changes in your own feelings about your legacy and its effect on your community

All of these occurrences are good reasons to review your will. Please remember that you can include Volunteers of America – Greater New York as a beneficiary. Donors who include us in their estate plans are recognized with membership in the Myrtle Legacy Society. Your legacy will assure your effect on future generations, making it possible for us to continue to deliver vital services to those in need.

Serving the Men and Women Who Served Our Country



In the past four years Volunteers of America – Greater New York has more than quadrupled its housing services for homeless veterans, expanding from only 47 beds in 2007 to 354 housing units today. VOA serves veterans across a broad spectrum of needs, with short-term emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing. Four major programs have been added since December.

On December 1, 2010 the Veterans Administration (VA) invited us to be one of only five agencies in the US in a demonstration project providing shelter for street homeless veterans with a history of shelter avoidance. The VA demonstrated their trust in us again in April, awarding us a grant for 40 additional transitional housing units in our existing veteran's housing programs, to provide veterans with residential services for up to two years, with the goal of moving them into permanent housing.

On April 27, the NYC Department of Homeless Services selected us to operate the East 119th Street Veterans Residence, providing permanent supportive housing for up to 174 veterans. The residence will

offer case management, financial planning and budget management, employment counseling, crisis intervention, recreation and more. Staff will also help coordinate primary care, mental health and substance abuse programming and social skills development.

Patriot House, our newest veterans' program, opened on May 2nd. A 40-bed, emergency housing alternative to discharging veterans into the NYC shelter system, Patriot House provides a safe dwelling for homeless veterans with special needs, serving both male and female veterans; in fact, 18% of the clients are women. The staff provides services to help the veterans regain financial stability and their physical and mental health.

Brian Bardell, VOA Director of Veterans Initiatives, says, "I attribute our success and growth to the unity, cooperation and planning that the VOA family puts forth on these important projects. Everyone makes an extra effort to ensure our veterans receive the best we have to offer, and we deliver on our promises." Volunteers of America is proud to be deepening its commitment to the brave men and women who have served our country.

THE GINESTRA FAMILY LEGACY

In 1975 Volunteers of America – Greater New York received its first gift from the Ginestra family — a \$5.00 contribution. Over the years, members of the Ginestra family — Sandra, John, Sam, and Margaret — continued to send modest gifts on a regular basis. Recently, and unexpectedly, we learned that the Ginestra family bequeathed a generous gift to Volunteers of America – Greater New York from the family trust. We are blessed to have received not only this generous contribution, but also the faith and confidence of this kind-hearted family for the last 36 years.

While we did not personally know the Ginestras, we have had the opportunity to learn about each of them from Trustees John D'Angelo and his son, Carlo. The stories they shared paint a picture of a close-knit, hard-working family, who cared deeply about people and believed that everyone deserves help when they need it. We are proud that our work resonated with these caring people, and that they trusted Volunteers of America – Greater New York to provide quality services to our neighbors in need.

The Ginestra Family took care to include Volunteers of America in their estate plan. We hope you also consider making a planned gift. Please contact our development office at (212) 496-4312 to learn more.



Graduation Day at the Staten Island Early Learning Center

June 28 — Proud parents, educators, and staff applauded as 27 children graduated from Volunteers of America's Staten Island Early Learning Center. Under an awning on the parking lot, with the waters of the Lower New York Bay in the background, the children entered to the strains of "Pomp and Circumstance." Some children strode confidently down the aisle holding hands with a classmate, others relied on a teacher's arm for gentle support, but all knew that they had achieved something big that day. They were all ready to move on to kindergarten.

Volunteers of America – Greater New York serves



approximately 350 children with developmental delays stemming from a range of conditions including autism, Down Syndrome, cerebral palsy, or other behavioral or physical challenges. All require early, specialized education if they are to be properly evaluated and their needs addressed. The goal of the Early Learning Center is to prepare the children for success in kindergarten. Every support a child could need is here: physical and speech therapies; cutting edge therapies for children with autism; social workers and psychologists. Respite programs allow parents precious time for themselves, or to give other children special attention. Peer-support groups for parents and one-on-one counseling are very much utilized.

Amidst the hugs and photos at the ceremony, there were tears and promises to stay connected with the school. Parent after parent spoke of the hope they found upon coming here, especially after the devastation of first learning their child's diagnosis. For many parents, their son or daughter was not speaking at all, or walking or



making eye contact when they started at the school. Now, the children could not stop expressing themselves with words, running and hugging their classmates. Parents called the school a second home – one they felt would care for their children as lovingly as they themselves cared for them. The thought of leaving brought mixed emotions: trepidation, but also excitement and certainty that their children were prepared for expanded, brighter futures.

Get Involved! UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 15 **BARBECUE AT THE BEACH FOR CHARTER OAK**
- 21 **BIRTHDAY WISHES** (Shelter 2)
- 25 **BIRTHDAY WISHES** (Shelter 1)

OCTOBER

- 12 **BIRTHDAY WISHES** (Shelter 1)

NOVEMBER

- 9 **BIRTHDAY WISHES** (Shelter 2)
- 16 **BIRTHDAY WISHES** (Shelter 1)
- 21 **HOLIDAY DRIVES**
(Toys for the Holidays & Gifts of the Heart) Campaigns begin
- 25 **SIDEWALK SANTA® KICK-OFF**

DECEMBER

- 7 *a New York Winter's Eve*
- 14 **BIRTHDAY WISHES** (Shelter 1)
- TBD **HOLIDAY DRIVES**
Toys/gifts delivery & sort week

