

VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 1 | SPRING 2019

# CONNECTIONS

THE DIFFERENCE **YOU** ARE MAKING FOR NEIGHBORS IN NEED

“I lost  
part of  
myself.”

*How your gifts gave  
Brian hope*



Alex Brodrick pictured with our Cars Helping People team

Dear VOA Family,

You have accomplished so much in the lives of veterans, seniors and families across the state over the past year.

You provided a place to sleep for 254 homeless veterans.

You helped 230 veterans find sustainable jobs.

Your support gave 387 moms, veterans and adults living in poverty the chance to go back to school and better their lives; many of whom are single parents doing their best to provide for their children.

You gifted backpacks for 8,016 homeless children and Christmas gifts to 2,163 families.

Because of your generous love and support, thousands of lives were impacted.

**Today, we are stronger and continuing to grow because of YOU.**

Whether you have been a supporter for years or just joined yesterday, you are changing lives and breaking the cycle of poverty.

Thanks to your support, so many individuals across Michigan are on a new path. **However, there are so many people who still need your help.**

Today, our team remains more committed than ever and **we can't wait to see what you accomplish next!**

Blessings,

Alex Brodrick  
President and CEO

# INSIDE FEATURES



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For Nate, finding a place to call his own seemed impossible. Your support brought him home.



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## Delivering hope

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The work you're doing is changing lives. Learn about the bridges being built in your community today.



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## Annual Report

You are committed to serving Michigan's most vulnerable, 365 days a year. Check out a glimpse of what that looks like.



Homeless  
with  
nowhere  
to go

## A veteran's journey home

**Your support helped Nate find the home he had been searching for all along**

Nate's journey to come home has been long and uphill. From 1979 until 1985, he served in the United States Army. After he left the service, Nate found work as a mail carrier, started a relationship, and welcomed the birth of his daughter.

He was working as hard as he could to support his family, but it was never enough. Every day when Nate came home from work, he was told that he wasn't enough of a man. He knew he needed to get out of that relationship, even if it meant he was left in the cold. He felt suffocated and had to leave.

**For weeks Nate was sleeping in his car and living on the streets.** In his time of need, a friend referred him to the Detroit Veterans Housing Program. After a few months, he found a place of his own.

Nate finally had found a place to live, but the emptiness of it was overwhelming. He was using a milk crate for a night stand and layers of blankets on the floor for a bed. As a surprise Nate, and to thank him for his service, a team of Gardner White designers and movers worked together to fill Nate's new apartment.

When Nate saw his fully furnished apartment, he couldn't contain his emotions. His bare apartment had been transformed into a home. For the first time in a long time, Nate had dignity and hope for his future. **Because of your support, Nate has the first home he can call his own.**

# Our nation's heroes need *you*

Every single day, *your* gifts have the power to create opportunity for veterans



**Mike's** life has felt like a roller coaster ride. As a teenager, he was drafted to serve in Korea with the United States Army. When he got out of the military, Mike had so many different jobs that it was hard to keep track, and his personal life followed the same pattern.

After years of living out of state, Mike moved back to Michigan and found he had no place to stay. **Your support gave Mike safety and shelter** at the Detroit Veterans Housing Program.

Since finding DVHP, Mike has secured permanent housing at Heritage Park Senior Village, and he's been there ever since. He's finally settled, and is very active in the community. Mike sings Frank Sinatra every week at karaoke, and serves as the Sergeant at Arms on Heritage Park's Resident Committee. Most importantly, Mike is giving back to his fellow veterans by driving them to and from their appointments at the VA.



**Tina**, a proud Air Force veteran, served her country honorably during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. After leaving the service, she settled into a home with her husband and two support dogs. Life was going according to plan, but because of circumstances beyond her control, **Tina and her family were suddenly homeless**. Tina's world was shaken to the core.

Luckily, our Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program stepped in just in time. Tina received rental assistance and within three days her family was able to move into their new home. Your support has given comfort and security back to Tina and her family when they needed it most. **"It was a blessing. When you're down, there is always someone to lift you up. Thanks for your help."**

# Don't let Noah go back to school without a backpack.



**OPERATION  
BACKPACK**

Join us this summer...  
[www.voami.org/backpack](http://www.voami.org/backpack)

## You gave the gift of hope

Because of *you*, Charlotte's family had a bright Christmas

Charlotte's world was turned upside down on July 4th, 2018. Instead of enjoying hot dogs and fireworks, Charlotte and her two children were escaping a house fire. Her family was safe, but everything else was lost: clothes, beds, and the family photos they held dear. To make things worse, Charlotte's car broke down and she lost her job.

Even though they had endured such hardship, Charlotte remained hopeful she could give her children gifts on Christmas. She applied for the Adopt A Family program and was adopted. After a season of loss, Charlotte and her kids received a ray of hope. **"This is what I prayed for... I thank God for Adopt A Family."**





## Breaking the cycle

# One student at a time

## How *you* are ending generational poverty

Mariela wanted a better life for her family and was doing everything she could to make it happen. She was working and going to school full-time on top of trying to take care of her family. After almost a year of being stretched to the max, she was feeling burned out. **If something didn't change, Mariela's goal of becoming a nurse would never become a reality.**

Mariela was exhausted and stressed out trying to figure out how she could pay for school knowing she needed to make more time for her family. She was in search of an opportunity that could empower her to pursue her dream and set a good example for her daughter.

That's when Mariela saw a flyer promoting a program that could help to pay her tuition. She seized the opportunity and enrolled in the program right away. Now that she doesn't have the constant worry of paying for school, Mariela is able to cut down on her hours working as a CNA and focus on being a mom, wife, and student. She is finishing her first year of nursing school and is working towards becoming an RN at a local hospital. **Mariela is thankful for the chance to create a brighter future for her family.**





How your  
gifts gave  
Brian a second  
chance





# Where's the camaraderie when a vet comes home?

## Thanks to *you*, Brian got the support he needed

Brian welcomed the birth of his son at the young age of 15. Soon after, Brian's perspective on life shifted. He realized he needed to change his plans to take care of his family. When he graduated high school, he knew college wouldn't be an option for him as he fought to support his son with one dead-end job after the next. After years of the same cycle, he decided to follow in the footsteps of both his brothers and enlisted in the United States Army in 2007.

He was stationed all across the U.S. as a 62 Bravo (heavy machinery technician). In 2012, he was being prepped to ship out to Iraq when he was severely injured and broke his neck. Five years of service, and in an instant he was discharged and headed back to Michigan.

For years, he struggled to obtain disability support and described the past few years as a blur of trips to the VA, complicated paperwork and lots of denials. He looked to nonprofits and veteran organizations for support but no one seemed to be able to help. Brian knew the bank wouldn't care if he had served his country, they would still take his house if he couldn't pay his mortgage. He didn't know where to go or what to do and began struggling with crippling depression.

Days before foreclosure on his house, he got word that his disability was approved and he was going to be receiving support. To ensure that his family would never be at-risk of losing their home again, he took all of the disability money and paid off their mortgage. He thought the worst was behind him, but his depression wouldn't let up.

Last fall, his world came crashing down again when he lost his job. The fate of his family was weighing on him and he wasn't ready to let his wife and three children down. **His depression became so unbearable that he kept his windows shut and his curtains closed at all times. He lived in the dark, because the light of day was too much.**

Then in November, Brian found our HVRP program and began working with Heath, a military veteran and VOA staff member. For the first time in years, Brian was around someone who understood him. **Thanks to your support**, Heath was ready and able to help. Heath helped Brian revise his resume and prepare for interviews.

Brian searched for months and was finally invited to interview for a great job at GM. Brian knew the job was perfect for him. There was still a problem though... the interview was 45 minutes away... an hour and a half round-trip. Brian wasn't sure if he would have enough gas to get there and he definitely knew he wouldn't be able to get back. **Once again, you were there.** Thanks to your support, Heath was able to provide Brian with a \$25 gas card so he could focus on interview prep instead of running out of gas.

In March, Brian signed an offer to work for GM's Flint Assembly Plant as their On-Site Maintenance Technician. Brian told us, **"I knew I could get that job... I knew that I was worth that job... and I knew I could keep that job because Heath had my back."**

Brian started his new job on April 11th. He is working full-time, receiving full benefits, and is excited to join the union. **Because of your support**, Brian will have stability again. He's especially grateful to HVRP for allowing him to show his three kids that hard work and dedication truly does pay off. Brian remains thankful for VOA, for Heath, and for you!

**"Heath saw that I lost part of myself when I lost my job and for him to make sure that I had a sense of purpose again made it so my windows were open today."**



## Caroline

*Volunteers of America Michigan Volunteer*

**What volunteer opportunities have you participated in?** Operation Backpack, Adopt A Family, and serving meals in the Call Sam Kitchen.

**Why do you volunteer?** I've always wanted to do some volunteering. When I was working in London it was difficult and I felt I never had the time. After coming here, I wasn't working, and I wanted to use my time in a good way. That's when I found Volunteers of America and the website let me sign up for opportunities around my schedule. It was brilliant.

**What has been your biggest takeaway?** Working at the veterans center and talking with the different generations of vets and their challenges. We'll never know what they went through and we'll never truly understand. My Grandad was a veteran. I have so much love and admiration for veterans. They deserve all the care and support we can give them.

**What experience has made the biggest impact?** I think Adopt A Family. It will always stay with me. You get so much insight into other people's realities. Putting faces and names and words to experiences was really moving.

# Connecting

# communities



## Renée Ahee

*Volunteers of America Michigan Board Member*

*President, In Other Words, LLC*

*Director of Communications and Marketing, Marygrove College*

**What do you enjoy most about serving with VOA?** The opportunity to make a difference and to use my years of professional corporate and entrepreneurial experience and communications and marketing skills to help the organization.

**How do you define success?** What do you see in the mirror? Do you like what you see? Do you feel that you're giving back for all the blessings you've received? That's success to me.

**Who inspires you?** My son, Matt, and daughter, Julianna. They're the most compassionate people, intelligent, resourceful and loving. Not only do they inspire me, they make me proud that they're mine!

**If you could choose anyone as a mentor, who would you choose?** Living: Oprah Winfrey; Deceased: My mom, Raquel. Both endured their own indignities and came out stronger, more resilient, and more determined to make things better for others.

**What's the last book you read?** Dr. Wayne Dyer's *"The Shift: Taking Your Life from Ambition to Meaning"*

**If you had to eat one meal every day for the rest of your life, what would it be?** Pasta (any variety) with spicy arrabiata sauce. Yum!



**CALL SAM  KITCHEN**  
FOR VETERANS  
**SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED**

## You are a part of something much bigger

**The Sam Bernstein Law Firm** has been an outstanding neighbor by helping to connect our veterans to life-changing resources. From purchasing supplies like bedding, clothing and toiletries to providing funding for necessary repairs to the facility, The Sam Bernstein Law Firm has been steadfast in supporting our veterans.

In 2018, when funding for the facility's kitchen was drastically cut, The Sam Bernstein Law Firm stepped up in a big way by establishing the Call Sam Kitchen for Veterans. The kitchen is a critical component of the facility, serving three meals a day, 365 days a year. When our veterans have their basic needs met, they can focus on finding gainful employment and sustainable housing.

The Sam Bernstein Law Firm is going above and beyond with their acts of service. Staff regularly volunteer in the kitchen, serving those who have bravely served our nation and providing a personal connection to our heroes. **"This is more than a passion project for us. Our staff is composed of countless veteran family members, and we are proud to help homeless veterans in Michigan,"** said Mark Bernstein of The Sam Bernstein Law Firm.

The continuous outpouring of support from our neighbors at The Sam Bernstein Law Firm shows our veterans that they are not forgotten and that there will always be people in their corner cheering them on.

# 2018 Annual Report

Here is a glance of what you accomplished:



**52,731**  
meals served to veterans



**28,673**  
bednights for homeless veterans



**585**  
veteran families supported



**475**  
veterans received employment & training



**387**  
students enrolled in our healthcare career training

## THANK YOU

There are countless stories of **veterans, seniors and families** who didn't know where they would sleep the next day or when they would find their next meal. That's where **you** came in. You stepped up and chose to **make a difference.**



**7**  
counties



**13**  
affordable housing facilities



**1,327**  
low-income seniors and families living with independence



*\*Numbers reported are from the 2018 fiscal year.*

# 2018

## Financial Report

### Revenue Report

**\$9,920,308**

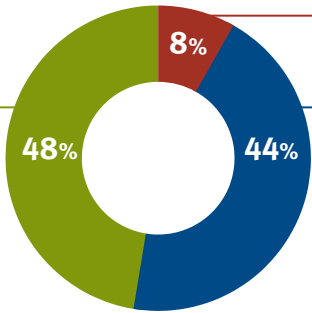
Direct Public Support

**\$9,286,069**

Government Grants

**\$1,716,347**

Other Revenue



### Expense Report

**\$17,821,571**

Human Services

**\$1,847,769**

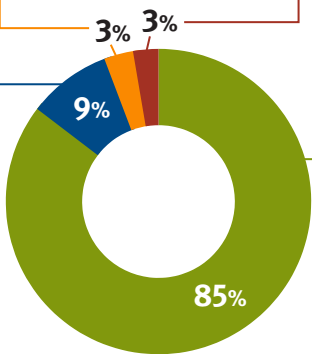
Management & General

**\$645,349**

Fundraising

**\$560,126**

Affiliate Fees



## New Hope Center

**89,140**

meals served in the community kitchen

**8,920**

lives impacted at the New Hope shelter

**24,498**

bednights provided for families in Lansing

**362**

served at the Ability Benefits Clinic

**693**

individuals received dental care

**2,975**

received referrals & services from HARA

**8,942**

volunteer hours served

**\$220,778**

impact value

## AdoptA Family

**7,621**

individuals

**2,163**

households

**8,016**

backpacks donated

Holidays of Hope | December 7, 2019

**You are cordially invited  
to make a difference.**



To join in this life-changing event, contact Laura LeBlanc  
[lleblanc@voami.org](mailto:lleblanc@voami.org) | 248-204-6034



# Connecting to you

The commitment you've shown to supporting Michigan's most vulnerable has not gone unnoticed, and we are so grateful to have you in our Volunteers of America Michigan family. **Because of you, this life-changing work is possible.**

While you're here, we wanted to learn more about you.

Please complete the donor survey below and return in the provided envelope.

## Thank You

If you don't want to send in your survey response by mail don't worry!  
You can take it online by visiting <http://bit.ly/ValuedDonorSurvey19>  
or verbally via phone by calling (734) 672-1363.

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### **Volunteer with us**

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### **Schedule a tour**

lleblanc@voami.org  
248-204-6034

### **Planned Giving**

lleblanc@voami.org  
248-204-6034

### **Donate your vehicle**

carshelpingpeople.org  
877-721-4862

### **Thrift pick-up**

866-333-8281

**www.voami.org**

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# Clean with a purpose

Drop off your donations at any of our four locations  
**Monday-Saturday 9am - 9pm and Sunday 10am - 7pm**



Your thrift donations fund critical social services and create  
opportunity for Michigan's most vulnerable.

**[www.voami.org/thrift-donations](http://www.voami.org/thrift-donations)**