



United Community Ministries

Community Connections

At the Heart of Community

UCMAGENCY.ORG

Fall 2014

MISSION

UCM mobilizes the power of community to equip, educate, and empower people to measurably improve their lives

VISION

No member of the UCM community will ever be hungry, homeless, helpless or hopeless.

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“Be Part of the Heart” to Help the Homeless

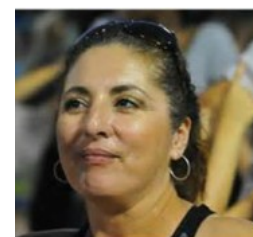
It may seem surprising, but many families right here in our Mount Vernon community are at risk of losing the place they live, of actually becoming homeless. Some people are out of work or have had their hours cut. Others may have had recent medical bills or other unexpected expenses.

No family should have to experience the fear of losing their home without a place to turn for help. For many, that place is UCM. Your generosity helps ensure that local families in crisis can get back on the path to stability. Families of hard-working people like Lola.

A single mom of two, Lola cleans houses for a living and couldn't work after surgery, with no paid sick leave and no savings left. UCM helped her with rent and food. She is now on track for good health and financial stability, taking a budgeting class and working with job coaches at UCM's Work Center to improve her skills for better employment opportunities.

Lola's counselor sees people like Lola nearly every day. "For many people, their income or savings are just not enough to cover unexpected expenses or time away from work," says Ana.

We rely on your generosity to meet the needs of these families. We have many ways to help this Fall, including neighborhood, school, and social events – even a “virtual” event to donate online via *Sleep In To Help Out* (details, page 3).



Without UCM to help, families like Lola's face life in a homeless shelter or living in their cars. Help them with a gift to our Help the Homeless Campaign by November 15.



We extend a special thanks to all the volunteers who donated their time to coordinate walks to support UCM with funds and food donations, including Aquinas Montessori School, Browne Academy, Islamic Saudi Academy, St. Aidan's Day School, Saint Louis Catholic School, St. Luke's Day School, and Waynewood Elementary.

Pictured enjoying the UCM Help the Homeless Walk at Browne Academy are the Hebron family: dad Carroll, mom Kelly, and daughter Drew, with a fellow student.

New Back Porch Thrift Store

Our UCM Back Porch Thrift Store opened this summer at its spacious new location at the Sacramento Shopping Center on Richmond Highway.

The Back Porch offers a wide selection of furniture, household goods, clothing for the whole family, and vintage collectibles and treasures – all at bargain prices. All proceeds from the store stay in our local community. Whether shopping at or donating items to UCM's

thrift store, you'll be helping our local community and other community members.

Every year, UCM provides \$30,000 in store vouchers to clients who are struggling to make ends meet. In addition to affordable shopping, the store provides a place for people to train and learn new skills.

backporchthrift.org



8794-A Sacramento Dr. 703.799.7015
Shopping: Mon.- Sat. 10am - 6.30pm
Sun. noon - 6.30pm
Donations: Mon.- Sat. 10am - 5pm

Healthy Food for Healthy Families



Free Veggies Distribution is just one of our initiatives to promote and provide access to healthy foods to low-income families.

On the last Saturday each month, UCM hosts our "Free Veggies" distribution. Several hundred families patiently wait in line to receive several thousand pounds of fresh, healthy locally grown seasonal vegetables and fruit.

We are grateful for our partnership with Capital Area Food Bank, which sends its loaded truck to our Fordson Road office. Families fill bags with fresh corn, beans, tomatoes, watermelons, and more.

We welcome healthy non-perishable food items to our Pantry, such as low-sodium, low-sugar, low-fat, and whole grain foods.

Want to help but too busy to shop for food

to donate? A monetary gift can help provide healthy foods for families: thanks to discounts with partner agencies, UCM can stretch your donated dollars a lot further – so that the 400 to 500 families who turn to us each week can eat.



UCM volunteers and staff distribute thousands of pounds of fresh produce every month to hundreds of families.

Thank you to Mount Vernon Center for Dentistry for a \$3,692 gift to our BEL Center, the proceeds from their Spring 2014 *Smiles for Life* teeth whitening promotion.



Early Childhood Care & Learning

UCM is an essential resource for working families who struggle to make ends meet. A key path to their success is our Bryant Early Learning (BEL) Center, which provides quality, affordable early care and learning for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years.

This Fall, the Pre-Kindergarten classes have implemented *Al's Pals*:



Fire truck visits BEL Center.

Do you love kids and want to volunteer at BEL? One of our most critical needs is volunteers to interact with the infants and toddlers.

This is a perfect opportunity for retired teachers or any adult who likes children. If you or someone you know would like to volunteer, register for an Orientation Session at ucmagency.org.

Making Healthy Choices, which is an early childhood curriculum designed to teach pro-social skills.

School Supplies Mean So Much More

With your help, more than 1,000 children selected backpacks of their very own at UCM to be ready for the new school year. Thank you to everyone who donated backpacks, supplies, and funds!

Your generosity means our students have the same chances for success as their more fortunate classmates.

In mid-August, volunteers donated their precious time

to help those eager students select their backpacks full of supplies, so they could start the new school year ready to learn and succeed.

We extend a special thanks to the faith communities, businesses, families and other groups that hosted collection drives. And to our many dedicated Back to School volunteers who keep us organized every year! We appreciate the commitment

to help our students grow and thrive. You are the heart of our community!



Thank you to all our volunteers, including our awesome teens!!



A mom and her kindergartener say thank you to UCM's Director of Social Services, Richard Dobber.

Bring Joy this Holiday Season!

The holiday season is just around the corner! UCM expects to provide hundreds of families with special holiday food for Thanksgiving and in December -- as well as gifts for children ages infant to 14. We rely on your generosity to make the season special for families who are struggling this holiday season.



If you'd like to organize a holiday drive or giving tree with your group, school, or organization, email us at info@ucmagency.org.

We can provide flyers, donation bins, and ornament gift tags to use

for your group's holiday collection drive or giving tree.

And a special thank you to Cadette Girl Scouts Troop 2048 of Mount Vernon for making hundreds of giving tree ornaments for us!



You can also shop our [UCM Books & Toys Wish List at amazon.com](#). Check out our Holiday Gift Room webpage for all the details and flyer.

Important dates:

- **Dec. 5:** Final day to get Holiday Gifts to UCM.
- **Dec. 12:** Final day to donate Holiday Food

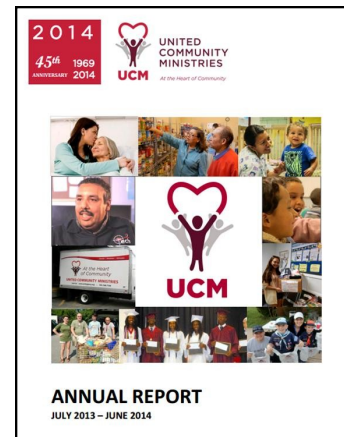
Unwrapped gifts for children are due at UCM no later than Friday, Dec. 5!

Thank you, TJX!

Tim Harper, Store Manager at the HomeGoods store on Richmond Hwy., stopped by UCM in September to present a \$5,000 check from The TJX Companies' foundation.

TJX is the parent of HomeGoods, T.J. Maxx, and Marshall stores. The grant will provide emergency food assistance for community members in need.

Thanks to generous community support, UCM provided food to 3,044 families in FY14. Pictured with Tim at the Food Pantry is UCM's Interim Executive Director Katherine Morrison.



Our FY14 Annual Report is available as a pdf download at ucmagency.org

Sleep In To Help Out . . .



Want to participate to **Help the Homeless**, but have no time with busy schedules? It's fast and easy to make a gift online by Nov. 15 for our **UCM Sleep In To Help Out** "virtual event"! Registration is \$20 for youth or \$30 for adults – or make a donation in any amount. Either way, your gift is 100% tax-deductible and hassle-free! To donate, click on "Sleep In To Help Out" at ucmagency.org.



. . . because too many families are at risk of losing their homes, right here in our neighborhoods.

Community Centers Help Youth Grow & Thrive

As every parent knows, children need more than their school classes to keep them growing in the right directions. But for many families, there are few affordable resources to give them extra enrichment outside of school. Many parents juggle multiple jobs and child care responsibilities, along with struggling with a limited budget for safe and reliable after school activities.

UCM's Creekside Village and Sacramento Neighborhood community centers serve as a hub for families with after-school programs and activities for youth. Our centers operate in partnership with Fairfax County's Department of Community and Neighborhood Service, police and fire departments, local schools, faith communities, and residents. We are grateful to the many volunteers and supporters who make our Community Center programs possible, including the Mount Vernon Kiwanis for their dedication to sponsor the centers' summer field trips. Pictured is the fun day trip this July to Great Waves Waterpark in Alexandria. Thanks for putting those big smiles on all these beautiful young faces!



Job Readiness & Empowerment

In our local area, there is a growing need for digital literacy training, as well as services that develop job search, job readiness, and interviewing skills.

This summer, UCM's Work Center partnered with Computer C.O.R.E. to initiate a unique 360-degree job empowerment training program for low-income and unemployed residents, combining accredited digital literacy classes with job readiness and career development training.



New Hotel Night Desk Auditor

Our Work Center clients can take advantage of one-on-one job coaching to obtain better jobs, become small business owners, and/or enroll for a

degree or certificate program at Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA).

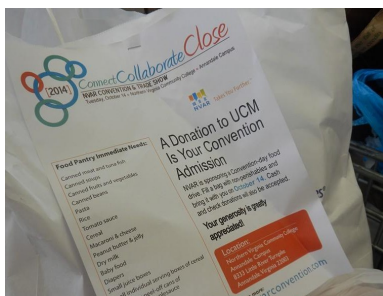
Thanks to one-on-one job coaching assistance, our client Mina* has landed a new job as a Night Desk Auditor at a major hotel chain in Crystal City. The UCM Work Center is recruiting volunteers to teach computer basics and other programs to eager students like Mina. Contact Tami Hunt, Assistant Director of Work & Literacy at tami.hunt@ucmagency.org.

"I have a lot of things to thank you for, but most especially for helping with my resume and for giving me courage to go to that job fair."

Mina,
Work Center graduate

Thank you, Realtors!

Share the Love!



Every October at its educational convention, the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors (NVAR) asks members to bring a bag of non-perishable groceries (or a check donation) to support UCM, in lieu of an admission fee. NVAR also supports UCM with a generous annual donation so we can purchase dairy products.

We are honored and excited that **Beyer Subaru** has selected UCM as its "hometown charity" for the nationwide Subaru of America **Share the Love** event! From Nov. 20, 2014, through Jan. 2, 2015, customers who purchase or lease a new Subaru at the dealership will be able to select UCM to receive a \$250 donation from Subaru of America, Inc.

This year, the Realtors® Federal Credit Union also presented UCM with a \$500 check at the NVAR Annual Meeting. We are so very grateful for the important part local realtors play at the heart of community to help our families thrive!



Thank you to the Beyer team for joining UCM at the heart of community!



'Tis the Season: Workplace Giving

Giving to UCM through your workplace giving campaign is an easy way to “Be Part of the Heart” to help struggling families and children to grow and thrive. The funds may be able to be deducted automatically from your paycheck.

Want to make your gift go even further? Many employers have gift programs that match employee charitable contributions dollar for dollar — as well as “Dollars For Doers” programs where your volunteer time can translate to a financial gift to UCM. Talk with your human resources office about the charitable gift programs that your company may sponsor.



CFC #37839



United Way #8199



Setting up a Recurring Gift is another convenient option via ucmagency.org

A Community of Support at Progreso Center

Thanks to our dedicated trained volunteer teachers, every year hundreds of non-English speakers receive comprehensive, affordable, and accessible ESL and citizenship instruction at UCM's Progreso Center for Literacy & Citizenship.

“With UCM's help, people with limited skills and literacy can acquire the skills necessary to function and thrive in today's labor market,” says Cristina Schoendorf, UCM's Director of Literacy & Work.

UCM is fortunate to have so many creative and dedicated volunteers who truly care about helping adult learners improve their English literacy skills. Inspiring volunteers like **Abigail Constantino**, who we asked to share her experience at Progreso. This Fall, she is co-teaching ESL Level 4 with Jennifer Dorr. She



co-taught her first class, Level 1, this past summer. Abigail tells us:

“I volunteered out of a desire to make a difference after I left the Peace Corps. I wanted to help people in my own community. A friend and I learned about Progreso from the conversational classes at Sherwood Hall Library.

“Most of my students are Spanish speakers, which I am not. There are many here who are African or Caribbean. So as a class, we really have to use English. Progreso

fosters a spirit of inclusion. It aims to serve everyone and not just one group.

“My students are hardworking, diligent, and intelligent people who are trying very hard to improve their lives. They are very brave. Many have been here for years but have only begun taking classes. Many work all day and come to class after.

“Many want to advance into professional careers or help with their children's homework. One person wants to improve her English so she can start computer classes. And one wants to be a writer. He writes poems and stories in Spanish, and he wants to do the same in English.”

“Imagine coming to a place where you do not know the language and culture. And you do not have a lot of money to make your way. Not many people would venture such a chance without a net. Progreso and our volunteers provide that kind of community and support.”

Abigail Constantino, ESL Volunteer,



UCM's Progreso Center has openings for ESL (1-5) and citizenship students, as well as opportunities for volunteers to teach or co-teach classes. Schedules are flexible, and training is provided for volunteers. Email Cristina at cristina.schoendorf@ucmagency.org.



**UNITED
COMMUNITY
MINISTRIES**

UCM *At the Heart of Community*

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Join our e-news list at ucmagency.org

Volunteer with UCM

Volunteers are at the heart of the work we do every day. We have many opportunities for individuals and groups to donate your time and talent. From mentoring a child, to stocking the Food Pantry, to serving on an event team – you make a critical impact! Click on “Volunteer” at our website.

Join us at the Heart of Community!



CFC #37839



United Way #8199

Save These Dates!



Boy Scouts of America's

Scouting For Food - Saturday, Nov. 8, 2014

Join in to stock the UCM Food Pantry for the winter months! Fill bags with non-perishable food items and place by your front door that morning. The Scouts will pick up and deliver your donations to UCM, where more volunteers will sort and organize them!



Capitol Steps Performance to Benefit UCM

Hosted by The Friends of UCM
Sunday, January 25, 2015

Poverty is no laughing matter, but the Capitol Steps and their political satire have been helping UCM to provide a helping hand to people in need for more than a decade. Join us for this popular benefit concert: always a sell-out crowd at the Knights of Columbus Hall! Tickets will go on sale soon. Sponsorship opportunities are available.

UCM's Spring Gala: *The Magic of Giving*

Hosted by The Friends of UCM
Saturday, March 21, 2015

We'll celebrate “The Magic of Giving” to help families grow and thrive, with an elegant evening at the Atrium, US Patent and Trademark Office – including cocktails, gourmet dinner, raffle drawing, live and silent auctions, and dancing with a live band. Sponsorship opportunities are available.



**Friends of UCM at the 2014 Spring Gala.
Don't miss out on this year's fun!**

Your generosity helps community members in need build brighter futures. *Thank you!*