



*At the Heart of  
Community*

## 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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*United Community Ministries*

# *Leadership Notes*

*An Update for UCM Insiders*

UCMAGENCY.ORG

March 2015

### *Program Spotlight:*

## Creating Bright Futures for Teen Moms & Their Children

Jennifer has had a lot to celebrate recently. Her toddler son is thriving and on track with all developmental milestones. She graduated from high school and now has a full-time job at a restaurant in Lorton, where she had been working part-time. She has plans for community college and is determined to make a good life for herself and her young son.



and more important, she is proud of herself."

Jennifer is one of five Project Opportunity mothers who have children at UCM's Bryant Early Learning Center and who graduated from high school in February. Project Opportunity is the high school completion program for expecting or parenting young women in Fairfax County. Pat Washington, our Child Development Specialist, conducts a Social Work Assessment and Observation on the children when they enroll, and holds monthly lunch sessions for the moms on parenting skills and other topics.

Pat's eyes light up with enthusiasm as she shares about Ava, another Project Opportunity mother who just graduated. "She has an 8-month-old son at our Center who is thriving," she explains. "She made the Honor Roll and has plans to enroll at the community college. I am so proud of her—

"The future is so much brighter for these young families because of UCM," says Pat. "In many ways, these parenting teens are no different from other students. We help them deal with the extra responsibilities each juggles to make their child a priority. Our teen moms participate in school clubs and extracurricular activities that build their self-esteem. Several of them have been elected to student government and have made the Honor Roll."

UCM's Bryant Early Learning Center is just one program in UCM's continuum of services that help children grow and thrive, which also includes Healthy Families Fairfax and our after-school programs: Forward Steps and the Computer Learning Center Partnership.  
*clients' real names are not used in this article.*

## From Nichelle A. Mitchem, UCM Executive Director

Annually, UCM's life-changing programs play an integral role in stabilizing the lives of more than 11,000 of our community's most vulnerable members. More than 40% of the people UCM helps are children.

What does your support mean for a struggling family? It means a child starts Kindergarten ready to learn and succeed. It means a single mother has enough food to feed her children when her job hours are cut unexpectedly. It means a group of neighbors come together to plan how they can improve their diverse community.

While Mount Vernon residents come to UCM for help with practical needs, they receive much more than just food or financial assistance to avoid eviction. They regain the hope they need to build a better future for their families.

Your support for UCM is a sound social investment that helps people become self-reliant members of the community. Together, we are changing lives -- and lifting hearts.

With warm regards and immense gratitude,

*Nichelle*

## Mount Vernon Kids: Raising Support for UCM's Childrens Programs

For many years, UCM has brought opportunity, hope and a brighter future to children in our Mount Vernon community. From birth through high school graduation, UCM provides children with enrichment and opportunities to reach new heights. Our Mount Vernon Kids campaign is designed to increase awareness for the great need of the children we serve and raise funds for these important programs.



There are many ways to help these children: organizing book or healthy snack drives, volunteering in our after-school programs, and donating to enrichment activities. By improving opportunities for our children, we ensure a brighter future for our community! See the video about our programs for children at our website, [www.ucmagency.org](http://www.ucmagency.org)

### Special Thank You to Dental Associates!

From our Housing Program Case Manager: "So grateful to Dr. Neil Charaipotra at Northern Virginia Dental Associates in Springfield. At short notice (and despite inclement weather), he treated one of our young mothers with a dental emergency on a pro bono basis. He has also graciously agreed to complete the follow-up dental work for her."

Thank you from all of us at UCM, Dr. Neil!

### SOUPer Saturday Raises \$4,700 for Families in Need!



This year's event at the Torpedo Factory Art Center was more successful than ever! We greatly appreciate everyone who came out on Sat., Feb. 14. We had quite an enthusiastic group of volunteers and shoppers! We would especially like to thank the ceramic artists, for sharing their creative talents to support the community. We also extend a special thank you to The Torpedo Factory management and The Art League, as well as Chart House restaurant for many years of donating their signature Clam Chowder.

### Upcoming Events:

Details at [www.ucmagency.org](http://www.ucmagency.org)

**Estate Planning Seminar**, Thurs., Apr. 16 at 7pm at UCM Main Office. Julie Parks from Parks & Schaffer, PLLC will discuss wills, trusts, and other family estate plans. She will also be available to answer questions afterwards.

**Volunteer Recognition Event**, Sat., Apr. 25 from 2-4pm, at Mt. Vernon Presbyterian Church (2001 Sherwood Hall Lane). Join UCM as we celebrate the people we need most: Our volunteers. All are welcome.

### "The Magic of Giving" Gala

Many thanks to all who made our **Spring Gala** a great success! Held at the elegant US Patent and Trademark in Old Town, this year's theme was "The Magic of Giving." Attendees enjoyed a luxurious evening of cocktails, live and silent auctions (featuring over 20 resort packages), gourmet dinner, and dancing with the band, Tower House.



We are grateful to our many event sponsors (listed at the UCM website). We would also like to extend a special thanks to The Friends of UCM, a fabulous group of volunteers who do outreach for UCM. We appreciate the time they spent to make this event a success!

### Save the Date UCM Reads

UCM continues to bring opportunity, hope and a brighter future to children in the Mount Vernon community. This spring, you can help these children by supporting our Mount Vernon Kids campaign.

Join us Saturday, May 9 for a community conversation on the importance of reading and healthy relationships. From 2-4pm at Bryant Early Learning Center (next to Bryant High School), local celebrities will read to kids, while parents have the opportunity to hear a speaker.

Please RSVP to Christine Lucas  
[christine.lucas@ucmagency.org](mailto:christine.lucas@ucmagency.org).

*For questions or for more information about UCM's programs and how your support makes an impact to change lives, contact UCM Director of Development Christine Lucas at 571.255.8985 or [christine.lucas@ucmagency.org](mailto:christine.lucas@ucmagency.org).*

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