



# Annual Report

2018-2019 | *Dismas House of Nashville*

**BUILDING  
COMMUNITY**

**#2424CHARLOTTE**



## COUNTDOWN TO #2424CHARLOTTE

Construction on our new home located at 2424 Charlotte Avenue is well underway! The foundation is poured and framing is being erected. Our construction partner, R.C. Matthews, says that we're on track to meet our completion date. We invite you to follow our progress on social media. Follow us on **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **Instagram**. When posting or commenting on our new campus location, please use **#2424CHARLOTTE** and tag **Dismas House of Nashville**. Keep an eye out for an announcement about our grand opening celebration planned for Spring 2020. We will recognize the contributions of our donors, city officials, board members and volunteers, all of whom have helped to make this dream a reality.

*vision +  
mission*

Dismas, Inc., is a 501(c)(3), nonprofit transitional housing program that serves individuals recently released from incarceration. Our ultimate goal is for those we serve to remain free from incarceration by becoming self-sufficient, contributing members of society. It is our family-oriented holistic approach that makes the Dismas model unique. From the moment a new resident walks through the door until the day they leave, Dismas is "home" to our residents—they are "family" forever.

*dismas.org*    



# Executive Leadership Summary



## CEO GREETINGS

### Vision for 2019-20 Fiscal Year

This past year was one of the most exciting and rewarding experiences during my tenure as Chief Executive Officer of Dismas House. We developed strategies to sup-

port our expansion, started construction on the new facility, and I watched many of our clients grow individually and collectively as they progressed through our program.

We reached milestones in the level of support we received from the community; in terms of program partnerships and volume of volunteering. We were also blessed with an unprecedented amount of financial support. Nonetheless, this upcoming year will strain our budget as we scale our organization to better serve the hundreds of returning citizens seeking to be part of our program.

The future holds challenges for our operations:

- » We hope to grow our staff from three full time employees to 12 by the end of the 2020 fiscal year.
- » We hope to serve up to 50 men this fiscal year. In comparison, the most we have served within a given year is 22.
- » Our operating budget will expand from \$800 thousand dollars to \$1.5 million this year.

Despite these costs related to scaling our reach, the opportunity to serve more residents is exciting and worthy of this massive undertaking. We must count on our existing constituents to help us through these uncharted waters and engage new partners to help us fulfill the needs of our clients. We are up for the challenge and cannot wait to take this journey alongside you this year.

Yours In Service!

Gerald Brown  
Dismas House CEO



## BOARD CHAIR GREETINGS

### Vision for 2019-20 Fiscal Year

There has never been a more exciting time for Dismas House. After faithfully serving hundreds of men to transition from incarceration to freedom for over 40 years in our home on Music Row, we are now poised to move to our new 72 bed facility and campus on 2424 Charlotte Avenue.

We are thankful for the dreams of those that made this a reality. We are indebted to those who have spent countless hours in planning and executing this new campus. We are humbled by the generosity of those individuals, companies and organizations that have contributed financially to make this all a reality. We are grateful to those businesses, banks, consultants, lawyers, architects, designers, and other non-profits that have generously shared their talents. We are blessed to have a dedicated Board and Advisory Board. Gerald Brown and our staff have been the bedrock of these efforts. We are eternally grateful to Kay Kretsch, our out-going Board Chair for her countless hours of dedication to planning for the new Dismas House.

The future holds challenges:

- » We are unwavering in our dedication to insure that as Dismas House moves and grows that we do not lose the family orientation of our program.
- » We are committed to raising the funds to make this a financially sound step into the future so that we can serve hundreds of more men each year.
- » We will find new ways expand the services we offer our residents.

None of what Dismas House does is possible without your support. We need your prayers, your volunteer time and your money. We pledge to be good stewards of all you give.

Thank you and God Bless you.

Respectfully,  
Tom Stearns  
Dismas House Board Chair

*Did You Know?  
Program Expenses  
increased 266%  
last year and  
Administrative  
costs doubled.  
Giving to Dismas  
helps us meet the  
growing costs  
of fulfilling our  
mission.*



*Dismas House*  
Impact on the  
Local Re-Entry  
Community  
2018-2019



17

Residents Served



15

Dental Appointments



164

Average Bed Nights  
Per Resident

1,972

Bed Nights Annually



195

Case Management Hours



56

Mental Health Sessions



105

Life Skills Instructions



189

Volunteer Dinners



271

Volunteer Hours



0

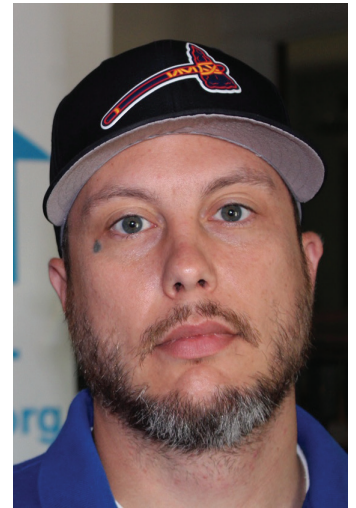
Residents Returned  
to Incarceration

Second  
Chances  
Save  
Lives.

## RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT

# We Just Need a Chance

Brandon was raised with good personal and moral values. His high school career was normal: he performed well academically, played baseball, and had a great community around him. When the time came to decide on a college, Brandon enrolled in technical school because he excelled in mechanical work. After receiving a Certification in Industrial Maintenance with a specific focus in robotics, Brandon found good work. He married, had a child, and lived his life with joy and purpose.



However, Brandon's marriage soured and they separated. Living and working in Clarksville, Brandon spent more time with work friends and started dating but the rhythm of life mostly stayed the same. Then one night, a split-second decision changed his life. He walked into the apartment of his ex-girlfriend to reclaim some of his personal items and was violently attacked by another guest in the house. In self-defense, he fought back, and when his fists, kicks and yells weren't effective, he grabbed a knife from the kitchen counter and stabbed the man. Brandon and his attacker were life-flighted to Vanderbilt together and both survived. Brandon was convicted of second degree attempted murder and the other man was not charged. This was Brandon's first arrest; he was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

After serving six years of his sentence, Brandon moved to Dismas House when he made parole. Brandon is grateful to have been accepted to Dismas House and he speaks often about how much he appreciates the support of the Dismas family. Here, Brandon feels accepted and respected as a man trying to make his way in life. He feels valued. He's no longer a number.

Finding good work was one of Brandon's primary goals because he especially enjoyed feeling valued professionally. Brandon says, "Getting a job is the thing that gives people the greatest chance of success." When Brandon completed all of this initial health and wellness goals at Dismas, he prepared his resume and applied for over 40 jobs. Because of his qualifications, he heard from about 25 of those employers. Because of his felony charge, he was interviewed by one.

Brandon's skills and kind demeanor shone in the interview and he was offered the job at United Record Pressing. After two months on the job, Brandon has received four raises and has moved from Set-Up to Maintenance Lead. He is incredibly grateful for this job, and is proud of his success. He plans to stay at Dismas House until he can obtain a driver's license, buy a car, and find a place to live. He has worked through child support issues and is in contact with his ex-wife and other family members.

"Just because you made a mistake doesn't mean you can't live a good life," says Brandon. "[People] in prison often have the skills and desire to do things that are beneficial to society in a lot of ways. We just need a chance."

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## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

# Building a New Life

By Julie Sellers, Ellevated Outcomes

I discovered Dismas House through the Nashville Community Education Center, where I had been teaching the course “Turning Your Passion into Your Business Plan.” The team approached me, asking if we could apply these business concepts and content to men who had been recently released from prison. After all, building a new life, when an opportunity is fresh and the resources are limited, is strikingly similar to building a business.



After living in the Northeast and overseas for my entire adult life, I moved to Nashville just two years ago, to gain a new lease on my own life. Nashville has been all I hoped it would be; her generosity and gifts have seemed to endlessly pour into my life. I came here for the reason that most transplants do—to take advantage of growing-city-opportunities. Yet, I’m also aware of the facts: growing cities tend to betray those who have been around for a long time.

In the hours that I’ve spent sitting alongside the Dismas House men, doing what I can to give back to a city that’s already given so much to me, it’s never felt like an equal exchange. When working together, I attempt to help guys like Brandon, Jason, Chris, and Mike cast a vision; clarify priorities; and set goals for their own new lives. We look for creative ways to use the limited resources at their disposal. We chart a path forward.

There are people and experiences happening all around me each and every day—in my now-city—that feel like they should be a million miles away, but they’re not. They’re right here, all around us. Each time I see the men of Dismas House, they gently and thoughtfully open my eyes and my heart to experiences and people who live and walk right alongside me, that I wouldn’t have seen in the same way, on my own.

## FORMER RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT

# Reconnecting Family Ties

Rich embodies mindfulness, control, and determination. However, Rich did not arrive so calmly; Rich was nervous about living at Dismas House and about the upcoming changes to his routine. A former drug user, Rich was used to running recovery meetings in prison, spending an hour every day leading groups of former addicts in groups such as AA and meditation.



Since the beginning of his stay, Rich benefited from visits from family and friends. It was clear that his family ties were extremely important to him. Soon after he arrived, Rich talked about his niece who was living in foster care and that he wanted to help raise her. A teenager now, his niece was living in a good home with the family of a friend from school, since his sister had been arrested. Rich wanted to be his niece’s daily family support, a positive influence in her life.

With this goal in mind, Rich worked to regain his driver’s license and bought a car from his uncle. Uncertain about what to do for work, he accepted an interview with NomNomNow, a company that contacted Dismas to discuss an employment partnership. Rich and the General Manager connected and felt excited to give the employment relationship a try.

Rich did very well at NomNomNow and they wanted him to work full-time hours. In order to work full-time, Rich needed to find independent housing—one of the most difficult hurdles for Dismas residents. Regardless of a person’s stability and earnings since being released from prison, a felony charge disqualifies people from most housing.

Rich was so valued at work, his coworkers presented an idea to the GM: allow Rich to move into a small office building on NomNomNow’s property that was not being used. The office was made suitable for residency and Rich moved in after a six month stay at Dismas.

With income and stable employment, Rich pursued gaining custody of his niece. Five months after moving out of Dismas House, Rich has earned a leadership role at NomNomNow and has married someone he’s known since childhood. Rich and his wife have moved Rich’s niece into their home. In under a year, Rich achieved all of his post-prison goals and is enjoying the life of a hard-working and free family man.



# Volunteer Appreciation Dinner Honors Community



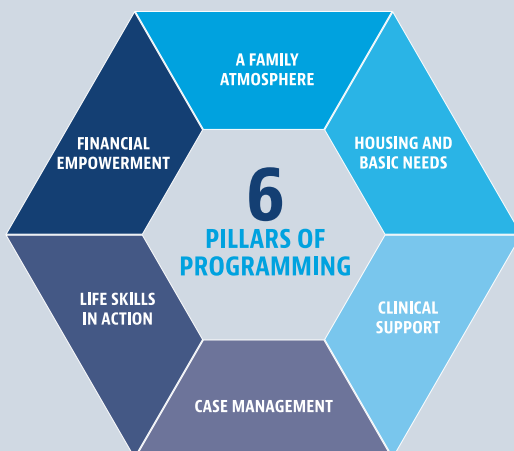
Dismas residents, former residents, volunteers, mentors, board members, and friends gathered at Rockettown in January to thank and honor the many community members who make Dismas a true family.

The spirit of our founder, Father Jack Hickey, O.P., was felt in the room, especially as one presenter reminded us of Father Hickey's words: "We all need to be struggling and compassionate people. That is the secret of Dismas' success." It is our gathering in courage and compassion that calls us, she continued, to be present for Dismas residents and to experience the presence of something larger than all of us.

Honored this year for their exceptional contributions were:

- » **Joel Gipson** - Resident of the Year
- » **Kala Kloeber** - Volunteer of the Year
- » **Mary Welch** - Student Volunteer of the Year
- » **Shade Tree Clinic** - Community Partner of the Year
- » **Bob Adams** - Board Member of the Year
- » **Patrick Theobald** - Grace Morales Commitment to Service Award

Our heartfelt thanks to First Tennessee Bank, TomKats Catering, Vanderbilt University, and Vantage for their significant contributions to this event. We also thank Moose Moore for acting as emcee and Stacy Widelitz for closing the evening with his poignant song "The Cage." We were delighted to have our sponsors celebrate with us! Their contributions allowed us to convey our collective expression of gratitude of service for all the volunteers who share their time and talent with Dismas residents.

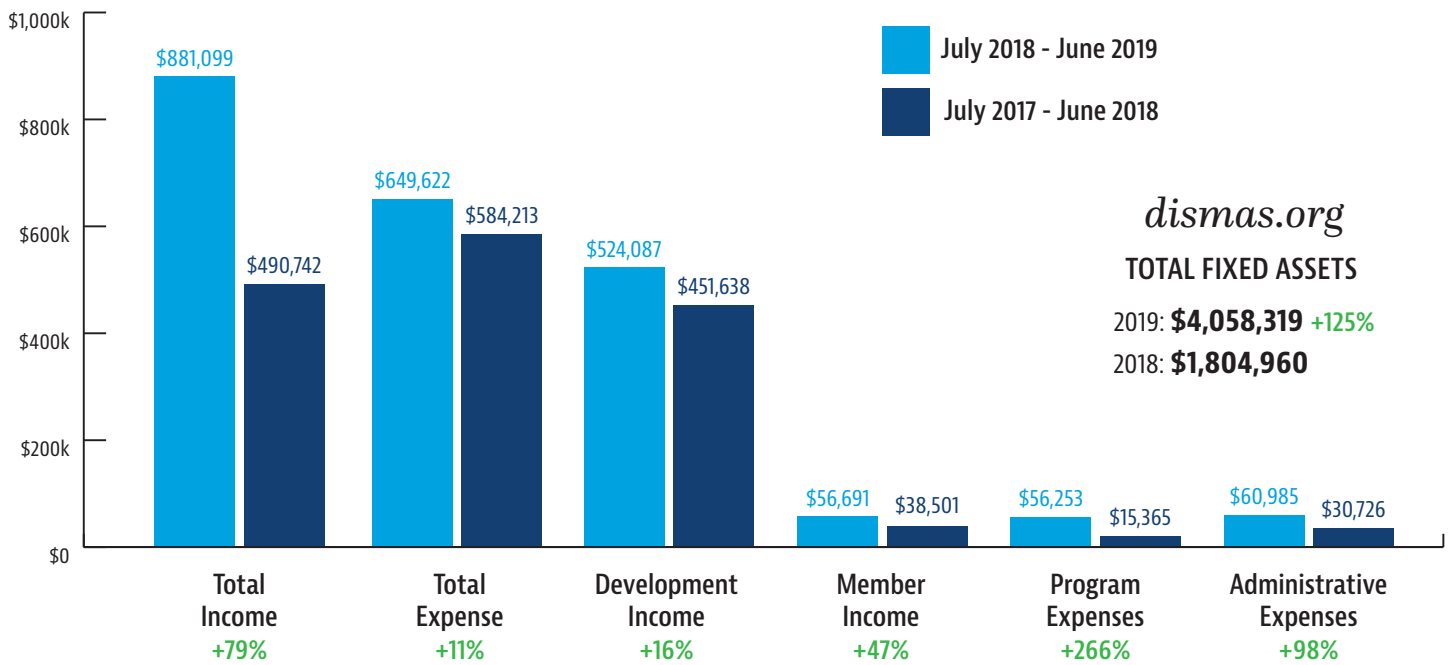


## Program Previews

Dismas opens its doors for a lunch-and-learn on the third Thursday of each month for prospective volunteers, board members and donors to learn more about the programs that impact residents. Attendees learn about the Six Pillars of Programming, **#2424Charlotte** expansion and hear from a former or current resident. The Program Preview concludes with a brief tour of the house.



# Financial Review



## Forgiveness Luncheon

In May, Dismas held its annual fundraiser at Music City Center called the Forgiveness Luncheon. This year's event attracted 650 guests who raised \$225,000 for the organization and heard about the life-changing impact the program has on former offenders to successfully re-enter society. The keynote address was delivered by former 1st Round NFL Quarterback Ryan Leaf who shared his personal story after the downfall of his football career and struggle with substance abuse that led to prison. Other speakers included Sean Hosman, CEO of Vant4ge and FBI Representative Matt Espenshade. First Tennessee Bank was awarded the Father Jack Hickey Award of Service.







We still  
need to  
raise

**\$4  
MILLION**

*Please  
give  
today!*

*dismas.org/  
donate*

# Dismas Builds Community

The mission of Dismas is to bring about mutual reconciliation between former offenders and society through the development of a supportive community.

We invite you to support our mission in the following ways:

## **BE AN AMBASSADOR.**

Leverage your networks, create opportunities to partner and share the Dismas story.

## **GET ENGAGED.**

Volunteer to provide direct services for residents including hosting family dinners, clinical support, case management, life skills and financial empowerment.

## **INVEST IN US.**

Support our expansion to serve up to 72 residents in our new home currently under construction at **#2424Charlotte**.





**is family.**

1513 16th Ave S  
Nashville, TN 37212

## CORPORATE PARTNERS

Dismas, Inc. is a not-for-profit 501.c.3 organization. Donations are tax deductible.

