



**RESTORING
FAMILIES**

Second Chances

Fall 2020 Newsletter | *Dismas House of Nashville*

In His Own Words

Resident Payton Johnson Confronts His Past,
Embraces His Future

"I have a long history of violence in my life, and it started like this. I had been in and out of juvenile since I was about fourteen years of age. I came up in a broken family where my mom left my father early in my life. So, I guess that's how I got lost in the streets of Memphis, Tennessee. It wasn't an easy life because you had to get things the hard way. I mean, that's how I learned. People don't respect nothing but a gun pointed at them, and only then will they respect you. Yes, it was some hard times growing up in North Memphis, Frasier area, or "The Bay" as it was called then. I went through there like a crazy person. Fighting all the time—getting kicked out of all the Memphis City Schools. I just dropped out of school altogether, and that led me into a life of crime. I ain't proud of the things I've done, but I had to survive. I did things like snatch women's pocketbooks and burglaries, and then I started reaching for the real money, or so I thought. I started carrying a gun, and that's when, one day in August, I became a real fool. I remember making the biggest mistake in my life which led to prison.



"I found someone who loved me for me and stuck by me for twenty-six years, and it changed the course of my time."

I became someone else in prison to survive because it was the school of hard knocks. It was no place for kids. You had to be a man. I just stuck to my business when I had problems. But I wasn't the type to have problems often because I stuck to the code of prison, and that code was to keep to myself, mind my own business, and stay out of everyone else's business. Like I said earlier, it was the school of hard knocks. I spent my years doing foolish things early on, like fighting to make a name for myself in prison. You had to prove yourself at some point, or, to me, you would be tried. That was a phase I went through for about seven years. Then I started longing for more. I found someone who loved me for me and stuck by me for twenty-six years, and it changed the course of my time. I started doing positive things and had no time for foolishness anymore."

After spending 33 years in prison, Payton joined the Dismas Family in June 2020 and successfully completed the program in September. He has reunited with his family and plans to return to Dismas to volunteer. We wish him continued success and the best that this life has to offer.

Our Mission

The mission of Dismas House of Nashville is to foster community awareness and understanding of the challenges and obstacles formerly incarcerated men face upon reentry by providing a system for personal transformation and growth as they transition back into society.

dismas.org



JOBS PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Feeding Body & Soul: The Turnip Truck

John Dyke opened the original Turnip Truck Natural Market on Woodland Street in East Nashville in 2001. An East Tennessee native, he grew up on a family farm and sought to bring the health and wellness benefits of whole, local foods to his Nashville neighborhood. Nearly two decades later, he has opened a flagship store in East Nashville, a Gulch location, and now, a Charlotte Avenue grocery. The Turnip Truck is Nashville's only full-service locally owned natural foods grocer specializing in local, natural, and organic foods and products. "I opened our first store in East Nashville to meet the needs of my neighbors, and we have expanded throughout Nashville to meet demands for a truly local grocer," he said.



Opening the Charlotte Avenue location "would not have been possible without the herculean efforts of our team and the support of the City of Nashville, to which we are grateful," Dyke said. *"We are thrilled to have more than 90 local companies represented in our inventory. In addition, we are creating new jobs here for 70 employees."* Nashville has been through immense challenges this year but the city always rises anew. Similarly, our residents have had to overcome obstacles but they, too, deserve a chance to start over.

"The spirit of the Turnip Truck has always been about the community, and we are proud to partner with Dismas House to offer people an opportunity to start again. It doesn't matter what your past was. We work with Dismas employees to focus on the future. They work closely with our leadership team to learn beneficial work habits, stay on task, and develop positive communication skills. We feel the experience gives them regularity to their life and instills pride in seeing the outcome of the work they do. Employees we've had from Dismas have been eager to work and respectful—they want to succeed. We have the same retention factor with Dismas House employees as with others—proving that they are just as committed to doing a job well done like anyone else."



– John Dyke, Owner Of The Turnip Truck

WHAT MAKES DISMAS HOUSE DIFFERENT

Dismas House of Nashville is one of the largest men's re-entry facilities in Middle Tennessee. Our residents benefit from a wide range of life-changing programs and benefits not offered by more traditional halfway houses, such as:



90-Day Program



No Wage Garnishment



Community Engagement



Low-Stress Environment



Family Atmosphere



Case Management



No Early Employment Requirement



Focus on Well-Being



Mental Health Counseling



Life Skills Programming



Post-Program Transitional Housing

ANNOUNCEMENT!

Dismas House Awarded \$90K Grant From Tennessee Community CARES Program



Dismas, Inc., has been awarded a \$90,472 grant on behalf of the Tennessee Community CARES Program to serve the re-entry community and keep them safe during the pandemic. Dismas provides basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and transportation to formerly incarcerated men. Applications are accepted from inmates at all Tennessee State prisons and County jails. The grant will be applied to groceries, COVID-19 personal use items, additional COVID-19 janitorial supplies, and upgrades to IT infrastructure to accommodate the shift to online programming for residents, including mental health assessments, group therapy, cross-fit classes, and job readiness training, to name a few.

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) awarded grant assistance to 656 non-profit organizations serving communities across the state. These grants are provided through the Tennessee Community CARES Program, created by TDHS along with Governor Bill Lee and the Financial Stimulus Accountability Group, to invest \$150 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds to address health and economic needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We're grateful to the Tennessee Department of Human Services for administering these funds and to the United Way of Greater Nashville for selecting Dismas as a recipient," says Kay Kretsch, CEO, Dismas, Inc. "We're on the front lines helping some of our most vulnerable citizens get back on their feet and navigate a pandemic." Dismas has had to create a quarantine area for all new arrivals who are kept isolated and tested for Covid-19. Upon receipt of a negative test result, new arrivals join the other residents. Rooms are limited to one person (rather than two), and there is a daily cleaning protocol in all common areas to reduce exposure. Dismas will serve between 60-70 men from March 1st to November 15th and have 50% reduced bed capacity through December 2020 to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Dismas House of Nashville provides a comprehensive system for personal transformation and growth. Our programming has resulted in only 15% of former offender residents returning to prison compared to a state average of 47%. Residents are well-equipped to transition back into society and reunite with their families.

Our Newest Residents



Chad



Edward



Jonathan



Rocky



Payton



Brian



Bernard



Derek



Community Spotlight: The Bridge

After touring and singing Gospel music all of her life, Candy Christmas came off the road to be home with her family. She found herself in deep depression and wondered what God had in store for her as she began this new chapter. The Lord had Candy's path cross with a gentleman who invited her to feed a few homeless men under a bridge. He asked her, "Can you cook?" She filled the biggest pot she had with her homemade Jambalaya and ventured out into Nashville's streets on a cold night in November 2004 to feed homeless individuals who nicknamed her "Jambalaya." After seeing the need was far greater than just one hot meal a week, Candy began to collect clothing and non-perishable food items to pass out to her friends. She invited her church members to help fill grocery bags in her garage and take them under the Bridge, while the homeless invited their friends to come eat and receive much needed items for the week. Candy says she literally gave her way out of depression. The Bridge, Inc. has now grown to a far greater capacity than she ever imagined. The four part ministry includes the following:

CHURCH UNDER THE BRIDGE

Prior to Nashville's March tornadoes and the COVID-19 pandemic, every Tuesday Night under the Jefferson Street Bridge, we served 300 – 500 of our homeless and under-resourced friends. Everyone received a delicious hot meal and participated in a powerful worship service. At the close of service, we distributed 15,000 – 25,000 pounds of food along with clothing and toiletries. Currently, we are adhering to CDC guidelines as well as closely following our mayor's pandemic response mandates while finding adaptive ways to strategically serve this vulnerable population.



BRIDGE TO KIDS

The Bridge To Kids Program was thriving before COVID-19. Not only did we have a special Bridge To Kids Service under the bridge every Tuesday evening before the pandemic, but we also served thousands of students each week with weekend food bags. These are students who suffer significant food insecurity issues and struggle to have food to eat when not receiving free breakfast and lunch at school. Our teams have been innovative during this unprecedented season. We are continuing to serve thousands of students each week through Metro School distribution centers, aftercare programs, and have recently added new distribution sites to our weekly deliveries.

BRIDGE TO YOU

Our Bridge To You area of ministry has evolved to direct service to hundreds of families and individuals. It is currently serving at multiple distribution sites throughout the greater Nashville area.

BRIDGE TO COMMUNITY

The Bridge To Community works with other like-minded partners and organizations to help serve those in need by sharing resources when organizations experience resource gaps to complete their mission.

Dismas House of Nashville is grateful to The Bridge for donations of groceries for our residents.



Breaking Bread: Community Dinner Volunteers



Father Ryan High School



Cross Point Church



Father Ryan High School



Cross Point Church



David & Annita Watson



Cross Point Church



Volunteers Joan Pugh and Joleen Ramirez



St. Ignatius Orthodox Church



Thank you
Klaus

Forgiveness Luncheon

Dismas House of Nashville hosted its first virtual Forgiveness Luncheon featuring a keynote address by entrepreneur, speaker, and author Robert Sherrill on Tuesday September 29, 2020 from 12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m. CT. The program also included remarks by Governor Bill Lee, Sheriff Daron Hall, residents, and a musical performance by Joe Wooten. Due to the generous support of sponsors and donors, we raised \$133,346 to help fund our mission. If you would like to watch a playback of the event, please visit our YouTube page: <https://bit.ly/DismasYouTube>

OUR FORGIVENESS LUNCHEON SPONSORS



Keynote Speaker Robert Sherrill



Daron Hall



Musical performance by Joe Wooten



Governor Bill Lee



is family.

2424 Charlotte Avenue
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CORPORATE PARTNERS

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



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