



DISMAS HOUSE DIGEST

WINTER 2026 ISSUE

Dear Friends,

As we welcome a new year, I am filled with gratitude for the community that makes Dismas House possible. A new year offers a moment to reflect on how far we have come and to recommit ourselves to the work ahead with clarity, purpose, and hope.

The past year marked a meaningful period of transition for Dismas House, as I stepped into the role of Chief Executive Officer in January 2025. Leading the organization during a time of change has been both humbling and inspiring. I am deeply grateful for our dedicated staff, the steady leadership of our Board of Directors, and the unwavering commitment of our donors, volunteers, and community partners. Your belief in second chances continues to sustain our mission.

Despite moments of uncertainty, Dismas House remained focused on what matters most: supporting justice-impacted men as they rebuild their lives with dignity and purpose. Through our holistic, evidence-based reentry model, we served 148 men over the past year, providing stability, accountability, and opportunity at every stage of their journey. Our commitment to whole-person care continues to deliver measurable results, including a three-year recidivism rate of just 2.5%, compared to the statewide average of 29.6%.

Behind every statistic is a human story. Fathers reconnecting with their families. Men securing employment, housing, and a renewed sense of self-worth.

These transformations are made possible by a community that believes people are more than their past, and that lasting change happens when individuals are supported with consistency, compassion, and structure.

As we look ahead to 2026, we do so with intention and optimism. My priorities center on strengthening our reentry model, expanding the clinical and behavioral-health supports that promote safe and stable transitions, and improving linkage-to-care pathways for residents managing substance-use and mental-health needs. We will deepen partnerships with reentry and public health providers, enhance employment-readiness services, and invest in staff development to ensure consistent, high-quality care. Above all, we will continue fostering a campus culture grounded in dignity and opportunity, one that supports successful reentry and contributes to healthier, safer communities.

What remains constant is our commitment to opening doors, reducing barriers, and creating pathways to lasting change.

Thank you for standing with Dismas House and for being part of a mission that proves transformation is possible. Together, we move into this new year grounded in purpose and inspired by what lies ahead.

With gratitude and hope,

Steven R. Murff
Chief Executive Officer
Dismas House





Dismas House Wins Leadership Award

We are proud to announce that we have been named the 2025 Winner for Outstanding Diverse Organization in a Nonprofit or Institution by the Nashville Business Journal's Leaders in Diversity Awards! This prestigious recognition honors organizations and leaders championing inclusion, equity, and representation across Middle Tennessee.

Your support enables us to be one of the most impactful local organizations in Nashville. We are grateful to be formally recognized by the Nashville Business Journal and Pinnacle Financial Partners and happily share with you, our faithful supporters, in celebrating the transformative power of diversity and inclusion in our city.



Forgiveness Luncheon Recap

With your generosity, we raised over \$218,000 to support our reentry programs at the September Forgiveness Luncheon. From the stories shared to the hope that filled the room, your presence was a reminder that healing happens when we unite.



Because of you, "Breaking Barriers, Building Futures" was more than just the theme. These men will now have the opportunity to rebuild their lives, reconnect with their loved ones, and reintegrate into society with dignity and purpose. Your belief in second chances underscores the essence of our mission, that everyone deserves the opportunity to start anew and to strive towards a better future. This belief fuels our determination to provide the support and resources necessary for individuals to overcome their challenges and embrace new beginnings.



Thank you for being a vital part of this mission. To our event co-chairs, sponsors, attendees, and volunteers: your energy, kindness, and commitment made this event a success. With your ongoing support, we'll keep breaking barriers and building brighter futures, one person at a time.

Meet Scott “Boston” Ross

Scott Ross arrived at Dismas House seeking a fresh start after years of uncertainty. Almost immediately, he gained confidence and quickly began his recovery journey. “The support here is incredible,” Scott shared, reflecting on the impact the team had on his life. The holistic programming helped ground him. He appreciated the genuine engagement from Tony, our Certified Peer Recovery Specialist. “Tony’s real—he engages you in meaningful conversations,” Scott said. He also found comfort in talking about his past with Kim, the Clinical Director. “Kim made it easy to talk about painful things,” he added.

In just a few short months, Scott has found stability, connection, and purpose, as well as a new nickname at his new job in hospitality. Guests have picked up on his New England accent and have begun to call him, “Boston Ross.” He also quickly impressed his supervisors, leading to a promotion. “My boss is over the moon,” Scott said with a smile, proud of his achievements. Scott plans to stay at Dismas House even after his parole ends, valuing the support we provide. “This is a safe, affordable, sober living community,” he remarked. Now, he wakes up with joy and a renewed sense of hope. “Dismas House has given me hope. I wake up happy. I never thought that would happen,” Scott admitted. Embodying the transformative power of community and compassion, Scott’s journey is a testament to the impact of your support.



“When I first got here, I didn’t have much confidence. But having the support of the Dismas House team behind me made all the difference.”

—Scott “Boston” Ross

Chopped Too: A Delicious Dismas House Activity

Brought back by popular demand, Chopped Too was the long-awaited sequel to one of our most popular resident activities. Inspired by the hit TV show “Chopped,” residents were divided into teams and challenged to create a meal using available ingredients and a certain mystery ingredient.

More than a cooking competition, Chopped Too built essential reentry skills: teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and planning, while strengthening confidence and healthy social interaction. Every participant was a winner, gaining practical life skills and practicing collaboration in a supportive environment. Because of your support, we were able to host an experience that reinforced accountability, cooperation, and real-world decision-making. No wonder Chopped Too remained the talk of Dismas House for months!



Admissions Manager Kleopatra emcee’d the event, interviewing residents as they scrambled to cobble together something super scrumptious.



Whiskey, Wine & Whiskers

SAVE THE DATE: MAY 16, 2026

Whiskey, Wine & Whiskers returns on Saturday, May 16, 2026, 12-4pm at Horton Events in Nashville for one of Music City's most fun and beloved events of the year.

This spring fundraiser brings the community together to experience unlimited tastings of whiskey, wine, and spirits in a lively, pet-friendly atmosphere. Enjoy a fun-filled afternoon while raising support for Dismas House and our mission to help residents successfully transition from incarceration to stability.

The day will feature exceptional wines and spirits, food trucks, a 360° photobooth, curated retail experiences, a live DJ, and, of course, a Pawty Zone for our furry friends. We can't wait to celebrate with you this spring!

VISIT: [WHISKEYWINEANDWHISKERS.COM](https://www.whiskeywineandwhiskers.com) TO LEARN MORE



Best Way to Ring in the New Year

THROUGH OUR "BE THE BRIDGE" HOLIDAY CAMPAIGN

For our 2025 holiday campaign, we invited you to "Be the Bridge" to hope and second chances. Over the course of several weeks, we shared touching video testimonials from residents Jayson, David, Gary, and Steven.

Their stories must have really resonated with you because we exceeded our \$40,000 goal and raised over \$57,000! Your incredible generosity will enable us to strengthen and sustain our programs and support residents on their reentry journeys. We're deeply grateful for your continued support and belief in our mission.



Love in Action

Your presence matters more than you think, and it can change a life.

Volunteers are essential to fostering a family-like atmosphere at Dismas House, and we are deeply grateful for the support of our community. Through both individual volunteers and partnerships with local organizations, there are many ways to share your time and talents and make a meaningful difference in the lives of returning citizens.

Looking for a simple way to get involved or know someone who is? Invite friends, colleagues, or community groups to attend a Lunch & Learn to learn more about our mission and how to support the men we serve.

VISIT: [DISMAS.ORG/VOLUNTEERS](https://dismas.org/volunteers) TO LEARN MORE



Clockwise from above: Shade Tree Medical recently came on site to give free flu shots to residents; Volunteers from the Frist Center teach thousand-year-old art techniques to residents; and a Vanderbilt volunteer teaches a resident new tech skills.



Celebrating IPS Success

At Dismas House, meaningful employment is one of the most powerful foundations for successful reentry. Through our Individual Placement & Support (IPS) program, we help people navigating mental health needs secure and maintain competitive employment, building stability, confidence, and a path forward. This evidence-based program is also available to eligible community members, extending its impact beyond our campus.

Recently, partners, employers, and IPS team members gathered for a Steering Committee Meeting to celebrate the impact of this work. Our IPS specialists collaborate closely with employers to understand workforce needs.

We were especially honored to hear from Josef Czelusta, Director of Environmental Services at TouchPoint, who spoke about their commitment to supporting employees at Ascension St. Thomas health facilities. The meeting concluded with powerful client testimonies that brought this work to life, reminding everyone in the room that access to opportunity, paired with ongoing support, can be truly transformative.



Donate new or gently used men's winter gear, including coats, gloves, hats, and scarves, to support the men we serve!

Drop off at 2424 Charlotte Avenue, Monday to Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

New items can be purchased from our Amazon wishlist at [Dismas.org/in-kind-donations](https://dismas.org/in-kind-donations)



DISMAS HOUSE

2424 Charlotte Pike
Nashville, TN 37203



MAKE YOUR IMPACT

There are numerous ways to support Dismas House and make an impact in the lives of returning citizens.

We are grateful for each vital role that our community members play in our mission to end the cycle of incarceration.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Please contact Brenan Sharp, Director of Marketing & Communications, to share your positive experience with Dismas House.

Email: bsharp@dismas.org

**SCAN
TO DONATE
TODAY**

Dismas.org

