

IMPACT REPORT 2023



THE URBAN RENEWAL CENTER, NORFOLK, VA

OUR MISSION

TO AWAKEN SOCIETY TO ITS PROMISED WHOLENESS.

Greetings!

I am excited about our plans for 2024! As we embark on this journey together, I have great anticipation on making a positive impact in the lives of our fellow citizens.

One of our primary goals for 2024 is to assist families in achieving economic mobility. We have partnered with the United Way of South Hampton Roads and the NFKThrive initiative. We firmly believe that economic stability is the foundation for a flourishing community. Through effective interventions and targeted programs, we aim to empower families by providing them with resources, education, and opportunities for growth. By forging strong partnerships with local businesses and institutions, we hope to facilitate job creation and professional development, enabling families to secure a brighter future.

Another crucial goal is to address homelessness in our city. We recognize that providing immediate shelter is only the first step. We are committed to helping homeless individuals secure stable employment and transition into permanent housing. By collaborating with community organizations and employment agencies, we hope to create a comprehensive support system that not only alleviates homelessness but also empowers individuals to regain control over their lives.

Furthermore, I am thrilled to announce our intention to launch the "Hope Movement" to combat the pressing epidemic of violence. The prevalence of violence has had a detrimental impact on the lives of countless individuals, sowing fear and despair. We firmly believe that hope is a powerful tool for change. Through the Hope Movement, we will foster an environment that promotes unity, understanding, and compassion. We will continue to partner with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra for the annual Evening of Hope. Also, we plan to support families with ongoing resources, especially to support children exposed to the grief of violence.

We are immensely grateful for your unwavering support and dedication to our shared vision. Without your commitment, none of these plans would flourish. Let's remain united in our purpose and steadfast in our determination to create a better future for every member of our community.

I eagerly anticipate the exciting possibilities that lie ahead in 2024. Let's continue to unite to build the Beloved Community. Thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to the opportunity to work collaboratively for positive change.

With great enthusiasm,

Antipas L. Harris, DMin, PhD
President of the URC



NORFOLK THRIVE

PARTNERING TOGETHER TO OFFER A HAND-UP

The Urban Renewal Center (URC) has collaborated with the United Way of South Hampton Roads to launch the NFK-Thrive program. This program has grown significantly since its launch in July 2023. The program provides support for the nearly 90,000 families in Norfolk who qualify as ALICE (Access Limited, Income Constrained and Employed). They are hardworking citizens who are struggling to make ends meet. United Way's NFKthrive initiative is a partnership with the City of Norfolk and the URC to support these individuals and families in five critical areas:

- Mentoring
- Housing
- Employment & Education
- Financial Management
- Well-being

The program's critical component is connecting the mentees to community resources to help them achieve their financial goals. NFKThrive is the perfect opportunity for the URC to advance our mission to extend a hand-up to a better life!

2023 SNAPSHOT

- 91 applicants
- 31 families enrolled in the program
- 62 goal developments
- 28 goals achieved
- 90 scheduled mentoring meetings
- 83 mobility mentoring sessions
- 92% participant engagement





MEET A NORFOLK THRIVE PARTICIPANT

Mrs. Barnes and her family joined the NFKThrive program in August 2023, during a time of immense stress and hardship. Her husband had undergone surgery. They were facing eviction, disconnection of electricity, and struggling to put food on the table.

Mrs. Barnes met Ravin Williams, the Lead Mobility Mentor at the URC, who informed her about resources available through the NFKThrive program. This program was a game-changer for the Barnes family. They received financial counseling, which helped to increase Mrs. Barnes' credit score from 472 to 516 in a short time. The family secured a new home, and Mrs. Barnes started counseling sessions to prioritize her self-care.

The URC also assisted the Barnes Family with food for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Additionally, the URC and United Way of South Hampton Roads supported the Barnes Family, helping to put smiles on their children's faces with Christmas gifts. When we help others, we welcome them as vibrant participants in the Beloved Community.

IMPACT ARTS PROGRAM

CHANGING THE WORLD THROUGH THE ARTS

Research has shown that children who participate in art classes develop more substantial social and emotional skills, exhibit better performance in school, and improve their overall behavior. The IMPACT Youth Arts Program (IYAP), now in its third year, has expanded to include Virginia Beach and Norfolk students. Every week, more than 50 kids participate in various programs including dance, theatre, culinary arts, and visual arts. Before each class, children are served dinner and given time to meet and get to know other kids. Old Donation Episcopal Church in Virginia Beach provides transportation for the Norfolk program. They also mobilize volunteers to support the Virginia Beach program.

IYAP focuses on personal growth and community-building for children. The program allows children to explore creativity, make new friends, and develop essential life skills.

“The URC’s Impact Youth Arts Program (IYAP) has touched my heart and helped me to see the power and possibility of a better future by providing professional instruction in theater, dance, visual, and culinary arts free of charge to children in underserved communities in Norfolk and Virginia Beach. Positive changes I have observed: I have seen excitement and dreams for a bright future in children’s eyes, and I have seen them form friendships with other children outside their immediate community. The children experience loving care from the URC instructors and IYAP staff, who love them and want them to realize their dreams. By embracing these children as important members of our Beloved Community, the IYAP brings a little bit of heaven to earth.”

-URC Volunteer Dan Ries

We look forward to our 2024 plans to expand the program to include educational enrichment in Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics – STREAM!



EVENING OF HOPE

UNITING THE COMMUNITY FOR CHANGE



In 2023, the URC held its second annual Evening of Hope, a formal event sponsored by Sentara Healthcare, United Way of South Hampton Roads, CBN/700 Club, and WAVY 10/Fox 43. The concert was a partnership with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra and took place at the Harrison Opera House. The annual event aims to raise awareness about the issue of violence in our community.

Over 1,100 people from various backgrounds attended the concert, which provided a rare opportunity for people to come together and enjoy the power of music for a common cause. The evening was not just about entertainment, but also a chance to honor the families of victims of violence and acknowledge the ongoing grief caused by the loss of loved ones.

As part of the event, nine front-line workers were recognized for their exceptional work in our community. These individuals go above and beyond their work to console families and make a real difference in the lives of those affected by violence. They represent a broader community that cares and is eager to see violence cease.



Throughout the evening, the power of music to unite people from all backgrounds was evident as attendees found common ground in the arts and shared some of their deepest emotions. The event was truly a night of hope, uniting everyone to make a change.

The day following Evening of Hope, one family commented, ***“At the funeral, we were so busy with arrangements. Last night was a chance for closure. We felt healed.”***



If you missed out on this remarkable event, mark your calendars for **October 10, 2024**, and join us for the next Evening of Hope.

HOMELESS EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

OFFERING A WAY FORWARD

Homeless Employment Services offers job readiness and workforce development to homeless citizens in Norfolk and Virginia Beach. In its third year, this unique program continues to soar with success. Anything from getting identification to securing documents, resume development, interview coaching, workforce advocacy, transportation support, uniform and clothing assistance, and financial planning is provided.

One guest from The Center commented, ***“You took the time to get to know me and not judge me for being in a shelter. It was my first time being there and hopefully my last. Having someone who genuinely cared kept me going. After earning my CNA, I feel good about myself. Caring for people is something I had been doing since I was 14. I have been able to prove to myself that I could do it.”***

SUCCESS STATS

- 94 job offers
- 63 resumes created
- 82 essential documents
- 500 bus passes for transportation to work
- 57 workforce/uniform clothing provided
- 16 students enrolled in vocational training, including:
 - 7 Food Handlers Certifications
 - 6 Forklift Certifications & Merchant Seaman Maritime training
 - 3 students completed WeldNOW at Tidewater Community College





MEET AN EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PARTICIPANT

Donnell, who is 23 years old, visited the Center on Tidewater in February 2023 as a day guest. He approached the URC for employment services and shared his career aspirations. He decided to enroll in the WeldNow program at Tidewater Community College to obtain his Welding certification. Donnell attended all his classes diligently and secured a job as a Machinist at Colonna's Shipyard. He now earns \$16 per hour and has gained a new-found sense of confidence and self-esteem. During one of his recent check-ins, he expressed his gratitude and exclaimed, "I couldn't have done it without you! I am immensely thankful for this opportunity that has changed my life for the better. I will never forget what you have done for me."

Stories like this remind us of why we do what we do. The joy in Donnell's eyes after achieving his dream is evidence that working together is the key to changing lives and setting a course for the Beloved Community.

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Income

TOTAL RECEIPTS \$542,119

Expenses

PROGRAM EXPENSES

Housing & Employment Services..... 42,428
Awareness Events..... 52,380
Program Expenses.....89,573
IMPACT Youth Arts.....83,630
School Support Programs.....5,759
Education & Outreach.....36,446
Norfolk Thrive.....51,912

Administrative Costs.....50,119
Salaries & Benefits.....101,811

TOTAL \$514,730

GRANTS & SPONSORSHIPS RECEIVED:

Frank & Aimee Batten
Blocker Foundation
CBN/700 Club
Christ and St. Luke's Episcopal Church
Congregation Beth El
Galilee Episcopal Church
City of Norfolk
Dollar Bank
Dominion Energy
First Lutheran Church of Norfolk
First Presbyterian Church of Norfolk
First United Presbyterian Church
GEICO
Ghent Area Ministries
Hampton Roads Community Foundation
Kiwanis Club of Norfolk
Lion's Club
Ohef Sholom Temple
Old Donation Episcopal
Sentara Healthcare
Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church
Saint Bride's Episcopal Church
Santee Ferebee and Erik van Strien
Starbucks
Temple Israel
Trinity Presbyterian Church
United Way of South Hampton Roads
Victory Church

HOMELESS HOUSING PROGRAM

MOVING PEOPLE TO NEW SPACES



When many people experiencing homelessness find permanent housing, they require additional support. In the fall of 2023, the URC introduced the Homeless Housing Program with the help of a grant from the United Way of South Hampton Roads. This program is unique in Hampton Roads as it focuses on the transition from homelessness to permanent housing.

Some citizens we have helped secure employment find housing through various programs in Norfolk, but they need extra assistance with security deposits, the first and last month's rent, furniture, moving services, and utilities. We also receive referrals from partners supporting families in need of assistance to move into permanent housing. We are thankful to United Way of South Hampton Roads for helping us turn this program into a reality.

2023 SNAPSHOT

- 12 program participants (10 individuals & 2 families)
- 90 household items
- 1 rental/utility assistance
- 17 volunteers





MEET AN IMPACT HOUSING PARTICIPANT

Anthony began receiving overnight services at the Center in December 2022. Despite facing several obstacles, he remained determined to improve his situation. In January 2023, he landed a job at Doumars and started saving for housing. In August 2023, the community services board helped him identify a housing program that he was eligible for and, in September, he signed the lease for his own apartment in Ocean View.

Once he had a place to live, we provided him a mattress, bed frame, kitchen, and household essentials, a window AC unit, and paid for his Dominion Energy deposit and first bill. Anthony expressed his gratitude, saying, "Thank you for all you have done. This allows me to start from such a stable place and makes me feel like I have what I need to be successful in future months. This time last year I was on the streets, and it really feels like it is such a long way to have come in such a short time. You have really made a difference in my life.. If it weren't for The Center and people like you working here, I wouldn't be where I am now. Thank you."

Falling on hard times is not the end. The Beloved Community rallies together to help so no one stays down long. Together, we rise to the pursuit of our promised wholeness.

WINTER SHELTER

REUNITING THE FAITH COMMUNITY

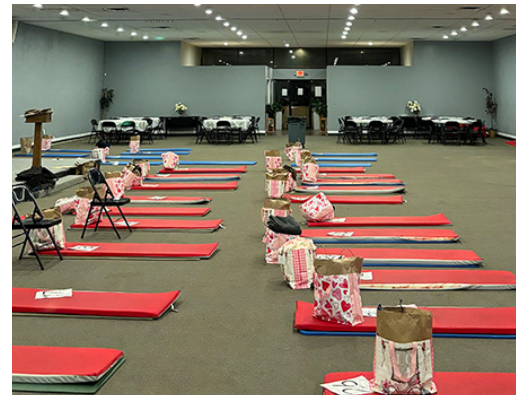
While the City of Norfolk works diligently to address the problem, the Norfolk Pastor's Roundtable grew increasingly concerned about persistent homelessness during the coldest months of winter. In response, pastors from various churches came together to address this issue, and the Christian Coalition Against Homelessness was formed.

The Coalition is a committee that renewed its vision, of NEST (Norfolk Emergency Shelter Team). The interfaith community quickly joined the mission from December to March to provide warm meals, shelter, compassion, and hope for the homeless community.

For eleven weeks, churches opened their doors and provided space and individual mats for homeless citizens. Several other churches, synagogues, mosques, and civic organizations worked together to create an ecosystem of support, including volunteer shifts, meal preparation, transfer of mats, blankets, and supplies from one church to the next. Also, donors, organizational gifts, and a TC Energy grant supported Winter Shelter needs.

2023 SNAPSHOT

- 154 Meals served (breakfast & lunch)
- 1,925 Volunteer slots filled
- 10 Participating Houses of Worship
- 55-60 Homeless guests each night
- 6 church sites





MEET THE WINTER SHELTER COORDINATOR

Jenny Wernly spent most of 2023 coordinating with participating churches and working as a partner with the URC to mobilize volunteers, secure spaces and hold the Winter Shelter together. She comments, "I have loved getting to know our guests, volunteers, and all who have supported the effort to provide food and shelter for our neighbors experiencing homelessness. At times this winter I have been deeply saddened by the complicated and difficult situations many of our guests face, but I have also been filled with hope as I have watched the power of hospitality through and to those made in the image of God. I have seen resilience, sacrificial love, and beauty in this Winter Shelter community, and it has been a great privilege to be involved."

BLACK SACRED ARTS

EDUCATING THROUGH THE ARTS



Music and theology have had a long-standing relationship, particularly in the African American community. They intersect through spirituals, gospel, blues, and other forms of music, serving as important mediums of expression and cultural preservation. Music often conveys messages of faith, hope, and resilience, reflecting the spiritual journey of the black community. Theology, rooted in various traditions, has provided a framework for understanding and coping with the challenges faced by the community. Together, music and theology have contributed to a sense of identity, solidarity, and strength within the black cultural and spiritual experience.

The black experience has heavily influenced the meaning and various forms of American music. The URC's Black Sacred Arts series aims to educate and unite the community through historical insights, helping carve out a future of promise and hope for the Beloved Community in which diversity is the most beautiful chord we play.



In 2023, we hosted two concerts that showcased various types of music and included pipe organ, strings, voice, and guitar. We celebrated Juneteenth and Fourth of July at First Presbyterian Church of Norfolk. The fall grand piano concert was a feature in the city's fall arts festival at Christ and St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

2023 SNAPSHOT

- 2 concerts
- 350 concert attendees
- Multiple musical genres presented
- Education & enrichment through music and mini-lectures



EDUCATION FORUMS

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF NORFOLK

The URC is concerned about where we've been, where we are, and where we're going. To address these questions, we reintroduced the City on A Hill Community forum in 2023 with the theme of "Sold Down River: Norfolk's Slave Trade and Reparative Genealogy." The purpose of this series is to learn more about our history, facilitate open discussion, and inspire new possibilities.

"Sold Down River" focused on Norfolk's involvement in the slave trade. Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander and Dr. Stephanie J. Richmond, historians from Norfolk State University, discovered that there was a slave jail in Norfolk and worked to uncover some of the city's darker history. They also revealed the role Norfolk played in resourcing other cities in the South with slaves. Much of the region's wealth, like much of the nation's generational wealth, can be traced back to the slave trade.

The forum was filled with new knowledge and insight. It also provoked deep reflection. The attendees left with a richer understanding of Norfolk's history and a renewed commitment to the URC's vision and mission to advance a society in which all of God's children enjoy social justice and human equality.



HOMELESS VOLUNTEERISM

GIVING BACK TO OUR COMMUNITY

The URC has a partnership with the City of Norfolk to facilitate volunteerism at the Center on Tidewater. The Center serves as a homeless shelter for citizens of Norfolk. The URC is grateful for all of the partners that offer their support.

The arts have proven to lift spirits and boost morale. This is exactly the case at the Center on Tidewater. We are grateful for the new partnership with the creatives and the 757 Maker's Space who dedicate time and resources to encourage people going through a hard time.

One guest said, ***"Sometimes things feel so hard. Having the time and space to make things and be together in art class and to read poetry has been such a relief."***

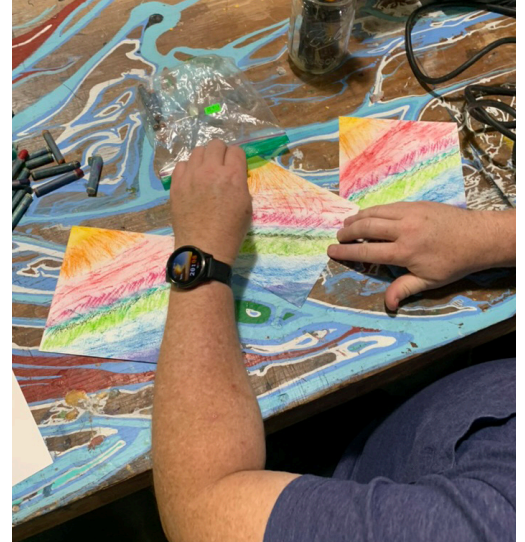
Another guests commented, ***"This brought happiness to what has been a very hard time lately."***

ART VOLUNTEERS

Tidewater Arts Outreach - In July 2023, TAO began providing free on site art classes for Shelter Residents in collaboration with the URC. Six teachers provide monthly arts programming to the guests at The Center.

757 Makerspace - Hosted three Art Nights, inviting the community to come together and create for The Center for Mental Health Awareness Month's beautification project. Their staff provided all supplies and the space to host these community gatherings and generated about 50% of all of the donated art for this project.

The Muse Writing Center - Facilitated three art and poetry tea parties! Practicing gratitude, each participant responded to a series of intentionally crafted prompts. The group was guided through the learning and creating process.



TOY DRIVE

SHARING WITH THOSE AROUND US

We are excited about our partnership with Community In Schools! December 2023 was our third annual Christmas toy drive, and we succeeded again. We work together with several community partners to collect more than 1000 toys. December 16, 2023, was a spectacular day for many children in our region. Families came to enjoy snacks and fun in a mall where they could choose toys to fulfill their Christmas dreams. What a joy to join them and their wrap-around services as they seek to bring joy and success to the lives of children throughout the region. Community In Schools works with these children every day to help them succeed in academics. What a joy to join them and their wrap-around services as they seek to bring joy and success to the lives of children throughout the region.

2023 SNAPSHOT

- 1,000 plus toys collected
- 15 plus locations that collected toys
- 9 Volunteers from Global Student Friendship (an international organization at ODU that supports students)



GHANA EDUCATION SEMINAR

SHARING LOVE AND LEARNING



Antipas Harris, co-led a travel seminar to Accra, Ghana from September 13 to 21, 2023. The seminar was organized in partnership with the Alliance of Black Pentecostal Scholars and took 20 delegates from the USA, Europe, and the Caribbean. Among the delegates were three African American boys aged 10, 12, and 15. The travel experience was deeply moving for everyone involved.

One of the highlights of the trip was visiting the Cape Coast Slave Castles, where the delegates learned about the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade. They also toured the WEB DuBois Center. Another memorable event was when the teen boys introduced the game of basketball to Nyame Bekyere village. The URC purchased the first-ever basketball hoop for the village school, and the children had a lot of fun!



Antipas and a group of guest lecturers made up the Community of Learning for the URC. They joined several other scholars to deliver lectures on the role of faith in civic life, as well as a business and faith workshop. The lectures were presented at four universities: the University of Ghana, Perez University, Trinity Theological Seminary, and Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry - the Rehoboth Temple. The Ghanaian government partnered with the URC to organize a special round-table for the National Cathedral and Bible Museum project. The round-table was held in honor of Antipas' book, "Is Christianity the White Man's Religion?" The lectures and subsequent conversations were well-received, with hundreds attending and providing overwhelmingly positive feedback. As a result, the national board for the Bible Museum project has invited Antipas to return to Ghana for ongoing lectures that will focus on the role Africa has played in Christian history and the reframing of a tarnished Christian history to revise the faith that Jesus intended.



OXFORD COLLOQUY 2023

PARTNERING TOGETHER ACROSS THE GLOBE

We are committed to dismantling the racial tension that continues to brew in our society. From March 20 - 24, 2023, the URC partnered with the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Institute to hold the first Oxford Colloquy at Harris Manchester College at the University of Oxford. Delegates from different parts of the world, including leaders from the Black Church tradition, the evangelical Christian tradition, and other faith leaders, concluded their summit on "Meeting the Challenge of the Rise in Racialized Christian Nationalism."

The group, consisting of 42 members, convened to discuss the increase of racialized Christian nationalism in the United States and around the world. The colloquy went beyond its initial intent, where leaders brought their individual academic content and unique perspectives. With the collective expertise of presenters and a full day of facilitated processing, the leaders were compelled to raise an urgent rally cry.

The seriousness of the topic, which has a history spanning more than three millennia and is on full display across the US, created a sense of urgency that brought the group together in solidarity. The gathering was full of insight and a plethora of perspectives ranging from ultra-conservative to very progressive. Our children and their future demand undivided attention to this matter. To quote the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "This is the fierce urgency of now." This evil not only disrespects our democratic republic but also insults the love and justice our faith demands.





MEET ONE OF OUR STELLAR URC VOLUNTEERS

We met Yvonne in 2020 when she began volunteering with the URC through the Norfolk Emergency Shelter Teams initiative. Since that time, she has not missed a week of serving the homeless in our community. This past year, she has also added another weekly commitment to her schedule as she tutors 5th graders at a local Title 1 school, Jacox Elementary.

Yvonne also organized donations of blankets, clothing, and more than 700 non-perishable meals through a partnership with Operation Blessing.

Yvonne's peaceful but strong presence, has built an unshakable trust with those she serves. Anyone who has the privilege of coming into contact with her experiences her selflessness and generosity. We honor Yvonne for her loyalty and consistency in offering a safe place for vulnerable members of our community.

If you are interested in volunteering with the URC, please email us at info@theurcnorfolk.com.





THE URBAN RENEWAL CENTER

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