

Why we must protect Permanent Supportive Housing

From the desk of Dr. Junior Dillion, President and CEO of Volunteers of America Upstate New York



Permanent Supportive Housing plays a vital role in helping people move beyond homelessness and build stable, healthier lives. By combining long-term affordable rental assistance with flexible, person-centered support services, PSH serves individuals living with disabilities, chronic health conditions, substance use disorders, and complex behavioral health needs. Research consistently shows it reduces returns to homelessness and outperforms short-term solutions.

Chronic homelessness is not simply a housing availability issue. The public debate often frames PSH as costly, but it actually reduces overall public spending by decreasing reliance on expensive crisis services like hospitals, jails, and shelters. PSH is not charity, it is essential infrastructure that shifts systems from crisis response to prevention and long-term stability.

Across Monroe County, more than 600 households rely on PSH, including hundreds supported by VOA through scattered-site and facility-based housing. These are individuals and families who are already

housed, already stabilized, and already rebuilding their lives. Right now, that stability is at risk.

Federal funding uncertainty threatens not just future growth, but existing programs. Even small disruptions could displace hundreds of people and place added strain on already stretched community resources. Programs should always be evaluated and improved but not dismantled. When affordable housing is scarce, removing supportive housing does not create flexibility; it creates displacement and undoes decades of progress.

As a community, we have both an opportunity and a responsibility to protect what works by preserving existing housing, prioritizing those with the greatest needs, and continuing to improve services without disrupting stability.

If we are serious about ending chronic homelessness, and not simply shifting it from one part of the system to another, Permanent Supportive Housing must remain central to our strategy.

It stabilizes lives.

It reduces public cost.

It strengthens communities.

And we cannot afford to undo what works.



From the archives

A news article in a 1918 issue of *The Endicott Bulletin*: Maud Booth traveled overseas during wartime to uplift spirits and bring comfort to American troops facing loneliness and hardship far from home.

More than a century later, VOA still offers hope and care for people in times of uncertainty.

WILL HELP CHEER UP
OUR BOYS OVERSEAS

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Mrs. Ballington Booth, wife of Gen. Ballington Booth, president of the Volunteers of America, has gone abroad in the costume of the Y. M. C. A. to spend the winter with the American expeditionary forces in order to cheer up the boys who will be mighty homesick on the cold winter nights. Mrs. Booth is a very talented singer and in the past thirty-two years has visited almost every town in this country.

Bank of America's Better Money Habits classes help families at shelters build financial skills and confidence



April is Financial Literacy Month. At VOA, we know that true stability goes beyond housing. It also means having the tools, knowledge, and confidence to make informed financial decisions.

Bank of America has partnered with Volunteers of America Upstate New York to provide its signature Better Money Habits® financial education program directly to residents in VOA's emergency family shelter.

"Our clients have really been enjoying these classes and learning from the instructors," said shelter director Sam Moskowitz. "Many of our clients have mentioned how no one has ever taught them basic finances,

and in some cases their parents have never had access to a bank account or credit card."

Through hands-on, interactive classes, Bank of America employee volunteers share practical guidance on budgeting, building credit, managing debt, planning for the future, and other financial skills that can make a lasting difference for individuals working to rebuild their lives.

"Volunteers of America delivers critical shelter and services, equipping individuals and families in Rochester with the support to achieve stability and self-sufficiency," said Colleen Matteson, president, Bank of America Rochester. "In partnership with Volunteers of America, our Better Money Habits program brings financial curriculum and practical skills directly to the community, helping participants confidently plan for future financial decisions and goals."

Many individuals VOA serves are navigating complex challenges, from recovering after a financial crisis to securing employment

and preparing for permanent housing. For many, access to financial education has been limited.

Twice a month, shelter residents participate in 45-minute lessons that help bridge that gap, breaking down financial concepts into clear, manageable steps. Participants are able to build confidence and a greater sense of control over their financial future by learning how to create a realistic budget, understand credit, and develop savings habits.

Bank of America has been a longtime supporter of Volunteers of America, reflecting a shared commitment to strengthening communities by first meeting basic needs like shelter, food, and health. Only once those needs are met are individuals better positioned to focus on personal and financial growth.

Together, VOA and Bank of America are investing in people, not only in moments of crisis, but throughout their journey towards stability and long-term self-reliance.

Lakeya's story of resilience



A mother of six, Lakeya, and her children were unexpectedly uprooted when her landlord lost his property, and they were forced to move out in a hurry.

Despite working full-time as a bus driver and recruiter, with a low credit score and limited housing options, finding a new place proved nearly impossible. Leaving her with nowhere to go, she felt alone in the world.

“You get this sense of feeling you let your children down,” she shared. Lakeya made the heartbreaking decision to split her children between family and friends. Some nights, she slept in her car.

Asking for help required vulnerability, but she knew she couldn't carry this weight alone. Grounded in her faith, she found the strength to keep moving forward. What she needed was a steppingstone.

That step came when she was referred to Volunteers of America's Rapid Rehousing Program. At first, Lakeya was hesitant, but with her case manager advocating on her behalf and helping her work through barriers that once felt insurmountable, real progress began to take shape.

In just three short months, Lakeya regained financial independence and achieved housing stability. Though continued support was available, she wanted those same resources to be available to others still in need.

“I know what I have been through and I want to make sure others find that same support I did.”

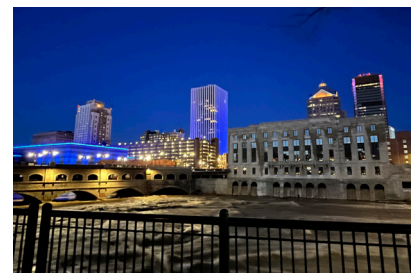
What once felt like the end of the road became a turning point. She is now on track to achieve her next goal of home ownership and building a future her children can count on.

VOA Week recognized throughout Upstate New York

Local leaders across Upstate New York helped commemorate VOA's founding week and the organization's 130th anniversary by proclaiming March 8 as “Volunteers of America Day” in Monroe, Broome, and Tompkins counties.

In Rochester, the celebration quite literally lit up the night with the city skyline illuminated in red and blue, a reminder that hope shines brightly when a community comes together.

Across our program sites, staff also marked the occasion with celebrations of their own, coming together to reflect on the work they do each day to support our neighbors. At the same time, supporters rallied around our mission for our first-ever Giving Day, helping ensure that individuals and families have access to safe housing, supportive services, and opportunities to build stability and independence.



Charity Trivia Night

Volunteers of America hosted a Charity Trivia Night last month, which brought together friends and supporters to test their knowledge while learning more about VOA's work in housing, education, and health.

We are grateful to The Sheffield for hosting and to everyone who joined us for a memorable evening of competition and connection.



214 Lake Avenue
Rochester, NY 14608

I Remember Mama

Through I Remember Mama, Volunteers of America honors women across generations who may be isolated, separated from family, working hard to rebuild their lives and create stability for their children.

With your support, VOA will deliver gift bags and flowers to women in our community as a simple but meaningful reminder that they are not forgotten on Mother's Day. You can sponsor one gift bag for \$50, two for \$100, or ten gift bags for \$500 as an act of kindness to show these women they are seen, valued, and remembered.

Please make your donation prior to Saturday, May 2 to ensure your card arrives by Mother's Day.

To donate online, visit voaupny.org/iremembermama

To donate by phone, call (585) 736-2487

To donate by check:

Please mail your complete form with your check payable to:
Volunteers of America, "I Remember Mama"
214 Lake Ave. Rochester, NY 14608

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: (____) _____

Email: _____

Gift Amount: \$50 \$100 \$500

