



Volunteers of America®

GREATER SACRAMENTO & NORTHERN NEVADA



# EVERYDAY GRACE

FALL 2010



## 'Safe' is a very big word

Maureen and Lisa were born decades apart, but shared a sense of hopelessness and despair when life tumbled out of control

At 68, an age when most seniors are well into enjoying their "golden" years, Maureen was working harder than ever – just to stay alive. Diagnosed with stage three breast cancer in 2002, she had already endured multiple rounds of surgery, chemo-



*When cancer drained her will to live, Maureen (far left) found support and newfound hope through Volunteers of America; Lisa Wrightsman's battle with addiction left her homeless. New opportunities through Volunteers of America have brought her back from the brink.*

therapy, radiation and blood transfusions. Unable to work at her management-con-  
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## This Christmas, be a Santa to those in need

In Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," miserly Ebenezer Scrooge is reminded that "many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts."

Unfortunately that is as true today as it was in 1843. With an unemployment rate of nearly 13 percent in Greater Sacramento, and more than 14 percent in Reno, along with more people facing homelessness, it looks to be a less-than-merry yuletide for many.

And while Volunteers of America may provide shelter and even meals to those enrolled in one of its dozens of emergency shelter or transitional housing programs,

we depend on community support to ease those wants and needs so keenly felt during the Christmas season.

In the "Spirit of Giving," Volunteers of America invites you to help

**To donate or volunteer in Sacramento, please contact Kim Castaneda at 916.442.3691, or [kimc@voa-sac.org](mailto:kimc@voa-sac.org). In Reno, call Sandy Isham at 775.322.7143, or e-mail [sisham@voa-nv.org](mailto:sisham@voa-nv.org).**

make it a brighter Christmas by contributing financially, volunteering, and/or participating in one of our in-kind holiday donation programs:

- Adopt-a-Family
- holiday turkey drive
- toy drive
- hat/glove/sock/scarf drive

Adopt-a-Family wish lists are now available, with wrapped-and-tagged gifts due at our administration office (1900 Point West Way, Suite 270, Sacramento) or at our Family Shelter in Reno (335 Record St.), by 4 p.m. Dec. 10. For more information, go online at [www.voa-sac.org](http://www.voa-sac.org), or [www.voa-nv.org](http://www.voa-nv.org).



## 'All you can do is try to help people.'

Bryan Bullard revs up his can-do, nothing-is-impossible attitude as the sprint-car-racer-turned-builder joins the board of Volunteers of America

**Q:** *What motivated you to volunteer to serve on the board of directors?*

**A:** I had met [Volunteers of America Greater Sacramento & Northern Nevada President/CEO] Leo McFarland through a mutual friend, and the more I learned about Volunteers of America and what it did for others – especially children – I knew I wanted to participate. There aren't a lot of organizations out there that provide the level of service that you do.

**Q:** *What do you hope to achieve during your tenure?*

**A:** When you see how badly people are struggling these days, you want to do anything you can to relieve their anguish. As a new board member, you're hoping you can add something to the organization – people are hurting out there.



*Bullard Construction's motto is "We can do everything," says president Bryan Bullard. "In that way, we're like Volunteers of America. We look to satisfy the many needs of the community."*

**Q:** *As president of Bullard Construction, you have already helped Volunteers of America a great deal.*

**A:** The first job we did for Volunteers of America was a renovation of [the affordable-living complex] Greenbriar Apartments. We also did the renovation of Sierra Manor Apartments in Reno. Currently, we're working on projects for sister affiliates in Alaska and Oklahoma.

**Q:** *While working on these homes, and getting to know the residents, you gain a whole new perspective on the plight of those in need, don't you?*

**A:** And that's what led me to my first Shelter from the Storm Breakfast in 2004. The messages shared by the clients really resonated with me. Last year, my vice president, Paul Linsteadt, and I sponsored families through the Adopt-a-Family program at Christmas. We brought our sons, Jason and Nick, when we delivered the gifts to families at one of the housing programs and it was a revelation: the appreciation and gratitude the families expressed was phenomenal. We really knew we had made a difference. When it comes right down to it, all you can do is try to help people." ♡



## No missed or belated greetings thanks to new partnership with Birthday Wishes

*Young Residential Family Center resident Tiffany recently celebrated her 13th birthday in a big way thanks to the support of Birthday Wishes and the Hasbro Children's Fund.*

**I**n September, Volunteers of America joined forces with the Massachusetts-based Birthday Wishes and Hasbro Children's Fund to provide joyful birthday experiences for children at its family shelter in Sacramento, joining Volunteers of America local offices in Kentucky, Maryland, New York and Virginia. In addition, plans are under way to add the program to Family Shelter activities in Reno. "We are so grateful to the Hasbro Children's Fund for making this new collaboration with Volunteers of America a reality," said Lisa Vasiloff, Birthday Wishes executive director. "I cannot imagine a better partnership to help expand our Birthday Wishes program on a national level."

*To learn how you can help make birthday wishes come true, call Kim Castaneda at 916.442.3691, or e-mail her at [kimc@voa-sac.org](mailto:kimc@voa-sac.org). ♡*

## NORTHERN NEVADA

*Shelby Bossert (right) is one of two volunteer leaders for Girl Scouts of the Sierra Nevada Troop 613, the recently established, Family Shelter-based group in Reno. Here, Bossert demonstrates the exotic art of eating with chopsticks*



## Volunteers help establish Scouts troop at shelter

**W**e've had a very warm response from everyone," happily reports Carol Merideth, membership specialist for Girl Scouts of the Sierra Nevada, which recently founded a troop dedicated to young residents of the Family Shelter in Reno.



**Community Relations Officer Sandy Isham**

From mastering chopsticks, to writing/illustrating storybooks, to refining their manners, volunteer leaders Shelby Bossert and Robyn Waller have been keeping their new members busy learning new skills while establishing continuity and normalcy in



*Membership specialist Carol Merideth welcomes a new member to Girl Scouts of the Sierra Nevada Troop 613 at a recent meeting at the Family Shelter in Reno.*

their lives. "Wherever there are girls, Girl Scouts is willing to go there to deliver," said Merideth.

*To volunteer or donate to Reno-based programs, call Sandy Isham at 775.322.7143, or e-mail her at [sisham@voa-sac.org](mailto:sisham@voa-sac.org).*



## You don't have to be wealthy to be generous

Your heart is in the right place. Your head should be, too. A legacy gift to Volunteers of America can help people in our communities for generations to come and provide financial benefits for the rest of your life.

To learn more, call us at 916.442.3691, or go to [www.volunteersofamerica-sac.org](http://www.volunteersofamerica-sac.org).



**GREATER SACRAMENTO  
& NORTHERN NEVADA**

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**GREATER SACRAMENTO  
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**Safe**

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sulting business since 2004, the former Hewlett-Packard executive had all-but-exhausted her savings and saw her house go into foreclosure in September of this year.

Divorced since 1972, and largely estranged from her grown children (“They know I’m sick, but I don’t think they know how sick I am.”), Maureen was resigned to giving in to her cancer – which had spread throughout her body – and spend her last days alone in a budget motel.



*Maureen*

Thankfully, a friend guided her to Volunteers of America and its Sacramento Senior Safe House. Though the safe house primarily serves as a haven for abused and neglected seniors, Maureen was welcomed without reservation.

Apprehensive at first, due to a negative experience at a skilled nursing facility that she describes as something out of “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest,” Maureen discovered that the SSSH really is a “safe house.”

And “safe” is a very big word,” says Maureen. “With the feeling of safety comes hope. Without feelings of hope, I wouldn’t have the desire to improve my health.”

Now undergoing a new series of chemotherapy treatments, Maureen is no longer afraid of becoming homeless.

“It makes such a difference to be safe physically in a bed that is comfortable – not just not an old sack on the ground,” says Maureen. “You feel comfortable to be yourself, too – free to laugh and giggle, and safe to share your thoughts and feelings.”



*Lisa Wrightsman prepares to kick a goal during August’s Homeless World Cup tournament in Rio de Janeiro.*

**‘I needed to make a change’**

As The Sacramento Bee’s Carlos Alcalá aptly wrote in an August column, Lisa Wrightsman was “a shooting star who fell.”

A scholarship athlete at Sacramento State University, Wrightsman (who still ranks as the school’s No. 2 all-time women’s soccer scorer) went on to play for the semipro Elk Grove Pride before her descent into drug and alcohol abuse left her homeless and hopeless.

“Drinking and using at parties became an everyday thing. I realized I needed to make a change, or I was going to end up in jail or die,” said Wrightsman, who found Volunteers of America’s transitional housing and job-training program the perfect follow-up to her successful stint in rehab.

Reinforcing sobriety through soccer was the suggestion of case manager Chris Mann, coach of the Volunteers of America-supported coed soccer team, which had found success through the Street Soccer USA league.

A striking debut at the SSUSA tournament in Washington, D.C. led to her selection for the U.S. team headed to Rio de Janeiro for September’s Homeless World Cup.

“It’s encouraging,” said Wrightsman of her rebirth. “Playing soccer again, going to represent our country – maybe not in the way I thought I would – but this is better. This is what I was meant to do.”

**Did you know?**

**M**ore than 4,000 schoolchildren returned to class this fall better prepared to succeed because of your generous support of Operation Backpack.

**I**n Reno, more than 700 coats and jackets earmarked for the men’s, women’s and family shelters were donated to HOPE worldwide’s One Warm Coat drive. Those still wishing to contribute may drop off Monday-Friday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Good Shepherd’s Clothes Closet (335 Record St.).

**N**early 500 Facebook fans are keeping up with the latest news about our events, campaigns, volunteer activities and more. You can, too, at [www.facebook.com/voasac](http://www.facebook.com/voasac).

**H**omeless families in Sacramento will find “winter shelter” Dec. 1 through March 31 thanks to renovations made by HomeAid Sacramento to one of our North Sacramento properties.

**T**wo-thousand men and women will be dressed for success this fall because of community donations to the Men’s Wearhouse National Suit Drive in support of Volunteers of America clients looking for a fresh start.

**S**ixty-three women celebrated new lives free of addiction at the Nov. 10 graduation ceremony at our residential treatment program for parenting women.