



Volunteers of America®

CHESAPEAKE

Courtney Dunn  
Volunteers of America Chesapeake, Inc.  
Communications & Media Relations Manager  
240.764.2632  
[cdunn@voaches.org](mailto:cdunn@voaches.org)

For Immediate Release

## **Only-one-of-its-Kind Essential Homeless Outreach Program in Montgomery County Faces Serious Threat of Closure Due to Imminent County Budget Cuts**

*Volunteers of America Chesapeake's Montgomery County Mental Health and Homeless Outreach Program Has Successfully Served Almost 1,000 Since Beginning Operation in 2006*

**Lanham, MD** - (April 8, 2010) – Volunteers of America Chesapeake's Montgomery County Mental Health and Homeless Outreach Program – which helps street homeless individuals in the county receive physical and mental health exams, medication, housing opportunities, and other vital services – is in danger of losing all county funding with the current Montgomery County proposed budget cuts.

“We are concerned for the wellbeing of the homeless men and women who are utilizing this effective program – if it will be cut from the county budget,” said **Russ Snyder**, president and CEO of Volunteers of America Chesapeake. “Without the outreach engagement and supportive services we provide, street mentally ill individuals will be very likely to be involved in the corrections system, adding unnecessary costs for incarceration, and not helping these men and women become healthy, productive members of society.”

According to the 2009 point in time survey there are 1,247 homeless people in Montgomery County, up 8.5 percent from 2008. One of those individuals is **S.M.**; who although once a successful business management professional, was laid off due to these historically bad economic times. After losing his job, and as a result of other mental health issues, S.M. lived in his car and on the streets for the past year and scavenged for food. Today, S.M. has permanent housing and a new job thanks to Volunteers of America Chesapeake's Montgomery County Mental Health and Homeless Outreach Program where staff addressed not only his housing and nutrition needs, but his mental health issues as well.

“Please do not stop funding programs that help the homeless,” he said. “Volunteers of America Chesapeake's staff helped me to see and enjoy the bright colors of life again... Thank you for hope and transformation you are giving people.”

Volunteers of America Chesapeake's Montgomery County Mental Health and Homeless Outreach Program is the only one of its kind in the county that serves the majority of these individuals by

sending workers out in the community at all times of day and night, to provide health, housing, food and other essential services.

The Program currently receives 43% (or \$114,000) of its funding from the county, with the remaining funds coming from State and Federal government grants. With the proposed budget cuts, the County would discontinue its program funding; thus putting the Federal and State government grants at risk and ultimately resulting in closure of the program.

To ensure these much-needed services are available at Volunteers of America Chesapeake's Montgomery County Mental Health and Homeless Outreach Program to serve the more than 1,000 homeless men and women of the county, area residents are urged to express their opinions/views through email (at [county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov)), regular mail (at 100 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, MD 20850), or by calling the budget hotline (call 240-777-7802). Residents can also follow the Council's daily work on the budget at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council) and clicking on 'budget update.' To learn more about Volunteers of America Chesapeake's work in action, residents can visit [www.voaches.org](http://www.voaches.org)

#### **VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA CHESAPEAKE**

*Volunteers of America Chesapeake, founded in 1896 in Baltimore, is the locally chartered affiliate of Volunteers of America, Inc., one of the nation's largest and most comprehensive human services organizations. They accomplish their spiritually based mission by serving over 8,000 people annually through programs spread geographically from Baltimore, Maryland to Virginia Beach, Virginia.*

*Volunteers of America Chesapeake operates 26 programs that serve the homeless, mentally ill, intellectually disabled, ex-offenders, substance abusers, the elderly and children. The professional staff of more than 600 employees, partner with dedicated volunteers, local government officials, businesses, civic organizations and the faith community to provide high quality human services.*

###