



STORY OF HOPE: Hiding Food TO SURVIVE

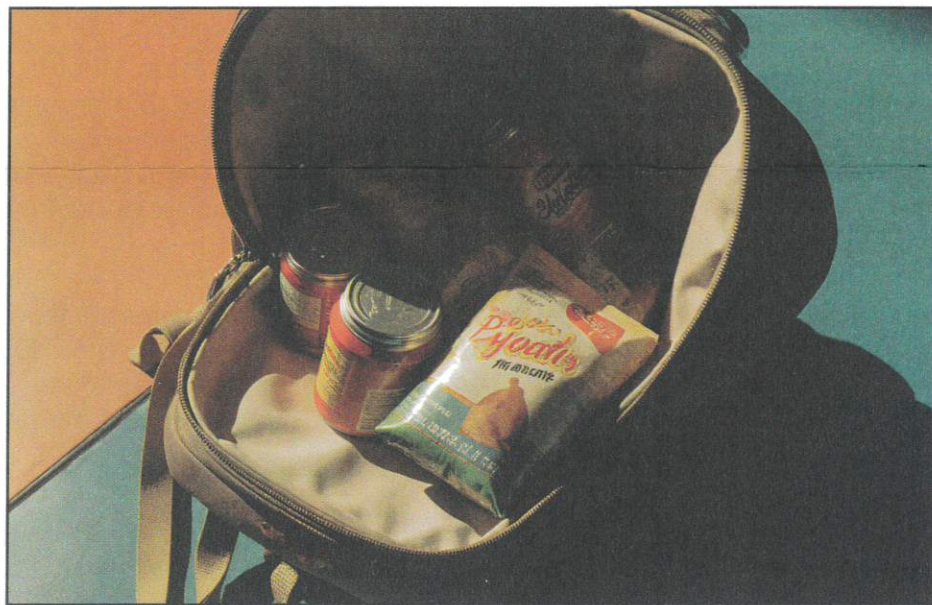
Consider the pressure a student faces when preparing for a critical exam. Their focus is completely absorbed by the difficult material—the complex equation, the historical timeline—with the stress of success weighing heavily on them.

Now, layer on a far more fundamental challenge: hunger. For many students, the issue is not just missing a snack, but facing an entire weekend without reliable access to food, having only had a school breakfast and lunch on Friday. This is often compounded by unstable home environments, such as a parent dealing with substance abuse, which removes the possibility of simply going to a store for groceries.

This scenario highlights a serious barrier to academic success and well-being. A child who is worried about their next meal cannot focus on their studies.

Does this sound familiar to you? It may. We presented this same scenario in our February 2023 newsletter pertaining to our efforts at East Bank Middle School. East Bank has folded in with Dupont, so we provide food to that school location now.

This past fall, we worked with Backpack Buddies to get food into Clay County schools. As we looked to expand those efforts, we were introduced to a lady who heads up the effort to keep Clay County school kids fed. Crystal Gibson is the



McKinney-Vento Director for Clay County Schools. She and her team focus on the needs of students in the county for food, clothing, and shelter. Last month, she shared a sobering statistic with us.

“...he has to hide it in the woods because if the adults at home find it, they will take all the food and eat it themselves.”

“Clay County Schools have just over 1364 students. Out of those 1364, 39% are considered homeless by McKinney-Vento*”, says Crystal. “We have a serious problem in Clay County.”

When it comes to food, Crystal and her team focus on assembling “food kits” for students to take home on evenings and weekends (and vacation breaks). These kits are put into nondescript backpacks and sent home with the students. Each day, they bring the backpacks back to school to be refilled. The challenge, however, is providing enough food for all the students.

“We have about 100 students who have the greatest need. These students have a very difficult time finding food at home,” Crystal explains. “Often, we don’t have enough resources to assemble the kits. “We try to send the students home with at least something, but at times, it is no more than a light snack.”

(continued on back page)



From **JASON'S** Desk

More Focus on *Feeding Students*

This year is proving to be a busy and exciting time for Union Mission. We unveiled our new Men's Recovery building in last month's newsletter, and dirt should be flying this month as that project ramps up. Furthermore, we are dedicating more resources to our weekend and evening food programs for students. Having provided food to several Kanawha County Schools for a couple of years, we recently expanded our work to include Clay County schools earlier this year. The more we lean in, the greater the need we are seeing, a reality highlighted by the cover story of this newsletter.

You probably feel the same frustration that we feel when it comes to food insecurity with West Virginia children. You probably ask the same question we have asked - why are there kids going hungry when we have social services dedicated to this issue? The answer is extremely complicated and involves a variety of reasons from government oversight to WV family dynamics. The more we investigate, the more we see how difficult a statewide solution is.

There is one thing we know, however. Many West Virginia children are going hungry through no fault of their own and we can't let that happen.

We are doubling down on our efforts in Clay County because that is where we are currently seeing the greatest need. Crystal, our friend introduced in the cover story, has opened our eyes to the plight of many of these kids in that region. Clay county has been designated as a "food desert" which is an area where residents have limited access to affordable, high-quality food due to a lack of grocery stores.

Our ability to help these students in Clay County (and our other schools we support) is dependent on the funds we have to purchase food. This is where we need your help. Many of you give generously to our general fund which helps us keep the mission operational. Would you consider giving an extra gift for this effort? If everyone who receives this newsletter gave an additional \$100, we could accommodate the 8 schools we are currently serving for a year. If we can keep these students fed so they can focus on their school work, then they have the best chance of lifting themselves out of poverty when they graduate.

Over the next few months, we will share additional stories and new details as they come available. We are exploring some additional business partner opportunities as well as some real out-of-the-box thinking with food production. Please pray that doors are opened and resources are made available.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

— Jason S. Quintrell, President/CEO

UNION MISSION HONORS & MEMORIALS *January 2026*

HONORS

Ralph and Victoria Edwards
Kathleen Radice

Francine Famularo
Jonathan Baran

Mike and Pam McClung
Troy and Kelly McClung

Love Gift "Sara"
Dale E. Cooper

MEMORIALS

Helen Hunter-Dishmon
Betty Taylor
Bob Wills
Buddy Acord
Mary Jarrell
Ernie and Sharon
Thompson

George Abbott
Monica Romiti

George Abbott
Darlene Peregoy

George Abbott
Louise Osborne

George Abbott
Roseann Ashby

Dana and Ola Bayes
John Bayes

Edith Brewer
Murrel Hoover

Ruth Duvall
William "Bill" Duvall

Peggy Hodge
Faith Missionary
Baptist Church

Lary Lilly
Theresa Lilly

Serena Dee Lucy
Anonymous

Charlie Miller
Brenda Miller

Frances Nichols
Richard Nichols

William E. "Bill" Mearns
Larry D. White

Julia Fay Prince
Vanessa Allison

Misty Stricker
Mark Stricker

Judy Williams
R. W. and Ann Williams

The Yanaks
Elaine Yanak

WOMEN ON A MISSION 2026

Join us for our annual Women on a Mission Luncheon on Wednesday, April 29, 2026, at the Charleston Marriott, beginning at 12:00 p.m.

This special event is an opportunity to honor five extraordinary women who are "Shining Their Light" in the community by consistently dedicating their time, resources, talents, and hearts to help others. This year's esteemed honorees are Erin Flanagan, Michelle Robinson, Michelle Thompson, Kate White, and Debbie Wright.

We understand your time is valuable. This special event is thoughtfully planned to be no longer than 1.5 hours, allowing you to attend without disrupting your business day. During the luncheon, you will have the meaningful opportunity to hear briefly from each of our five esteemed honorees

about the inspiring work they are doing to "Shine Their Light" in the community.

Individual and group tickets are available for purchase online at unionmission.com. We are actively

seeking sponsorship opportunities for the luncheon as well. If you have any questions or would like more details on sponsorship opportunities, visit unionmission.com or contact Lisa Pack at lisalpack@gmail.com or 304.552.4500.



Women on a Mission
Shining Their Light
APRIL 29, 2026 | LUNCHEON
12:00-1:30 | CHARLESTON MARRIOTT

STORY OF HOPE: **Hiding Food to Survive** *(continued from page 1)*

Crystal has been active in the Clay County school system for over 35 years and can share a multitude of stories. One story she shared with us, however, stopped us in our tracks.

“We have one student who gets a food backpack each week”, Crystal says. “However, I have to send him home with a heavy-duty garbage bag as well. The garbage bag allows him to keep his backpack dry when he hides it in the woods after getting off the bus. He has to hide it in the woods because if the adults at home find it, they will take all the food and eat it themselves.”

When a child must hide their food in the woods from the adults in their own home, it reveals the profound and desperate level of need we face.

Union Mission is committed to working with Crystal and her team to be able to keep them stocked with food to provide to these students. We are working to help establish a pantry on-site in Clay County where food can be stockpiled. We are exploring opportunities with businesses and food producers to maximize our purchasing power to the fullest.

We need your help. We need to get

food into the hands of these students so they can focus on schoolwork and just being a kid. They should not have to come up with elaborate plans to hide food in the woods or worry about starving if school is out for an extended period. To help, consider giving to our Union Mission Student Food Kit Fund. **Learn more at: unionmission.com**

**The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (1987) is a federal law that ensures students experiencing homelessness have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as their housed peers.*

Administration

Jason Quintrell
President & CEO

Board of Directors

Lisa Pack, Chairwoman
Steven Corbin, Secretary
Deitrich Clark
Madonna Estep
Tammy Gonzales
Kurt Higginbotham
Jason Lunsford
Tom Minturn
Will Swann
Otis O'Connor, Juris Doctor, Emeritus
Tom Tolliver, Emeritus

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Union Mission Ministries, Inc. is set apart by the Spirit of God to preach the Gospel and meet physical and emotional needs throughout West Virginia through the provision of shelter, clothing, food, counseling, and structured programs for the poor, the needy, and those bound and bruised by addictive lifestyles. Union Mission does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. Union Mission provides no goods or services in exchange for gifts. Your gifts are tax deductible when you itemize.



Union Mission

UNION MISSION - MAIN CAMPUS

**Family Services • Thrift Store •
Outreach Ministries • Addiction
Recovery Programs**
700 South Park Road, Kanawha City
304.925.0366 phone

Mailing Address

Post Office Box 112, Charleston, WV 25321
Men's Shelter
503 Leon Sullivan Way, Charleston
304.343.4352 phone

Visit us online at www.unionmission.com