

Spring 2021 Quarterly Report

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Miracle Money has officially launched!

15 amazing unhoused individuals are now receiving \$500/month for 6 months in our initial pilot. Follow their journeys at [givemiraclemoney.org](https://www.givemiraclemoney.org)

18-months of continued success in South Florida

We just passed the 18-month mark of our South Florida pilot, funded by the Kenan Charitable Trust. Gabby Cordell, our GM in South Florida, and her team have now reunited over 68 families, with 19 getting off the streets!

Expanding our footprint to Austin

Miracle Messages has been selected as one of four organizations to be a part of the [University of Texas' Impact Factory accelerator program!](#)

Educators, unite!

We've been working with several university professors to provide real-world experiences to students studying homelessness. One member of the group, Bonnie Ervin from the ASU Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions, just got her course, "Ending Homelessness" approved!

In the media

A 30-minute documentary on Miracle Messages was aired on Envoyé Spécial, the French TV equivalent of 60 Minutes! See the documentary [here](#).

*Thank you to our
Spring 2021 Interns!*

From creating reports, managing social media, and conducting essential research, our interns have been a huge help!

Tristen Tu, Julia Ip, Sophia Wenzel, Emily Reynolds, Raquel Abifadel, Andrijana Bilbija, Maya Gite, Kaitlin Ip, Jazz Henry, Nina Moore, Becca Graybeal, Ava Ciosek, Merisa Rovcanin, Ritika Byali, Maria José Urbina.



REUNION SERVICE

Our toll free hotline, 1-800-MISS-YOU, has continued to play a vital role during the pandemic as many service centers that helped people experiencing homelessness closed. We have received numerous calls from families that want to reconnect with their missing unhoused relatives. We make sure that there is always someone to listen, and try our best to facilitate these life-changing reunions.

Partnership spotlight

Simtech Solutions

**Simtech
Solutions**

Simtech Solutions develops and maintains mobile apps to support general street outreach and the annual “Point In Time” count of unhoused individuals across the United States. Through our partnership with SimTech Solutions, regions that choose to participate are now able to ask clients if they have any friends or family that they would like to be reunited with – directly from within Simtech’s Counting Us and Show the Way apps. Thus far, we have received over 40 messages as a result of our partnership with Simtech. Our digital detectives are now actively working on these cases, and have facilitated a few reunions already!

Our numbers to-date

1616 Messages
Recorded

712 Messages
Delivered

437 Reunions

South Florida Impact Report

With the help of a grant from Kenan Charitable Trust, we set out to complete a two-year Miracle Messages pilot program in South Florida, led by General Manager, Gabby Cordell. We've just passed the 18-month mark and we're happy to report strong, positive results - **239 messages have been recorded, 68 reunions were facilitated, 58 which led to a positive outcome, and 19 of which led to getting off the streets!**

Gabby's ongoing communication, combined with our post-reunion outreach efforts, have allowed us to stay in touch with many of our participants, and to track how their reunions impact their lives.

We've also been able to gather some interesting findings about the demographics we serve:

- We are generally reaching and serving an older, chronically homeless population who are unhoused and unsheltered.
- The average length of time our service recipients have been homeless is 7 years.
- The average length of time our service recipients have been disconnected is 14 years.

We are thrilled to have Gabby working with us full-time, and look forward to seeing more incredible work being done in South Florida!

Check out the full report [here](#).





Reunion Story: Linda

Linda had been homeless for 25 years before encountering Miracle Messages. She is an active substance user and has several chronic illnesses. She asked Miracle Messages to find her children, whom she hadn't seen since they were small children, and who were now in their 30's. Her message to them was "Thinking of you. I miss you. I love you."

A Miracle Messages volunteer located Linda's daughter. She and her brother immediately flew to Miami, searched the streets with Gabby, and met their mom for the 1st time since they were children. Since Linda does not have an ID and would not have been allowed to board a flight, her children rented a car and drove her home. They are now caring for her as she begins substance withdrawal.

Reunion Story: Zoran



Zoran had only recently become homeless when he found Miracle Messages. He had been a steady supporter of his family until an accident left him unable to work for a few months; just as he was medically cleared to go back to work, the pandemic hit and his job in the restaurant business disappeared. Having been separated from his wife for the last couple of years and his parents no longer alive, Zoran found himself on the streets, sleeping in Bayside park.

His pride and feelings of shame were preventing him from reaching out to his wife and son who were living in Nebraska. As the holidays approached he began to reconsider. Gabby spoke to him about how easy it might be to slide into homelessness—how quickly 2 months turns into 2 years and into 20 years (!). The following Tuesday he was waiting for Gabby and quickly said, "I've been thinking about what you said and I'd like to try." It took about a week to get his wife on the phone, another week or so to get them both on a call, and soon we were making travel arrangements. We flew him to Lincoln, Nebraska in time to spend Christmas with his family.



MIRACLE FRIENDS

The social isolation this pandemic has brought has been especially difficult for our unhoused neighbors. Miracle Friends continues to play a pivotal role in helping to facilitate meaningful human connection. Over the past few months, we've facilitated 38 new friendships via Miracle Friends, and have received extensive interest in this phone buddy program. We're now recruiting more volunteers!

Supporting our volunteers

The Compassion Crew

The Compassion Crew is a group of Miracle Messages volunteers and staff that share stories of their situations to help give and get feedback from each other. As an organization that works with vulnerable populations, especially during the pandemic, there are times we must deal with breaking hard news to one of our friends, setting boundaries, having difficult conversations, or understanding perspectives of our Friends or a family. Having a group where we work through difficult situations together and gain new perspectives from each other is therapeutic. Everyone always leaves feeling full of compassion, ideas and suggestions.

In their own words

What Friends are saying

"Got to recognize and celebrate her 5-years of sobriety - she was so happy that I remembered. I am so proud and honored to celebrate with her."

- Miracle Friends volunteer

"My Miracle Friend calls me her big sister." - Miracle Friends volunteer

"It was just great to know someone. I feel like we built trust very quickly, he was open about his family and about having faith to keep pushing to find a place to live."

- Miracle Friends volunteer



Miracle Friend Story: Angela

Angela was 21 when the child protection services took her children away because she was experiencing homelessness. From that point on, her life turned upside down as she turned to drugs, experienced two strokes, and spiraled into depression. In that part of her life, she struggled with her mental health and combatted the difficulty of walking outside.

Now, Angela is in her fifth year of sobriety and is as strong as ever. She heard about Miracle Friends through her friend and signed up to be a part of the program. "It's like having a big brother and big sister; it's amazing." Angela chats with her volunteer 2 to 3 times a week. She says that having these connections gave her support and help; especially during the pandemic and even prior to COVID-19. Angela is in a very happy place right now, and after experiencing the downfalls in her life, she wants to support others who may be experiencing the same situation she was in before. She wants to tell those who may not be in the best situations, to know that they aren't alone and "don't be afraid to reach out because you don't want it to be too late."

More testimonials from our Friends

What Friends are saying

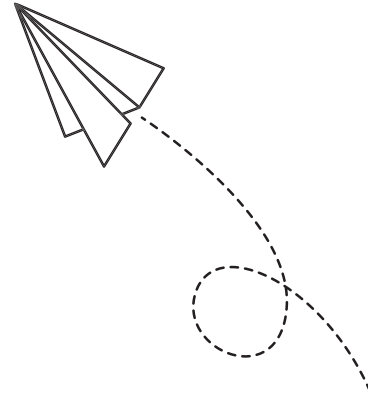
"At my suggestion, [my Friend's] caretaker, procured a digital library card for [my Friend]. He is thrilled and ordered his first Dean Koontz book. He is really excited about reading again. He hasn't had a library card since high school."

- Miracle Friends volunteer

"She makes me laugh and I enjoy her friendship!" - Miracle Friends volunteer

"I spoke with a resident today and she sang the praises of her Miracle Friend - states their talks are really making a difference in her life! Thank you and all of the Miracle Friends for the work you do!"

- Partner Site Worker



*On the left:
Sarah's friend Patrick
and his dog, Lucy.*

Miracle Friend Volunteer Story: Sarah

What had I gotten myself into? I had volunteered to call someone I didn't know with the goal being that we'd become friends and I'd help support them through their journey. I asked myself if I possessed the skills and experience to be a friend. I had doubts about being impactful and saying the right thing. It was slightly awkward at first and honestly it stayed awkward for weeks. I didn't know what to say or how to navigate certain topics because after all, I didn't know my friend nor his challenges. It didn't take me long to realize that there wasn't a right or wrong way to go about being Patrick's friend - I just had to be myself. In fact, my new friend helped me navigate the process more than I could've hoped. Weeks and months passed with small successes and milestones along the way resulting in a beautiful friendship. Each phone call brought us a bit closer and trust was building. He was slowly opening up to me.

We've been friends now for 4 months. We talk twice a week and our calls get longer each time because we love to chat!

It's incredibly rewarding to know that I have brought something special to Patrick's life and he trusts me with information that is close to his heart. Hearing enthusiasm in his voice when he answers my calls and says "HELLO", makes my heart full every time. The experience has been enormously rewarding and special for me on a deep personal level. Not only am I helping to support someone but he has also given me the gift of friendship and the satisfaction that I am making a difference. The admiration and respect goes both directions for us and while I am the volunteer, it sure feels like we were paired up so we could both experience love, support and a strong human connection.



Miracle Money Participants. Top row (left to right): Brian, Sandi, Caridad, Beverly, Rachel. Bottom row: Elizabeth, Ray, Nathaniel, Martin, Muhammed. Not shown: Marie, Peggy, Drake, Joanna, Karyn.

This Spring, we officially launched the first Miracle Money pilot! Miracle Money is a Universal Basic Income (UBI) pilot for people experiencing homelessness, inspired by the successful New Leaf Project in Canada. The Miracle Money pilot consists of monthly cash stipends for people experiencing homelessness, to provide both increased stability in basic needs and the opportunity to plan for the future.

Through our peer-to-peer holiday campaign and with a push from Kevin's birthday fundraiser in February, we raised over \$50,000 to provide 15 Miracle Friend participants \$500/month for six months to help fund our initial Miracle Money cohort. Recipients were nominated by volunteer friends from the Miracle Friends program, who have established tremendous trust over many months. **We're pioneering a relationship-first approach to direct cash transfer programs.**

We've also launched our storytelling and survey teams who are keeping track of participants' progress towards their goals for these six months. Some of the goals our Friends have include saving funds to secure permanent housing, paying down their debt, getting new clothes for job interviews, and getting a service dog. In addition to helping them achieve their goals, we also hope to see a positive change in perceived levels of depression, anxiety, stress, sleep quality, financial security, and food security by the end of the pilot. In tandem with these efforts, a lot of background research work is being conducted by our interns, Maria and Stephen, to ensure that our Friends' benefits are retained and that the cliff-effect is prevented throughout this pilot. You can learn more about our participants, their goals, and monthly updates at givemiraclemoney.org.



Miracle Money Story: Ray

Prior to experiencing homelessness, Ray was a dad, a husband, a very good salesman, and he enjoyed his work. Unfortunately, he and his family were separated. After signing up for the Miracle Friends program, Ray got matched with his volunteer friend, Jen. Ray and Jen became dear friends, and Jen decided to nominate Ray for Miracle Money.

Upon hearing the news that he had been selected to begin receiving \$500/month for six months, Ray began to cry, saying how much this money would positively impact his life. Ray plans to use the funds from Miracle Money to secure permanent housing as well as fund his daughter's college education. We asked Ray what the Miracle Money program means to him: "Hope. That is one thing that Jen has given me since the first day we spoke. No matter what troubles I had faced or am currently facing, there was an answer to it - it may not be the answer I wanted to hear, but it was an answer that gave me hope that it will get better. Things aren't going to be bad all the time - It's gonna get better."

Watch this heart-warming video of Ray hearing for the first time that he was selected for the Miracle Money program.

In their own words

What our Miracle Money recipients are saying



"It's a real blessing not having to worry about meeting my basic needs. My main worry was around paying for my storage, and I didn't want to throw away that stuff because a lot of it was related to my career. I know I'll be rehoused one day and I don't want to start from scratch." - Elizabeth

"This program will impact me hugely. I'm so grateful for the people I talk to, because it is always positive. The financial offering is like a big gift. I can't even find the words. Thank you."

- Drake





LOOKING FORWARD

Kevin & Elizabeth present at TEDxFoggyBottom

Kevin and Elizabeth will be presenting at TEDxFoggyBottom (virtually, hosted by The George Washington University) on April 16th, 2021.

Miracle Money impact report

Watch out for the Miracle Money Impact Report in the coming months!

We've been named a Full Circle Fund grant partner!

The Full Circle Fund has selected Miracle Messages for a \$15,000 grant! More so, FCF members will be working with us for the next six months to increase the number of unhoused neighbors referred to our programs, by unlocking new partnership opportunities and mobilizing skilled volunteers.

Want to get involved?

VOLUNTEER: Join our global community committed to better connecting with our neighbors experiencing homelessness. We're always looking for more volunteers and interns! **Fill our the form here.**

DONATE: Your support changes lives. Make a tax-deductible donation on our website: miraclemessages.org/donate. EIN #82-4179328

Sponsor spotlight:



Thank you **Bombas** for continuing to donate warm socks to our unhoused individuals in San Francisco and South Florida each year!



Thank you A Runner's Mind for donating 27 shoes to our unhoused Friends in the Miracle Friends program!



Thank you Verizon for donating 150 phones and \$10,000 to help us reach more unhoused friends through Miracle Friends!