



# THE OPEN DOOR

*guiding the journey from homeless to home*

Presbyterian Night Shelter | Winter Newsletter 2025



Tommy found his calling through UpSpire Furniture

## YOU HELPED TOMMY FIND STABLE GROUND

Tommy has always had a knack for learning fast. As the youngest child in his family, he found himself looking up to his siblings and community for guidance.

Unfortunately, as he grew up, Tommy became enmeshed in a crowd that didn't have his best interests at heart. "The streets were there...I got caught up in all that," he explains.

By the age of 16, Tommy had been certified as an adult in the justice system, beginning a period of incarceration. Without the opportunities to learn critical adult skills, Tommy wasn't sure how to create a new life when he was released for the second time in 2011.

*"I found myself lost, really...Everything I was trying to build, it just crumbled,"* he says.

Without those critical tools, Tommy experienced housing insecurity. "I was homeless for five years... living in motel rooms, walking around until the sun came up. It was just about surviving," he shares.

Thankfully, friends like you were there to help.

When Tommy first arrived at Presbyterian Night Shelter, he says he felt called to be here spiritually. He was ready to commit to changing his life, and our helpful staff was ready to provide the support he needed.

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“Everything you need to get back on your feet is here,” Tommy says. “They did it all — birth certificate, Social Security, ID. They got me back into being a functional citizen.”

Tommy also applied to our UpSpire Furniture program, where he is learning carpentry skills under the guidance of Jasper Clements, our lead carpenter (p. 3).

“This is a full 180 for me. To know the furniture we make goes to families and kids who need it...it’s incredible to be a part of that,” Tommy says.

The program is not only providing Tommy with a new passion and valuable career training, but it’s also giving him an opportunity to connect with fellow participants in a meaningful way.

With the tools he’s gained over seven months at Presbyterian Night Shelter, Tommy is optimistic about a stronger, healthier future. He’s currently on the housing wait list, and planning to create a home with his girlfriend. “I haven’t looked back,” he says happily.



Jasper is the Lead Carpenter at UpSpire Furniture

## BUILDING FURNITURE — AND A BRIGHTER FUTURE

A meaningful job has the power to transform lives. When we feel inspired and supported, there’s no telling how far we can go.

For our neighbors experiencing hardship and homelessness, that transformative power is especially important. That was one of Jasper Clements’, favorite things to witness as Lead Carpenter of our inaugural UpSpire Furniture program.

UpSpire Furniture is our new skills-based vocational training program dedicated to teaching specialized craftsmanship skills, opening doors to careers in carpentry, construction, woodworking, and more.

Along with practical skills, Jasper encourages program participants — like Tommy, p. 2 — to embody values like accountability, confidence, and personal growth.

Journey Home Housing, Presbyterian Night Shelter’s affordable housing program, is UpSpire Furniture’s first partnership. Furnishings made in the program, like beds and tables, will go to families and individuals who are exiting homelessness and moving into Journey Home Housing.

Jasper’s leadership style comes from his own experiences with hardship and life’s trials. Coming from his own losses and challenges, he knows how important it is to have a community of care and a goal to work toward.

*“This by far has been the most rewarding and life-changing [experience],”* Jasper shares. He hopes to help empower UpSpire employees to learn the trade and grow their skills, so that they might go on to gain employment, lead workshops, and succeed well in the future!

Valerie and her Junior League group help neighbors transitioning out of homelessness



## VALERIE HELPS GUIDE THE JOURNEY HOME

At the suggestion of a friend, Valerie joined Junior League in 2020 to serve her community more meaningfully. This year, her group is continuing their longstanding partnership with Presbyterian Night Shelter by volunteering through Journey Home Housing, our permanent affordable housing initiative.

Just like the furniture provided by our UpSpire Furniture program (p. 3), Valerie’s volunteering provides tangible benefits to tenants who are transitioning out of homelessness.

Monthly, Valerie meets with Journey Home Housing tenants to host workshops on practical life skills. The topics of each workshop vary from DIY projects to budgeting, but they all focus on topics picked by tenants.

Valerie says, “[We’re] trying to help them transition easily into [independent] life and setting routines and good habits.”

She adds, “Building those relationships and seeing their confidence grow over the years has been incredibly rewarding.”

If you’re considering donating your own time to Presbyterian Night Shelter, Valerie encourages you to dive right in.

“[In Junior League, we say] ‘just say yes’ to an opportunity,” she says. “Just by saying yes and figuring it out as you go, it pays off in so many rewarding ways.”

## COLD WEATHER NEEDS

As the cold weather closes in, we have specific needs for items that will benefit our guests.

Currently, we have a great need for bottled water, men’s and women’s underwear (all sizes), cough and cold medications, as well as over-the-counter medications. A full list can be found on our Amazon Cold Weather Wish List. There, you can order these items to be shipped directly to Presbyterian Night Shelter.

Thank you for helping us meet these cold weather needs!

Check out the list here:





Toby Owen  
Chief Executive Officer

# DEAR FRIEND,

Thank you sincerely for sharing in our celebration of Presbyterian Night Shelter’s 40th birthday. With any milestone as big as this one, we have the opportunity to reflect on where we’d like to be when the next big one rolls around—which is precisely what the Board of Directors and I have done as we think about the next ten years.

Over the next decade, we will continue to provide the same excellent shelter and case management that makes such a difference. But we will also be expanding our reach in several pivotal ways.

First, we aim to provide 1,000 permanent affordable housing units through Journey Home Housing in order to help even more families and individuals exit homelessness for good.

We are also expanding our employment enterprise, adding more jobs to the program to ensure there is a job for every shelter guest who wants and is

able to work. One way we’ll do this is through UpSpire Furniture, our brand-new, skills-based training program designed to train participants in craftsmanship skills that can translate to furniture building, construction, cabinetry making, and more. You can read more about UpSpire Furniture in this issue.

Once again, **thank you** for your support as we continue to guide the journey home for so many neighbors. I hope the stories of hope in this issue of *The Open Door* show you just how meaningful your partnership is!

Warmest Wishes,

**Toby Owen**  
Chief Executive Officer

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### Our Mission:

*“Guiding the journey from homeless to home.”*

We strive to break the cycles of homelessness and empower our guests through shelter, housing, and employment.