

# h REFUGE of HOPE MINISTRIES

## U-Londa Hicks

*Chicago, Chicago is my kind of town . . .* are the lyrics of the song, but U-Londa Hicks no longer felt that was true for her family. Looking for a fresh start she moved her young sons to Ohio but soon discovered you can't simply move to a new location and expect your life to change. A transformed life begins inside of you and requires hard work, and even though she got off to a slow start U-Londa now has her new life!

After re-locating to Ohio, U-Londa struggled for several years. Moving did not solve her problems with alcohol or depression. Drinking became an everyday coping mechanism for U-Londa and she was not applying herself to find that better life.

Then in 2012, U-Londa was assigned to complete her community service hours at Refuge of Hope. Until then her work record through Job and Family Services was hit or miss but from the first day working in the Meal Ministry she began to notice something different at Refuge of Hope.

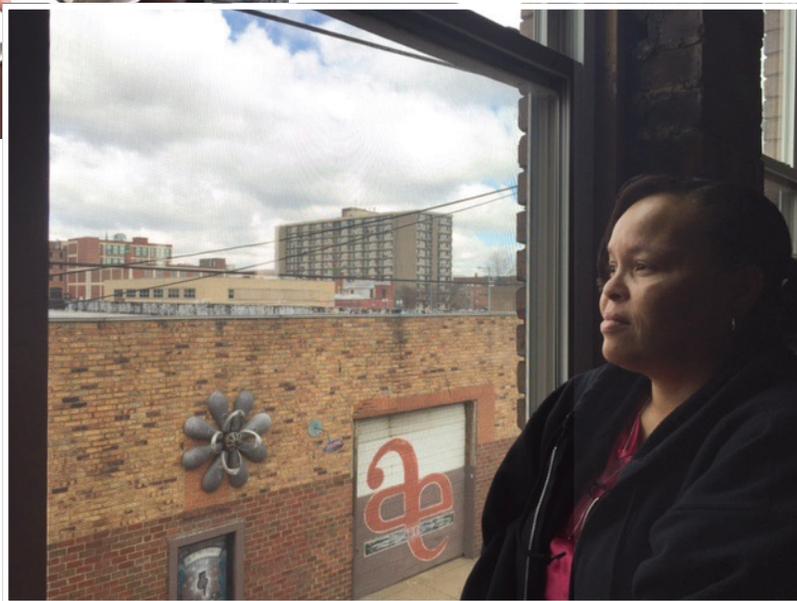


"I found encouragement for myself while preparing meals to serve those who had less than I did," said U-Londa. "The staff at Refuge of Hope treated me like I was family, and I noticed how much they cared about all the men, women and children we served. That got me to thinking..."

**"If I can use my cooking skills to help others, I can help myself by staying sober and working hard for my family. And while I am at it, I should also get back to praying and reading my Bible!"**

U-Londa soon discovered her cooking skills were an asset to the kitchen prep work and she gained new confidence in herself! Life began to feel different! Drinking no longer seemed necessary to ease her pain and depression.

In July of 2014 U-Londa was offered the position of Meal Ministry Assistant at Refuge of Hope. She was excited and terrified at the same time but has stepped up to the challenge of her responsibilities.



"I used to prepare meals according to the number of pans we needed for that meal. Now I realize those pans represent people, hurting people, just like I used to be. They leave satisfied with food,

but also so much more. We are all a family in God and that makes the difference," said U-Londa.

## Duane Wykoff, CEO, Notes:

*LESSONS LEARNED: This June marks my seven year anniversary with Refuge of Hope (ROH) which caused me to reflect on what I've learned working here. One lesson is to celebrate. I think of Thomas\* who overcame a crack cocaine habit that cost him his family, home and dignity. Thankfully, he is now clean, works, is reuniting with family members and, most importantly, has accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior. Who wouldn't want to celebrate that turnaround?*

*I've learned that each of us is one catastrophe or bad decision away from having our lives turned upside down in ways we can't even imagine today. No one sets out in life with the goal of staying at a homeless shelter or bringing their family to ROH to eat because they can't afford to feed them.*

*Working at ROH has shown me clearly every person is redeemable and each life is truly valuable in God's site. Regardless of current circumstances, one's life can indeed be transformed. There is always hope for a better tomorrow.*

*Lastly, as a follower of Jesus Christ, I've come to understand the Bible is not ambivalent about what all of us are required to do to help those in need. "If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry." Luke 3:11 (NIV). Pretty difficult to misinterpret those instructions.*

*\* name changed to protect identity*

## HOF Marathon, 2016

Jim Chaney, Race Director for the Hall of Fame Marathon, has invited Refuge of Hope to once again participate in the two day Expo before the big race this year.

"This was a wonderful opportunity for Refuge of Hope last year to provide 'toss off' warm clothing for the runners to wear early in the morning before the race begins. Volunteers then followed the runners to pick up the discarded clothing as they warmed up. We then brought it back to the mission, washed it and were able to distribute the clothing to homeless and



Dawn Bowman, Director of Meal Ministry for Refuge of Hope, is displaying shirts to keep runners warm before the race.

needy individuals," explained Jo Ann Carpenter, Director of Development for Refuge of Hope.

During the two days expo Refuge of Hope staff members met with runners as they registered and explained how poverty, homelessness and hunger are still major issues in Stark County. As runners selected a warm article of clothing to wear prior to the race, they generously donated funds to help the men, women and children we serve at Refuge of Hope.

"The partnership with the Hall of Fame Marathon in the spring and the Hall of Fame Kickoff Celebration in the fall has allowed our residents at Refuge of Hope to contribute their time and talents in a special way," said Jo Ann. "It is our way to give back to this community who faithfully supports Refuge of Hope as we work together to help change lives in Stark County!"



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[www.refugeofhope.org](http://www.refugeofhope.org)



A higher standard.  
A higher purpose.



The following excerpts are a true account from our Meal Ministry Director, Dawn Bowman, during a conversation and prayer. You can read the entire blog post by visiting our website at [www.refugeofhope.org](http://www.refugeofhope.org).

## "That God, Ain't He a Booger!"

In the midst of a lot of commotion, T. (\*for privacy sake) walked up to me looking like Pig-Pen on Charlie Brown. God love him, he was so dirty.

A hulk of an elderly man with a slow southern drawl, he asked if I could do him a really big favor.

As I put my hand out and into his larger one, I smiled and asked, "How can I help you?"

**"Would you pray for me?"**

**"I'm a good feller and I need help to stop drinking. You can probably smell alcohol on me right now and I apologize for that..."**

His slow southern drawl is endearing and I learn he came to Refuge of Hope because a year ago he was homeless and when he came in I gave him a coat.

They always remember the little things we provide as if it is tucked back away of their minds.

I was stunned and sat still when after I prayed I heard...

**"God, ... I don't know if you can hear me... I know I'm not worth a nickel... but, I need your help..."**



My head was bowed and I was blinking to hold back tears. It was the sweetest, most genuine, honest prayer.

**"For days, I've known it's time to get help and God lead me to you. That God, ain't he a booger! It has to be God that sent me here. I've been thinking for a while now I need to stop drinking, but something told me to come down here to see you."**



This man has warmed my heart in so many ways. Hearing God referred to as a booger was something new to me, too! But I got his term of endearment.

I remember who we are, Refuge of Hope, a refuge of hope to many.

– Dawn

**Yes! I want to help struggling people like U-Londa by providing meals, shelter and HOPE for a better life. Your gift today will make a difference to hurting men, women and children in Stark County!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

### How you can contribute to Refuge of Hope Ministries

\$50.00    \$100.00    \$150.00    Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card:    Visa    MasterCard    Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you on behalf of those who benefit from the work of Refuge of Hope Ministries made possible through your generous gift. Tax deductible information will be mailed with your donation receipt.*



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**For your convenience, on-line donations are accepted on our website:  
[www.refugeofhope.org](http://www.refugeofhope.org)**

# Local Students are a Blessing to Refuge of Hope



Impressive team effort blesses Refuge of Hope (ROH) dinner guests. Three groups unite: C.A.S.T. (Caring And Serving Together), Timken Early College High School and Souers Early College Academy donated 120 blessing bags to Refuge of Hope dinner guests.

*Blessing bags were filled with personal hygiene products, SARTA bus passes and McDonalds gift cards which made for a wonderful morning and very happy dinner guests.*



Frank, ROH shelter resident, sharing his testimony with students.