



# RAISING UP

## The good news at Helping Up Mission



Ravens in the House  
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"I am blessed that God sent me to the hospital. I was ready emotionally, mentally, and physically to change."

### Carmita's Journey Through Birth, Recovery, and Hope



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Carmita, age 38, was born and raised in the Baltimore City community of Butcher's Hill. "I came from a Polish/ Puerto Rican family," recalls Carmita. "My mother partially raised me, but she was an alcoholic and died at age 38. My father was not around, and so I was raised by my grandparents. I was born legally blind in one eye, and my grandparents helped me out. I was a good student, part of the drill team, and on the honor roll."

"At the age of 15, I had my first daughter and got married. I wanted to get out of my aunt's house where we were staying, and getting married helped. I stayed in high school and graduated. I went to school for nursing, and by the time I was 21, I had my own house, a good job at Franklin Square Hospital as a multifunctional technician, and my second daughter. Life was going great until I injured my back lifting a patient one day."

"When the injury occurred, I was in an abusive relationship, and I liked how the oxycodone (oxy) they prescribed made me feel. I started taking oxy when I did not need to, and by age 23, I knew I had a habit forming. One day, my friend noticed that I might be showing signs of withdrawal, and I said 'NO!'"

As soon as I took one, I felt better and knew something was wrong. I tried getting out of my bad relationship and started using it for my emotions or any possible excuse."

"At one point, my grandparents and my mother passed away. I had nowhere to go, and my daughters were staying with their respective grandparents. I started living from friend to friend. One day, when I was 26, I met up with an old friend who introduced me to heroin."

"I finally knew that I was an addict. Heroin was amazing at first, but then I started waking up worse and worse. Two years later, it got ugly. I was running around the streets of Baltimore and getting into terrible situations. I was officially homeless. I ended up in scary, unsafe positions and did not remember what I did the day before. My life was horrible."

"At this time, I could not stay sober for my children! In 2022, my kidneys shut down, and I was admitted into Hopkins Bayview. During the exam, I was informed that I was three months pregnant with another daughter. It was a bittersweet moment. One day, her dad visited me in the hospital and asked, 'Are you



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## NOW IT'S UP TO US Daniel's Monthly Update

Dear HUM Family,

Sometimes statistics about substance use can be overwhelming—recently I learned that substance use/unintentional overdose is the leading cause of maternal morbidity in Maryland. Considering that reality, the opportunity for new life—for moms and their babies becomes both an critical need and a chance to change that narrative. It's a story we see play out each day at Helping Up Mission's Center for Women and Children (CWC).

Since March of this year, the CWC opened the doors to pregnant women seeking recovery—welcoming them into a community of hope and clinical supports through our partnership with the Center for Addiction & Pregnancy at Johns Hopkins Bayview. After so much attention, focus and generosity—this Center is not just open for women but is a thriving community of help and hope—with 19 pregnant or parenting moms and 10 of their infants and more on the way!

Carmita's story this month is one of the first stories from this effort and shows the investment of time, wraparound supports and compassionate care it takes to get to life change for both mom and baby. As Carmita so poignantly shared, "HUM has given me love, concern, and care. The more that I fight it, the more that they care." The challenges Carmita faces are very real but the hope and joy in her eyes is even more evident.

As we enter this Christmas season of giving—please know that your support are vital to us at Helping Up Mission and all those we serve. Carmita said it best, "Thank you for changing my life in more ways than one. Spending this Christmas with my daughter at HUM is the exact picture of a miracle and is priceless."

We invite you to visit, volunteer or donate to help HUM continue to focus on the value of each new life and hope—this Christmas and in the days ahead.

Serving with you,

**Follow @helpingup on TikTok to see  
our women's choir Voices of Praise!**

## Ravens in the House

On November 6, the Baltimore Ravens continued their tradition of delivering warm winter coats, hats, and gloves to the men of Helping Up Mission. We are honored to celebrate the Ravens' unrivaled community support and their invaluable partnership. Thank you, Wade, Johnny, Craig, and all of the Raven's Community!



ready to get your life together? Because I am not ready to be a single dad.' I needed to go on methadone to help with my withdrawals. I was not ready, nor was her dad, but it helped me feel better."

"While I was at the hospital, a friend told me that Helping Up Mission (HUM) was opening a Center for Women & Children. I finally found a family and was the first transfer from Johns Hopkins Bayview Center for Addiction and Pregnancy (CAP)."

"I am blessed that God sent me to the hospital. I was ready emotionally, mentally, and physically to change. On March 1, I had a beautiful baby girl named Izzy, I wanted to be the first pregnant woman entering the program. God was the only reason I made it to where I was, and

the spiritual aspect of HUM was what I needed. HUM has given me love, concern, and care. The more that I fight it, the more that they care. She has so much love throughout the building. She has a family, a sense of comfort, and safety. I know this is the right spot for recovery. To be surrounded by mothers, I am the 'big sister' to help them. The other mothers feel that they can trust me as long as they stay safe and healthy. Today, we have 19 pregnant or parenting moms and 10 of their infants, and I care about this program. HUM has changed my whole way of thinking."

"Before I came to HUM, I always had faith but was not at peace. What was I doing not to grasp the idea? Today, I am

surrounded by the right tools and my faith in God. Before HUM, I was defeated because I looked into other rehabs but had no trust. I needed to be at the Center for Women & Children."

"To the donors, thank you for changing my life in more ways than one. Spending this Christmas with Izzy at HUM is the exact picture of a miracle and is priceless. I am a recovery coach, and I am taking my Peer Recovery Specialist classes. I am so grateful for your generosity. To any mother experiencing what I went through – I was scared. A lot of other programs have let us down. Just give HUM a chance for a week and enjoy the calmness and the peace. The same peace HUM gave me knowing they gave my children their mom back!"

To read more of Carmita's story, visit [helpingupmission.org/stories/Carmita](https://helpingupmission.org/stories/Carmita)

## Focus on Recovery – Pam Wilkerson Senior Director | Center for Women and Children



In this feature story, we are sharing an inspirational story about Carmita in her battle with addiction. Her story, shared with her permission, includes tragedy that would be insurmountable for many. It is a poignant lesson in her perseverance and hope, but more than anything, it demonstrates the power of the power of community in changing and ultimately saving lives.

Carmita is an intelligent and beautiful young woman, full of life's potential. She grew up with her mother, who was at the time battling her own addiction, but later Carmita was left to be reared by her grandparents. That is the story of so many of our women at Helping Up Mission Center's for Women and Children; growing up in homes with parents who are often times dealing with substance use disorders; a time when youth like Carmita was still occupied by innocence and a developing mind.

At 15 years of age, Carmita, vulnerable to her home situation and environment, became pregnant and then shortly afterwards, a mom of her first baby girl. While most teenagers are planning for homecoming dances and prom dresses, she was planning to be a mother and a wife. She bravely shares her story of abuse at the hand of her then-husband and even through that traumatic experience, she was clearly demonstrating her inner strength by completing requirements to graduate from high school.

Carmita, proudly shares her success in the field of nursing until she experienced a serious back injury which was her introduction to opioids use for pain. Coupled with her ongoing abusive marriage, and back pain, she found herself addicted to progressively more dangerous drugs. What began with a back injury and a traumatic and abusive relationship, quickly led to an addiction that she could not escape.

Although Carmita didn't have the tools she needed to escape the vicious cycle then, she knew she was hurting herself and quickly spiraling toward what she now refers to as "rock bottom". Pregnant with her now 9-month old daughter, Izzy, in the hope of ending her addiction, she turned to Helping Up Mission Center for Women & Children.

It is important to understand that the work does not end here for those like Carmita. She is fighting a lifelong battle for which she draws upon an incredible amount of internal strength and determination. She finds refuge in both spirituality and a supportive community at the Center for Women and Children; of those who genuinely care for her and who share similar values and life aspirations.

— After all, we are a Community of Hope!

## Feed a Hungry Soul This Christmas

Christmas is quickly approaching. Will you open your heart and bless some of our most vulnerable—and hungry—neighbors?

We need to serve over 50,400 meals this Christmas season to people at Helping Up Mission who are struggling with homelessness and addiction this holiday season. But this can only happen with help from caring friends like you!

That's why I hope you will select one of the meal tickets below to feed and care for hurting souls. At just \$2.30 per meal, imagine how many people you can bless...

**\$50.60** to feed and care for **22 people**  
**\$101.20** to feed and care for **44 people**  
**\$174.80** to feed and care for **76 people**

With your gift today, the holidays here at HUM will include a family-style Christmas dinner with all the trimmings. It's sure to provide warmth, joy, and a real sense of family to everyone who comes through our doors.

Your generous gift will mean much more than just meals, though...

For someone who is struggling with homelessness or addiction, a hot, home-cooked meal can be the **first step toward a new life filled with promise**—inviting them to discover the abundant life God intended through our Spiritual Recovery Program.

So please make your special Christmas gift now at [helpingupmission.org/christmas](http://helpingupmission.org/christmas). You'll bless men and women who need to know they're not alone this holiday. Thank you for your compassion and your partnership!

 Find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/Helping.Up.Mission](https://facebook.com/Helping.Up.Mission)

 Follow us on Twitter @helpingup

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[helpingupmission.careasy.org/](http://helpingupmission.careasy.org/)

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## Dealing with Trauma is Healing!



At Helping Up Mission, one of our core missions is to get to the roots of the problem. Through our trauma healing classes, men get the chance to dig deep and heal. Recently, Jay Baylor, sat down with the guys and captured some of their reflections.

**What I've been hearing and seeing in our Trauma Healing Groups.** *What guys will say when they hear we offer trauma-healing groups:*

"I need this, when can I get into a group." "When is the next trauma healing group? That's the reason I'm here."

"I can't keep holding all this inside. I gotta get it out. Talking about it in this group really helps."

"We created a brotherhood here, where we could be real with each other and help each other heal."

"Learning about the grief journey helped me see that I hadn't grieved my losses. I didn't know how to grieve. Now I know."

"After we took our pain to Jesus and did the exchange, I feel lighter."

"I never thought I would be able to forgive them for how they treated me. But now I know how God sees them and my perspective is totally changed. I can forgive them now and hopefully we can reconcile someday."

"It was hard on the streets. I had to do a lot of horrible things that I am not proud of. I've had lots of shame and guilt. But now I know I'm loved by God, I'm His son. That stuff in my past doesn't control me anymore."

"I'm letting myself be bullied by the voice in my head. Those are lies. I'm learning how to listen to what God has to say to me."

"I'm spending more time alone with Jesus now and it really helps me stay at peace, even when things are hard."

*What guys will say when we are done with a trauma healing group:*

"When does the next group start?" "Can I do this again?"



## Our Mission

Helping Up Mission provides hope to people experiencing homelessness, poverty or addiction by meeting their physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs.

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