THANKS TO YOUR SUPPORT

1,970 high-risk youth received life-changing services in 108 communities across Virginia, touching the lives of 8,466 youth and families.
FROM SHREDDED HOMEWORK TO STUDENT LEADER: How Drexel built a brighter future

Today, Drexel takes pride in his ability to complete his work, even when it gets a little challenging. “One time, I was sick for a while, but I caught up on all my work eventually. It might have taken a little bit, but I still got it done,” he shared.

This is a stark contrast from how Drexel used to feel about his schoolwork, which he would often tear into pieces.

Drexel’s mother, Loretta, was at the end of her rope. “I thought there was no hope for him.” Once Drexel settled into Charterhouse School, he was able to get the resources and support he needed to thrive. “They just work so hard to get each child to where they need to be.”

“**He’s a straight-A student, and this is coming from a kid who used to not do any work. I’m just so proud of how far he’s come.**”

Drexel’s teacher, Robyn Bonilla, witnessed his transformation first-hand. “Drexel’s first day in my classroom wasn’t a very successful one. He ended up going home early. When he came back to school a few weeks later, you could start to see a real change in him. Now he comes in ready to work and does not give up.”

Loretta noticed the change as well. “There was a light at the end of the tunnel. He started succeeding with good grades and a positive attitude about school.”

Drexel’s hard work has paid off. “I think he won almost every award he could win last quarter including the personal growth award,” Robyn shared. “He’s a straight-A student, and this is coming from a kid who used to not do any work. He has such a positive attitude and will ask for help if he doesn’t understand something. I’m just so proud of how far he’s come, and he continues to show so much growth and maturity.”

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Drexel credits his experience with his mentor, Mr. Damien, as well as his former mentor, Scott, for helping him become a better student. Carol also credits Drexel’s self-determination.

At Charterhouse, Drexel has found community and a place to grow. His relationship with his teachers, and especially his mentors Scott and Mr. Damiles, gives him structure and someone to share his passions with.

Reflecting on the impact Scott had on his life, Drexel shared, “What’s helped me is having somebody that’s kind of like a father figure, because I normally just get to see my father once on Fridays.”

Drexel loves being in nature, whether he’s exploring his own backyard or venturing out to Storybook Trail for a view of Luray with Mr. Damien. Drexel’s love and concern for animals extends beyond his cat, dog and bearded dragon at home. He even wants to protect cockroaches, the one creature that startles him, because he knows they’re still part of the food chain.

This also helps Drexel keep other perspectives in mind. While he has a passion to protect all living things, he’s learning that not everyone has the same adoration for spiders as he does.

In his free time, Drexel enjoys getting creative with his kinetic sand, listening to country music on the radio and playing with whatever is in his packed book bag.

Drexel recently graduated from equine therapy and is looking forward to getting a job at the same center when he turns fourteen in November.

While it may not have been the case before coming to Charterhouse, Drexel’s ability to see the beauty in those around him is universal. “My teachers are very great to me,” he says, “but to me, anybody can be great in their own ways.”

“He has come so far,” reflected Loretta. “I don’t think any other school could have done this. I don’t know what I would do without you all at Charterhouse.”

Your support can help transform the lives of more students like Drexel. To learn more about volunteering as a tutor or mentor, visit UMFS.org/volunteer. To learn more about donating, visit UMFS.org/donate.
Construction is well underway on the Charterhouse School expansion on UMFS’ Richmond campus. Thanks to generous donors like you, Charterhouse School students will soon be able to enjoy the new facility, which will be attached to the current school building by a covered walkway.

The beautiful new 25,000-square-foot addition features 10 classrooms, a recreational therapy room, a new bus loop, and a cafeteria and kitchen to support the new centralized dining program.

The support of the Be a Champion capital campaign from hundreds of compassionate donors has been inspiring and is opening new doors on campus. We were thrilled to celebrate the opening of the new Child & Family Healing Center facility last year alongside youth, families and partners like you. This state-of-the-art residential mental health facility is now serving youth from across Virginia.

Seeing the expanded Charterhouse School building take shape marks an important moment for phase two of the campaign. The building is scheduled to be completed in time to welcome students back to campus for the fall semester.

Nearly 120 children and teens attend the school which serves students with behavioral, emotional or developmental challenges. At Charterhouse School, students benefit from very small class sizes with a customized, therapeutic educational environment designed to support their special needs.

As the school grew over the past several years, teachers and UMFS leadership created classrooms throughout campus to relieve space constraints. The new Charterhouse School expansion means everyone can learn under one roof in new classrooms tailored to their unique needs.

Your generosity helped make this beautiful new facility a reality. Thank you for helping shape the lives and minds of Charterhouse School students for many years to come.

You’re invited to visit UMFS to see the impact of your generous support. Tour the new facilities and learn how your generosity is changing lives. Visit UMFS.org/campus-tour to sign up for a tour today.

To learn more about Caring Closet, visit Caring-Closet.org.

Partnerships are a foundational part of UMFS. Two of our agency’s core values articulate this. We believe that “relationships are our building blocks” and that “collaboration multiplies impact.”

UMFS is embarking on a new strategic vision to form deeper partnerships with grassroots organizations who share our mission. We know our social impact is amplified when we have opportunities to create synergies with aligned organizations. It makes everyone stronger.

Our first step into this new initiative is already coming to life with the opening of the Caring Closet on our Richmond campus.

Caring Closet provides high-quality clothing at no cost to at-risk children and families, including many UMFS clients. Sara Fender, a UMFS volunteer for over a decade, founded Caring Closet in 2008 knowing that fashion is a form of self-expression. “Clothing makes a difference in how we feel,” Sara said. Her team of volunteers curates and personalizes wardrobes intended to help clients feel comfortable and confident.

The collaboration with the Caring Closet means the organization can operate rent-free from a larger space than its previous location, while reaching more individuals and extending its mission.

There is power and strength in partnership. We’re eager to continue collaborating with our greater community to work towards a shared mission of empowering high-risk children and families to achieve a brighter future.
UMFS is proud to report another year of strong support from our incredible donors, volunteers, churches, community partners and employees. Thank you. Your generosity makes a huge impact on the lives of high-risk children, teens, and families. We are committed to being good stewards of the donations that have been entrusted to us. UMFS exercises efficiency and transparency in all financial endeavors. As we envision serving more youth and families, we remain committed to financial prudence and investing into the future to ensure the sustainability of the organization’s high-quality programs.

A few years ago, Chris Collier heard a quote that resonated with him. “Everybody wants to change the world, but you can really make a big difference if you just start helping one person at a time.” This memorable quote continues to inspire him to help others by giving back to his community today.

As a middle school math teacher who loves what he does, Chris reached out to UMFS to volunteer as a tutor. When he heard that what was really needed was mentors, Chris was more than happy to step up.

Over the last 16 months Chris has made a huge difference in the lives of three youth who are receiving treatment at the Child & Family Healing Center, UMFS’ residential mental health treatment program in Richmond.

Whether it’s a game of UNO, drawing or making cookies, Chris helps his mentees find and express their talents. One of his mentees even surprised him by drawing a portrait of Chris, complete with the artist’s unique signature. Chris asked for the drawing to be hung up somewhere on campus, because he wanted his mentee to see that his artwork was good enough to be displayed.

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In addition to being beloved by those he’s mentored, Chris’s presence and impact is greatly appreciated by UMFS staff.

Sara Barrille, Administrative Services Manager at UMFS, shared the difference Chris has made as a mentor. “Chris consistently shows up for our kids week after week. He simply just sees a teenager needing someone who cares, and he can immediately connect with our kids. I use Chris as an example for new mentors I onboard, that it just takes someone to show up, because it shows you care.”

Another driving force that motivates Chris’ volunteerism is a belief that every child deserves to know that somebody cares about them. “I know these kids have had tough backgrounds. I’m sure they have people to care for them, but just making sure that they know one more person does is one of my goals.”

You can make a difference in the lives of the children and teens at UMFS. To learn more about mentoring and other volunteer opportunities, visit UMFS.org/volunteer.
Backpack Buddies donates backpacks filled with school supplies for our Charterhouse School students & youth in our Tidewater region.

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FOLLOW ALONG FOR STORIES THAT INSPIRE

Have you heard? Incredible things are happening at UMFS. We regularly share inspiring stories from across the agency. Follow along for photos, videos, and blog posts that celebrate the children, teens, and families at UMFS, and the selflessness of the donors, volunteers, and staff who support them.

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