

Kind HEARTED

your gift changed lives

HumanKind

April/May 2024



Sheltering Hearts

YOU'RE THE REASON THIS FAMILY AND THESE CHILDREN ARE THRIVING IN A LOVING HOME.

IRVIN AND TEESHA
WARD HAVE
BEEN FOSTER
PARENTS THROUGH
HUMANKIND FOSTER
CARE SINCE 2012.

After fostering 47 children, adopting seven, and having three biological children of their own, the Wards were about to ask for a break from fostering. But when a call came in asking them to take a sibling group of four severely malnourished and neglected non-verbal children, how could they say no. In spring of 2021, HumanKind received a call for a sibling group placement of four children ages 3, 2, 1, and 4 months – all severely malnourished. Child Protective Services (CPS) had responded

YOUR GIFT EMPOWERS CHILDREN & FAMILIES TO THRIVE.

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to a call for a domestic violence allegation and were investigating. Before entering the home, CPS did not know there were children living there. By chance, CPS saw evidence of children and began asking to see them. The children's severe malnourished state took them straight to the hospital and eventually to specialists at Virginia Commonwealth University medical center.

The Wards didn't even hesitate. They agreed to foster all four siblings, providing the love and care they so desperately needed. The children had suffered unimaginable traumas and needed extensive care. After leaving the hospital began a grueling routine of appointments with doctors, specialists and therapists in Lynchburg and Charlottesville. Visits to neurology, developmental clinic, occupational therapy, speech therapy, physical therapy, infant and toddler therapy took place multiple times a week for all of the children.

With early screenings, they learned that three of the children have an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis and will be able to have specialized interventions tailored to their specific needs including social communication, language development, and behavioral challenges.

Under Irvin and Teesha's dedicated care, the children began to thrive. With patience and persistence, they helped them overcome their communication challenges, and they slowly started to express themselves. Day by day, their progress

“They really are 360-degree support to these kids. They are truly special people.”
- Foster Care Case Worker, Essence Pennix

“Irvin is the heartbeat of our program because he has been with me pretty much since the beginning, and he never turned down a child,” Executive Director and Program Director of Foster Care at HumanKind, Jamie Creasy said. “And what’s so wonderful about him is that when a child leaves, whether they turn 18 and choose to leave or they’re returned back home because the court sees fit, he stays in touch with all of them.”

was evident, as they became more confident, playful, and happy. Their once sad faces transformed into radiant smiles, and their resilience touched everyone around them.

Moved by the incredible bond they had formed with the children; the Wards made the life-changing decision to adopt all four of them. They now share a loving and nurturing family environment, where



You are the reason these children had a family like Teesha and Irvin Ward ready and waiting to help meet their need for extensive love and care. Because of you these young lives are forever changed.



Through the whole process – from the time a family is trained, a child is placed with a foster family, and length of a child's placement -- the HumanKind Foster Care staff is there. Your support makes it possible for them to provide around the clock care to families ensuring they are equipped with the necessary skills and resources.

they continue to make amazing progress in their physical, emotional, and cognitive development. The Ward's selflessness and unwavering dedication

“They didn't have anybody who would step up, so it was just really sad,” Teesha said. “We were like we have to help them and not have them split up and not have them be in the system.”

have not only changed the lives of these children but also served as an inspiration to many in the community. All four children have officially become Ward's after a successful adoption on June 1, 2023.

The Wards were one of HumanKind's first approved foster families. Through the years, they

have provided a nurturing environment for numerous children, regardless of age or background and were always willing to foster teenagers, one of the most needed placements in Virginia. They believed in the importance in taking in teenagers and made time to work with each of them to learn a trade or skill that they could take with them no matter where they went in life.

Irvin and Teesha are now officially retired as foster parents – with a full house of eight children living under their roof from ages 3-17, Irvin simply shared with a smile, “We don't have any more bedrooms.”

“You just try to love the children the way you would want to be loved if you were in that situation,” Teesha shared.

Because of you, these children got the love, care and support they desperately needed.

Help! OUR PANTRY SHELVES ARE EMPTY!

The shelves of our Emergency Household Pantry are empty and we need your help! Please donate items from the most needed list below. Our families depend on this pantry to weather short-term crises without having to take on more financial burden.

ITEMS MOST NEEDED RIGHT NOW

- Body Wash (Men's/Women's)
- Bar Soap
- Hand Soap
- Deodorant (Men's/Women's)
- Shampoo & Conditioner
- Toothpaste & Toothbrushes
- Toilet Paper
- Paper Towels
- Trash Bags
- Dishwashing Liquid
- Laundry Detergent
- Household Cleaning Products
- Razors (Men's/Women's)
- Kroger or Wal-Mart Gift Cards (\$15.00-\$25.00 for basic necessities including food or gas)



DONATION DROP-OFFS

HumanKind Main Campus | 1903 HumanKind Way, Lynchburg VA 24503
 HumanKind Richmond Office | 908 N. Thompson Street, Richmond VA 23230
 Open Monday – Friday | 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM
 To coordinate a group drive, contact info@humankind.org.
 All donations must be new.



Finding a Safe Haven

YOU'RE THE REASON THIS FAMILY FOUND A SAFE PLACE TO CALL HOME.

Tanisha woke up every day fearful of the neighborhood she lived in. How could she and her partner Daniel bring a new baby home to this environment? Not only was the neighborhood unsafe, but it was dangerous. After witnessing a crime, Tanisha's anxiety and stress level became a concern for her pregnancy. She knew she had to make changes for a better life, but it's hard to know where to start.

Because of you, a lifeline of support was ready and waiting to help Tanisha take the next right steps. The journey wasn't easy, but it was life-changing for her and her family. The first step was making sure Tanisha, and her baby stayed healthy even under such stressful conditions. With the help of her Healthy Families Family Support Specialist (FSS) Lindsey, Tanisha was connected with a local resource for trauma counseling that she could work with at her own pace. Reducing the stress and anxiety can increase the likelihood of a full-

What a gift you have provided Tanisha and her family – wrap around support for the whole family, access to community resources, and high quality child care.

term pregnancy and reduces the risk of health complications for both mother and baby.

Because of your generosity, FSS Lindsey was right there offering guidance to both her and Daniel throughout the remainder of the pregnancy. Tanisha and Daniel knew after ensuring their baby would be healthy, their biggest goal was to establish a secure and safe environment for baby's arrival. So together with Lindsey, they made a plan on how to make that big goal become a reality.

With each milestone reached, they celebrated. Every piece was critical from finding suitable employment, to budgeting for savings to purchase a vehicle, and now they just had to make sure they had reliable childcare. FSS Lindsey referred her to HumanKind's Early Head Start (EHS) program – and the baby was soon accepted for childcare. Two days after the baby started at EHS, Tanisha found employment. What a blessing to wrap around this family even further helping them achieve stability.

Eight months after making a plan, Tanisha and Daniel moved into their new home. None of this would be possible without your support. You are the reason this life-changing work is possible. Because of you, Tanisha had a support system to wrap around her and her family.

"I am pleased to share, thanks to your support and encouragement, all of Tanisha's ambitious goals have been accomplished." – Lindsey, Family Support Specialist

Your support provided Tanisha someone to walk the journey with her—ensuring a safe home and a better life for her family.



Letter from the President



Thanks to you and your partnership, HumanKind can be uniquely focused on caring for each man, woman, and child who comes to us.

Stan Southworth
President and CEO

We meet them where they are in life—sometimes at their lowest point—and connect them with essential resources to find stability in housing, transportation, employment, parenting support, and childcare. But more than that we offer them something that will feed their broken spirits.

Like Tanisha, featured in one of our stories, many people come to HumanKind scared, afraid and unsure of what to do next. They feel isolated, empty and hopeless. And through our programs they find a path to hope and healing.

You are transforming the lives of homeless, hopeless and anxious people in our community. Thank you for your faithful support. Thank you for caring for our vulnerable neighbors in need. Together we will strengthen people, we will strengthen families and we will build a stronger community. I am grateful for you.

You Can Provide Courage in Crisis

YOUR GIFT WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR A MOTHER WHO IS STRUGGLING.

In a span of just a few months, Mary lost her job, lost her housing, and lost her way. She did not know what to do next, but she knew she needed to find help to keep her children safe.

Falling on hard times is not a new obstacle for Mary, but now as a single mother she has three children that depend on her to meet their needs. When her Family Support Specialist spoke with her, she shared that “it feels like a cycle that never seems to end.” Mary never imagined she would be staying at a shelter with her children by her side. Life was good—until it wasn’t. And it all happened so fast.

She’s made a lot of progress to bridge the gaps for food and shelter – but she needs a support system to help navigate building a better life for her children. And through it all she wants to stay positive to keep fun alive for her two older kids and her baby during this stressful time. Mary wants to give her children



a better life, and her greatest need is having reliable childcare so she can work.

But the good news is that you can help! For just \$22 you can give her baby a full day of childcare plus lunch and a snack through Early Head Start. And it’s more than childcare for the baby – your generous gift will also provide additional help for Mary like food, diapers and wrap around parent support that she so desperately needs.

When you help a mom like Mary have childcare – you help her find steady work, have access to resources and ultimately equip her to build a better life for her whole family.

And it’s not just Mary who is struggling right now. The economic impacts from inflation are leaving moms with low incomes struggling. Your support is critical in supporting these children and their families. Moms like Mary cannot overcome these challenges without you.

Please send in a gift today to help a mom like Mary connect with resources to navigate these challenging times.

Your gift of \$22 will equip her with reliable childcare and parent support.

Yes, I’ll help equip a mom struggling to overcome crisis and find stability.

Here’s my special gift to provide childcare, food, diapers, parent resources and support the good work of HumanKind.

- \$22, to provide parent support and a full day of childcare for 1 child.
- \$44, to provide parent support and a full day of childcare for 2 children.
- \$66, to provide parent support and a full day of childcare for 3 children.
- \$ _____, to provide help to as many moms and children as possible.

To give faster, please give online today: humankind.org/helpamom

Help a mom in need today!

