

IMPACTS REPORT

Shaun Johnston is 22 years old and on a track toward social and economic success. Four years ago his path was far less certain. He had dropped out of high school, was living on the streets and experiencing regular run-ins with the criminal justice system.

His encounter with a UTEC streetworker changed his future. With assistance from Cascade Alliance, UTEC had started a mattress recycling social enterprise to provide disconnected youth job training to help them redefine their future. Shaun discovered that the mattress recycling job could provide him with a steady income and opportunities to learn basic workplace business skills. After a month at UTEC, he earned his HiSET (GED).

With job training, education assistance, and social support from UTEC, Shaun was able to secure a full-time job at Whole Foods and is thriving. “These accomplishments have given me confidence in myself. I believe the biggest challenges create the strongest people. My challenges are great, but I am strong. My past is behind me and my future is bright. And so is my son’s.”

With mentorship from Cascade Alliance, UTEC started a mattress recycling social enterprise in 2014. The waste-based business helps the environment, provides earned revenue for UTEC, and employs people with barriers.



Robert Carroll was unemployed and finishing a court-mandated drug rehab and addiction treatment program. He vowed to find work that would enable him to improve himself and his community, but he faced substantial barriers to employment because of his past.

Fortunately for Robert, The Mustard Seed of Central Florida (TMS) was able to give him that opportunity. With assistance from the Cascade Alliance, TMS operates a mattress recycling business through which the nonprofit furniture and clothing bank could offer a job to Robert, and others with barriers to employment who seek a second chance to be contributing members of society.

Robert expressed his deep appreciation for what TMS is offering him, which he knows encompasses more than the job. “I stand behind The Mustard Seed’s motto of integrity, respect, commitment, compassion, and service,” Robert said.

“I know while working at The Mustard Seed, I too will show integrity and be of service through my work and time,” he stated. “Thank you for giving me a chance to prove my integrity and hard work!”



Shanika Burton



THE
SCRAP
EXCHANGE

What were you doing before working at The Scrap Exchange? I had a job as a teacher's aide at a daycare. I was the only dark-skinned person at my workplace and was talked down to. I was made to do humiliating tasks like cleaning the personal vehicle of my boss. After many years on the job, I was fired while out on sick leave. I had a hard time finding another job. I don't have computer skills and because of my age employers thought I wouldn't be able to keep up. Without work, I fell behind on bills and the bank foreclosed on my house. I was headed for the streets until a family member agreed to take me in. I finally got another daycare job, but the hours were inconsistent and I couldn't support my family.

What impact has your job at Scrap had on your life? I started as store staff part-time in June 2016. Since then, I've gotten a raise and been offered full time hours, and now I receive health/dental benefits and paid time off! Thanks to Scrap, I am now able to afford rent and am enrolled in a rent-to-own program through the Housing Authority.

"This job brings out my best attributes. It lets me be myself and be more positive. It feels like family. I'm surrounded by people who show me respect. When I'm here I try to do 110 %. I love coming to work"

Since joining Cascade Alliance, The Scrap Exchange, a Durham, NC-based nonprofit arts reuse center, has grown its retail thrift operation two-fold and added 9 full-time jobs with healthcare benefits for people with barriers to employment.

John Pounders was feeling hopeless. Just hours after losing his job, his car broke down and he was evicted from his apartment. "I lost so much, and so fast. It seemed like everything was going wrong," John recalls. In search of a safe shelter, John came to the Union Rescue Mission in Wichita, Kansas. "I was so glad to have a meal and a bed. I finally felt like I was getting the help I needed." He thought he would be at the shelter for just long enough to get back on his feet. But when he learned of the Mission's residential life-transformation program, he enrolled in the next class.

Following graduation, John was offered a job in the Mission's social enterprise—NewLeaf Books—launched with the assistance of Cascade Alliance. Today he drives a NewLeaf truck picking up donated books and is learning warehouse management. "The job's given me a chance to get back into life. It keeps me grounded. People know me here. They look at my heart and want to be part of my life."

So far, NewLeaf Books has provided employment for three clients of the Mission—jobs at an hourly wage higher than minimum with benefits—plus valuable job readiness training for people still in recovery programs.



UNION
RESCUE
Mission

Timmica Alexander and her five children were bouncing between friends' houses after she left a decade-long abusive relationship. "I was in a bad situation, and it was ten years of craziness. I had a house and everything when I was with him. But I had to do what was best for my kids and leave." She lost everything when she walked out the door. She found herself homeless and in need of work to get her and her children back on their feet.

She found hope in the Opportunity House. In addition to temporary shelter for her family, the Reading, PA-based nonprofit organization was able to offer her a job at its retail thrift social enterprise. With the help of the Cascade Alliance, OppHouse had launched the OppShop in 2015 and now provides 25 clients with a job and a path to independence.

"Opportunity House helped me get back on my feet after I lost everything. They helped me financially, mentally, and physically. They gave me a job and the chance for a fresh start."

Timmica is looking forward to when she can move her children into a place to call their own, but until then, she will follow the advice she gives to anyone going through a struggle, "Never give up."

