

Donations with meaning

Campaign allows people to buy naming rights for items at Urban Ministries of Durham

By Ryan Wilusz
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James Tilley left Durham for a fresh start, lured by the opportunities of West Virginia coal mining. The work he found was gritty, but it paid the bills. But following a work-related injury and a divorce from his wife, Tilley lost everything. He became homeless.

On a recent chilly afternoon, he bundled up in his donated leather jacket and sat among a group of men outside the Urban Ministries of Durham, a nonprofit homeless shelter. He has been living there since Dec. 28.

UMD partnered with advertising agency McKinney in 2013 to create Names for Change, a campaign that is close to reaching its \$100,000 goal.

The campaign allows people to purchase naming rights to their choice of 169 items at UMD, located at 410 Liberty St. The items range from individual tampons to the ovens used in cooking nearly a quarter-million meals each year.

Jenny Nicholson is a creative director at McKinney, a national advertising agency based in Durham. Although the agency works with companies such as Samsung Electronics and Nationwide Insurance, McKinney wanted to make an impact at home.

"It's where we live and it's part of our community," Nicholson said. "It has been a very organic relationship with UMD. The more we learned about them, the more we liked what they stand for."

After a two-year partnership in 2013, UMD asked McKinney to help create a new campaign. Nicholson had just heard of a \$220 million deal that gave Levi's the naming rights to the San Francisco 49ers' stadium.

"How interesting would it be to let people buy the naming rights to things



James Tilley sits outside Urban Ministries of Durham in a donated leather jacket and shirt. UMD's Names for Change campaign lets people buy naming rights to items they donate.

that really matter for people that really need them?" Nicholson recalled asking herself.

The thought transformed into the \$1 million Names for Change campaign, which has raised \$79,000 in just over two years. McKinney created the campaign and new logo for UMD at no cost.

"It's the most important thing I have ever done in my life," Nicholson said. "It's an opportunity to use my powers for good."

Individuals who purchase naming rights through the Names for Change campaign receive a digital poster in return, which can be shared through social media or ordered as a large print. The poster design includes a custom name and a colorful image of the item.

UMD thought most people would name items after themselves, but almost every item is named in honor of a loved one. UMD noticed an increase in purchased naming rights last Christmas and hopes to keep the streak going with Valentine's Day.

UMD helped 237 people helped out of homelessness last year, a task that costs about \$4,956 per person. Each dollar from the campaign goes toward costs such as utilities and a case management staff that identifies each per-

son's strengths and weaknesses.

For each dollar donated, UMD estimates an equal amount of donated labor as well as items like Tilley's leather jacket.

"Nothing says 'I love you' like 'I named this can of Vienna sausages at the homeless shelter after you,'" said Bryan Gilmer, the director of marketing and development at UMD.

Items such as canned food are continuously accepted, which allows the campaign to last as long as people want to participate. But limited items such as the washing machines at the shelter have already sold out.

UMD believes the message of the campaign is important: items people take for granted are missing from the lives of others in their community. Even donating a \$1 napkin shows the homeless that people care about them, Gilmer said.

Tiller said the naming campaign is a meaningful way of aiding the homeless.

"This right here is helping the ones that people really don't want to think about," Tilley said. "People should really think about this instead of a box of candy. It means something more. It has a message behind it."

How you can help

Items up for naming rights can be found at namesforchange.org.