

New Life Mission to host 'Community Care and Share' at Hilton Melbourne, organization marks its 15th year of serving homeless women and children

By Ken Datzman

New Life Mission has been at the center of transforming the lives of homeless women and children in Brevard County for the last 15 years, and the nonprofit has been able to achieve its mission without government assistance.

Because New Life Mission teaches families how to live self-sufficiently, the organization models that principle by not utilizing government funding.

"We rely solely on donations from individuals, churches, businesses, grants and fundraisers to assist families in transforming their lives," said New Life Mission CEO Amy Lyon.

Staci Donovan, director of development, added that New Life Mission's annual "Community Care and Share" event "provides nearly one-third of our operating budget. There is no other fundraiser in the area like it because it is a two-day event attracting about 400 people each day."

New Life Mission will be celebrating its 15th anniversary during the Community Care and Share luncheon April 18-19 at the Hilton Melbourne. The event is open to the public.

Guests are invited to attend from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. either Thursday, April 18, or Friday, April 19. They can register by emailing CCS@NewLife-Mission.org. There is no cost to attend and guests will be asked to make an investment in New Life Mission. People interested in hosting a table at Community Care and Share can use the email address to learn more details.

The Community Care and Share chairs are Megan Renfro and Karem Sapp, both with years of volunteer involvement at New Life Mission.

"I became involved as a volunteer with New Life Mission after attending their Community Care and Share luncheon," said Renfro. "Then I was asked to chair the event in 2017 and 2018. From the beginning of my involvement with New Life Mission, I was inspired by the life transformation of the program participants, and the Christ-centered aspect of the organization."

"New Life Mission was something I wanted to be part of as a volunteer. It was clear to me that lives were being transformed. New Life Mission's staff does amazing work. The women who come here work hard and are dedicated to turning their lives around."

Before Sapp became a volunteer, she was on the New Life Mission staff for 10 years working in a range of positions. "I learned about New Life Mission from the Church of Viera, which I attend. When I started working for New Life Mission it



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

New Life Mission will host its annual 'Community Care and Share' fundraiser April 18-19 at the Hilton Melbourne. During the luncheon, attendees will hear about the history of New Life Mission, which is marking its 15th year of lifting homeless women with children out of poverty. The event is open to the public. From left: Amy Lyon, CEO, New Life Mission; Megan Renfro, co-chair, Community Care and Share; Karem Sapp, co-chair, Community Care and Share; and Staci Donovan, director of development, New Life Mission. They are at the New Life Village campus in Melbourne.

had one location. Today, it has four campuses. I have seen New Life Mission grow exponentially. I am friends with many of the graduates of New Life Mission. I have seen them grow in many ways."

Homelessness is growing in communities across the nation as housing becomes increasingly unaffordable for many people. Rents have skyrocketed over the last three years.

During the Community Care and Share luncheon, attendees will learn about the history of New Life Mission, formerly Brevard Rescue Mission, and the impact the organization has had on the lives of homeless women and children over the last 15 years.

Attendees will also learn about upcoming campus tours, volunteer opportunities, and other ways to become involved with the organization.

"Last year we started hosting 'Come and See' open houses on a quarterly basis and invited the community," said Donovan. "It's a great way for the community to learn about our mission, learn about our programs and see our facilities. Interested people can register for the open houses at our website (<https://newlife-mission.org/events>)."

"I think a big part of getting more people involved with our organization is raising awareness of our mission and the work we do in the community," said Lyon. "Once we get potential donors out on the property and show them what we are doing to change lives for the better, they embrace New Life Mission."

Her organization started in 2009 with "a few apartment units and today we have four campuses in Melbourne with capacity to serve 30 families in our program and

another eight families in affordable graduate housing," said Lyon. "It's incredible to watch a mother go from living in her car to working a full-time job with a livable wage and providing for her family."

New Life Mission opened its fourth campus, New Life Village, last spring on the site of the former Hacienda Girls Ranch on Croton Road in Melbourne. Hacienda Girls Ranch, which was under the wing of the Children's Home Society of Florida, provided living accommodations and educational opportunities for more than 30 years for teenage girls who had problems at home.

The Children's Home Society of Florida closed the Hacienda Girls Ranch and sold the 25-acre gated property to New Life Mission for \$2.25 million in May 2021.

Please see New Life Mission, page 21

New Life Mission

Continued from page 13

New Life Mission launched a capital campaign to raise \$3 million to cover the purchase, renovation, and operating expenses of New Life Village.

"We are in the third year of a three-year capital campaign for phase one," said Lyon. "We still have \$757,000 to go to reach our goal. We hope to reach that goal by June 30 of this year. The other three New Life Mission campuses are debt-free. We're proud of that."

New Life Mission renovated the Hacienda Girls Ranch facilities in April of 2023, said Lyon, who will mark her second year as New Life Mission CEO in July.

"New Life Village is the entry point for anyone entering our program," said Lyon. Two years ago, Lyon succeeded New Life Mission founder and CEO Stacia Glavas, who retired.

There is a second phase planned for New Life Village which includes dormitory-style living for up to 60 families, a cafeteria, reception and community space, classroom space and computer laboratory, and multipurpose room for chapel and gatherings.

"We are good stewards with our money, so before we think about phase two, we want to have phase one paid off," said Lyon.

She said her organization prides itself on "financial integrity" and "maximizing every dollar to benefit New Life Mission families." This is confirmed through an annual independent financial review, an independent review by the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, Charity Navigator, and Candid, formerly Guidestar.

New Life Mission has an endowment at the Community Foundation for Brevard, and an active planned giving program.

While in the New Life Mission program, families reside at one of its four campuses for one to two years. They receive one-on-one case management, mental health counseling, financial coaching, life skills classes, and educational and career guidance.

Mothers, who are called "students," work through a four-phase program: freshman, sophomore, junior and senior.

Upon successful completion of the program, they can apply for affordable graduate housing.

New Life Village includes residential facilities built for group-style living.

Purchase of the Hacienda Girls Ranch property has not only allowed New Life Mission to serve more families, but it also prompted the organization to start its own full-time child-care center called "Kids Academy."

"Many of the mothers who come to us can't afford child care," said Lyon. "A lot of them do not have vehicles. With the launch of Kids Academy and no-cost child care, we have removed those barriers."

The U.S. Department of Labor's "National Database of Child Care Prices," which provides prices in 2,360 U.S. counties, shows that child-care expenses are "untenable" for families throughout the nation.

Sponsored by the Department of Labor's "Women's Bureau," the database shows prices vary by child-care provider type, age of children, and location. It includes median prices for center- and home-based providers for children ages 0 to 12. The database is "the most comprehensive public federal source of child-care prices at the county level."

A new brief drawing on available data across 47 states shows child-care prices for a single child ranged from \$4,810 for school-age home-based care in small counties to \$15,417 for infant center-based care in large counties.

The National Database for Child Care Prices shows that where child care prices are high, mothers are less likely to be employed, even in places with higher wages.

"Reducing out-of-pocket child-care expenses for families would support higher employment, particularly among women, and lift more families out of poverty."

Lyon said the students in New Life Mission's program often use public transportation.

"One of the student's goals is to purchase a vehicle, and we have people who donate vehicles to New Life Mission, which is a good tax deduction. We have local mechanics who check the vehicles and do repairs as needed for New Life Mission students."

"It takes a village to keep our doors open and community support is the lifeblood of our organization," added Lyon. "We are always looking for individuals and groups to help in our Kids Academy, in our Transformed Shop, and with our facilities team."

With the purchase of the property, New Life Mission was also able to expand its "Transformed Shop." The Transformed Shop is a sewing center where the mothers in the program work with staff and volunteers to learn cutting and sewing skills using upcycled denim and fabric. They create products such as drink coasters, placemats, tote bags, and jewelry items, which are sold at events and

at Transformedshop.com. All profits are returned to New Life Mission, said Lyon.

By purchasing products from the Transformed Shop, people are empowering a mother to gain valuable skills that will equip her to break the cycle of homelessness.

In addition to purchasing items from the Transformed Shop, there are various way to support New Life Mission, including volunteering individually or with a group. To learn more, email volunteer@NewLife-Mission.org.

Monthly gifts help provide programming for the students. Donors who give \$100 or more a month become "Impact 100" partners and attend a special event.

Supporting the New Life Village capital campaign is another way to help the organization. And people can include New Life Mission in their estate plans to transform lives for generations to come.

"As we celebrate our 15th year, New Life Mission thanks all the individuals, businesses and organizations that have reached out to help us grow and be able to serve more families," said Lyon. "We have heard from people who were involved when this organization began 15 years ago. We are excited about the future of New Life Mission."




Hope inspired. Community driven. Expect MORE.

NEIGHBOR UP BREVARD'S ANNUAL
ANCHOR FUNDRAISER WITH CHAMPION
SPONSOR ORION180

**SOWING SEEDS OF HOPE
DINNER & PROGRAM**

FRIDAY, MAY 10TH
SUNTREE COUNTRY CLUB

300 Country Club Dr. Melbourne, FL
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

*Invites to follow
for sponsorship opportunities, please reach out to
Andrea Sasson, development@neighborupbrevard.org*

With Thanks to our generous sponsors:



Platinum Sponsor



Expect MORE.
Champion Sponsor

Susan & Julio Vallette (Gold)
Katie & Alan Prestwood (Gold)
Gatto's (Silver) ♦ Ron & Li Klein (Silver)
SBS Precision Metal (Silver)
Joy & Mark Willard-Williford (Silver)
Lynn & Michael Brockwell-Carey (Bronze)
Brooker Schmidt & Kim White (Bronze)



Gold Sponsor



Platinum Sponsor



Silver Sponsor



Silver Sponsor