

## New Life Mission to host 'Opening Doors for Women' at American Muscle Car Museum — tickets, sponsorships available; hundreds of classic cars on display

By Ken Datzman

Since its founding 15 years ago, the nonprofit New Life Mission has transformed — through education, accountability, and goal achievement — the lives of homeless women with children.

The organization's program equips and empowers its participants to become self-sufficient and break the cycle of homelessness.

"We have a 90 percent success rate in our program, so we know it works," said Staci Donovan, director of development at New Life Mission.

New Life Mission works to permanently break the generational cycle of homelessness by providing women with housing, access to health care, child care, counseling, transportation, education, nutrition, and job training, all in a safe environment.

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

"We rely on donations from individuals, churches, and businesses, and grants and fundraisers to assist families in transforming their lives," said Amy Lyon, New Life Mission's chief executive officer.

For many nonprofits, fundraisers play an increasingly important role. The funds help organizations achieve their stated missions.

New Life Mission will be hosting "Opening Doors for Women" from 6–9 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 10, at the American Muscle Car Museum on Sarno Road in Melbourne.

Tickets to attend this fundraising event are \$125 per person and \$200 per couple. Tickets are sold at <https://NewLife-Mission.org/events>. Sponsorships for Opening Doors for Women are also available. For event sponsorship information, email [Staci.D@NewLife-Mission.org](mailto:Staci.D@NewLife-Mission.org).

Donovan said New Life Mission is hoping to attract 400 people to the event. She also said New Life Mission is planning to have live and silent auctions. Alfie Silva will provide the entertainment.

"The inspiration for the event came from a conversation we had at New Life Mission," said Donovan. "For 15 years, we have been empowering women to self-sufficiency. We have a lot of women on our staff, we have women supporters and women volunteers."

She added, "With this event, we are looking to have more men become involved with New Life Mission. And we thought a good way to do that was to reach out to men in the community through an event at the American Muscle Car Museum. People who attend Opening Doors for Women will learn about New Life Mission in an interesting setting. There is nothing like the American Muscle Car Museum."

Donovan added that a group of men are helping to promote this fundraiser.

Admission to Opening Doors for Women includes hors d'oeuvres, drinks, and access to the 90,000-square-foot vehicle display area and an 18,000-square-foot showroom highlighting the exclusive muscle car collection owned by entrepreneur Mark Pieloch.

"We have more than 460 cars," said Andrew Mackey, event coordinator at the American Muscle Car Museum. "The number typically moves upward. By the time of this event, the number could change.



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

New Life Mission will present 'Opening Doors for Women' Oct. 10 at the American Muscle Car Museum in Melbourne. The event is open to the public. Tickets are sold at New Life Mission's website. This is an opportunity to see up close businessman Mark Pieloch's collection of more than 460 classic cars. The museum is not open to the public. It is open for nonprofit fundraisers, car activities, and educational tours for students. The New Life Mission team includes: Staci Donovan, right, director of development; and Jessica Slater, volunteer and events coordinator.

The New Life Mission fundraiser kicks off American Muscle Car Museum's fall event schedule. The facility is closed June, July, and August for community benefits."

He added, "New Life Mission is an outstanding organization. We're happy to help them."

Mackey said the American Muscle Car Museum has about 60 volunteers who work the various fundraising events. "We couldn't do it without their support. A lot of the volunteers are local car-club members. Bill Albaugh, for example, the current president of the Space Coast Mustang Club, volunteers as did the outgoing president of the club, Jack Sawdy, and his wife. So, we are connected to the car clubs in the region."

Mackey said volunteers "do not have to have any special knowledge of classic muscle cars."

The American Muscle Car Museum is not open to the public. It is open for nonprofit fundraisers, car activities, and educational tours for school-age

children and other groups.

The collection itself, in addition to the cars, has vintage balloon tire bicycles, auto-related neon signs, antique gas pumps, jukeboxes, pedal cars, vintage soda coolers, and motorcycles.

The collection includes more than 50 "Indianapolis 500" pace cars and trucks, more than 50 Shelby's, over 50 Porsches and 29 Yenkos. There is at least one car for every make and model of Yenkos ever built, which "makes it the most extensive Yenko collection in the world."

The Yenko Super Camaro was a modified Chevrolet Camaro prepared by Yenko Chevrolet and developed by the dealership owner and racer Don Yenko.

The American Muscle Car Museum also features more than 80 first place national show winners.

Ever since it opened in Melbourne, the American

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Muscle Car Museum has reached out to help nonprofits through the use of its facility.

“Mark Pieloch has been very accommodating,” said Donovan. “The American Muscle Car Museum is wonderful to work with on Opening Doors for Women.”

The actual title for the fundraiser came from Pete Masciave, New Life Mission’s donor relations director, said Donovan. “Pete, during a conversation, said he always opens the door for his wife, Lisa. And that kind of sparked the title for this event.”

Donovan said New Life Mission has been “opening doors for women for 15 years — a door to mental health, a door to financial education, a door to safe housing, a door to health care. This event gives the community the opportunity to help us continue to open doors for families. This is a ‘call to action’ for the community, for people to better understand and become familiar with New Life Mission.”

Homelessness is growing in communities across the nation as housing becomes increasingly unaffordable for many people. Many of these homeless people are military veterans.

Compared to the general population, veterans face an increased risk of homelessness. An estimated 40,000 veterans go without shelter on any given night, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The number of veterans experiencing homelessness increased by 7 percent between 2022 and 2023.

“Dealing with homelessness is a challenge for cities nationwide,” said Donovan, adding, “A lot of people have heard about New Life Mission but are not familiar with our program for homeless women with children.”

Her organization started with a “few apartment units” and today has four campuses in Melbourne with capacity to serve 30 families, and another eight families in affordable graduate housing.

“It’s incredible to watch a mother go from living in her car, to providing for her family by working a full-time job that pays a livable wage,” said Lyon.

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

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

New Life Mission launched a capital campaign to raise \$1 million to cover the purchase, renovation, and operating expenses of New Life Village.

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.

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 Kids Academy and no-cost child care, we have removed those barriers.”

Child care has long been one of the largest expenses for families. In order to meet that expense, according to the Care.com 2024 “Cost of Care Report,” families are using both their savings and their household income.

That’s just one key finding from the 11th, annual report, which is based on feedback from 2,000 parents.

“Within the first five years of their child’s life, some parents are being forced into a financial hole that is nearly impossible to climb out of,” the report says.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services says that child care is considered “affordable” when it costs families no more than 7 percent of their household income.

Yet, on average, according to the Care.com survey, respondents are spending 24 percent of their household income on child care (versus 27 percent in the prior year), with 60 percent spending 20 percent or

more (as compared to 67 percent last year) and 84 percent spending 10 percent or more (compared to 89 percent last year).

In addition to purchasing tickets and sponsorships for Opening Doors for Women, another way to support New Life Mission’s work is by purchasing products from the organization’s 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, which are sold at events and at Transformedshop.com. All profits go to New Life Mission.

“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 are looking forward to the Opening Doors for Women event and telling more people about the work of New Life Mission,” added Donovan.

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