

Love and Hope in Action

Winter Newsletter



As we seamlessly move into 2021, we are excited to share an updated count of 61 homeless or nearly homeless persons now in sustainable housing since July 1, 2020! Read on for the stories of Ophatell and the Thomas family as well as a piece highlighting an incredible volunteer that we cannot imagine not being a part of the ministry!



Ophatell first arrived at LAHIA in June of 2020. It took quite a bit of patience and time for Ophatell to trust the staff here at LAHIA. Like many of us, he has a past that included the misplacement of his trust. Fortunately, as time went by, he began to trust us little by little. Through this mutual trust, LAHIA has been able to advocate for Ophatell so that he might have a better life. We were able to apply for the SSDI that he now receives. We were also able to help him find and obtain housing, and because he receives his SSDI, he will be able to maintain on his own!

Ophatell has really opened up after giving us his trust. He has been donating much of his time here at LAHIA. He helps in any way he can – from cleaning inside, to landscaping outside, and helping donors unload their vehicles. We are very grateful for his time and genuine camaraderie!

When Ophatell was first interviewed, the LAHIA staff asked him how we could pray for him. He answered; “Pray that I do not go back to my old ways - Pray for wisdom and direction”. If you believe that prayers are heard and answered, please say a quick prayer for our Ophatell!! We are so proud of the direction he is heading!!

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT – Donna Conti

Our beautiful Donna is the definition of a staple here at LAHIA, which literally translates to; one that is basic and important in people's everyday lives. For example, “Donna will know” has become somewhat of a mantra. If there is an inquiry and an immediate answer is unattainable, “Donna will know” funnily enough, is a sufficient and acceptable response.

LAHIA is the beyond grateful beneficiary of most of Donna's free time. Her volunteer hours at LAHIA are the equivalent of a full-time job... and then some. After retiring from 35 years as a court reporter, or as Donna would say, “human tape recorder”, she was looking for a purpose. God undoubtedly had a hand in guiding Donna to LAHIA. As she was opening a new bank account here in Stuart, the bank attendant asked what she was planning to do for retirement. Donna answered that she'd like to find something to do that makes her feel good. The bank attendants reply, just a few simple words, directed Donna straight to us. We will be forever grateful to the bank employee who suggested LAHIA!



In Donna's limited free time, she likes to dance around the house to music and play board games. She loves early mornings and early evenings on the beach and absolutely loves starting her day with a fresh cup of coffee on her balcony. When Donna was asked to share something that might surprise us, she answered

that she completed the 2002 NYC Marathon with her 75-year-old uncle, who had asked her to join him. Together they completed the marathon in 8.5 hours.

It is important to note how BIG Donna's heart is. She sees the best in everyone. It is a natural gift that Donna has, to love with zero prejudice. This statement does come with a warning, however... If you cross her, her Bronx will come out. At that point you better run, because you're in big trouble! If you are good to her though, she will be a dear friend with a fantastic sense of humor. The lives of our clients, volunteers and staff, are more enriched and full just by knowing this Italian, animal-loving, people-loving, girl from the Bronx!!

THE THOMAS FAMILY

When LAHIA's outreach worker Dan met the Thomas family in July of 2020, they were at the home of a relative. Their family consists of a mother and her two adult children, a male and a female. It was obvious all three members had some functional difficulties (developmental issues and/or mental health). They had relocated to Fort Pierce from Texas two years ago. They reported never having a place of their own to reside in since arriving in Florida. Over the next several weeks, Dan encouraged the mother and oldest child to return to mental health services, which they did! The younger adult sibling is largely non-verbal and unable to read or write. The ability for the mother and oldest child to read and write is very limited.



For the most part, each time Dan met with them, they were at a different location. They would spend entire days outside, sitting in the child's playground area of Burger King, which was otherwise vacant due to the pandemic. Many times, they were in a room at the local motel. Occasionally a nearby relative would allow them to stay for a few days. All three receive Social Security benefits, but they lack adequate money management skills. LAHIA's outreach worker made efforts to obtain a representative payee to assist with money management, and helped with identifying a duplex for the family to rent. Due to the efforts of the LAHIA staff, this family finally has a home of their own! Dan continues to check on the family regularly. Lauren, our peer specialist at LAHIA organized several trips to the Thomas's to help the family furnish their new residence. Every piece of furniture and housing item that the Thomas family is now enjoying, came entirely from LAHIA's generous donors!!

The Thomas family has expressed great relief and gratitude to finally have a roof over their heads! This may seem like such a simple thing, something so easily taken for granted. The mother is so happy to simply be able to prepare meals for her family, instead of constant fast food. As they continue to adjust to the neighborhood and having a consistent place to rest their heads, the LAHIA team will keep an eye on them and help them maintain this new way of life!



Thank you for your continued interest and support of LAHIA. We welcome you to share this newsletter with your family and friends. New volunteers and supporters are always welcome to join our mission in assisting our homeless neighbors!

Learn more at www.lahia.org, call us at (772)781-7002 and "like" us on Facebook for updates.
1760 SE Salerno Road, Stuart, FL 34997