

Love and Hope in Action

2024 Summer Newsletter

How a Helping Hand from LAHIA Transformed My Life — Jill's Story

I am originally from Long Island, New York. I moved to Florida in 2017. In 2021, what was intended to be a short visit to Arkansas, turned into what I would eventually call my rock bottom.

Due to an unforeseen set of circumstances that were beyond my control, I spent 3 years away from my daughter and needed to get out of a very unhealthy situation. I finally got on a Greyhound with \$20 in my pocket and returned to Florida in January of 2024.

I knew about LAHIA before leaving for Arkansas because I had been helped by them a few times back in 2021. On January 19th, I contacted them and they had a sleeping bag and tent ready for me when I got off the bus. By Monday, LAHIA was able to assist me with the food stamp application and a letter/verification of homelessness for me to get a state ID for free. While diligently attempting to find work, LAHIA provided me with hot meals, hot showers, and clean clothes, which they also washed and dried once a week.

I went to LAHIA daily for the first 3 months, while living in a tent. Eventually I got my job at Dunkin' Donuts, which would have been impossible without access to showers and clean clothes. When I finally was able to get an apartment, LAHIA so graciously helped me with my first month rent which allowed me to purchase an electric bike so that I could get to and from work.

I absolutely love being able to walk into air conditioning when I get home from work, cooking in my own kitchen and being able to do laundry at my own leisure. I enjoy decorating my room and buying the things that I need. I also love that my belongings do not get wet or ruined in the rain. I can keep things fresh in the refrigerator rather than getting holes poked in my tent by the raccoons. I'm loving the community pool I can swim in, and the list goes on and on.

I have been working at Dunkin' Donuts for 5 months now and have already gotten a raise. It's nice to feel like people can count on me.

I am very passionate about being in my daughter's life again, hoping to be the best mother I can be. I now have a relationship with my mother — we had become separated for way longer than I could have ever imagined. I'm desperately trying to make up for lost time, and I see them two or three times a week. I've already begun my journey and I could not have done it without the help of LAHIA!



This New Place is Music to His Ears



Some of our clients have physical disabilities that make being homeless—already unimaginably difficult—even worse.

In 2007, John was hit by a drunk driver and suffered a traumatic brain injury. After a long recovery, John is still suffering seizures and, as a result, has struggled to find work.

John is a professional musician and spent his life playing in a band at restaurants and clubs. Unable to keep doing what he loved, John eventually became homeless.

This spring, we worked with our valued colleagues at Martin County Human Services to secure an apartment for John in Fort Pierce. Fortunately, we sometimes get furniture and houseware donations (in some cases, we empty a whole house)!

John is very content in his new home. As it turns out, his next door neighbor is also an avid musician! They are quickly becoming best friends!

From Chemical Engineering to Computing: Ed's Lifelong Learning Journey Fueled by Florida College System's Homeless Fee Exemption

It's a real blessing to go through life with a curious mind. Ed's got one.

Originally from Lantana, FL, Ed has a long history of educational pursuits at Florida colleges including chemical engineering at the University of Florida, land surveying at Palm Beach State College and now, computing at Indian River State College (IRSC) in Stuart.

Ed is going to IRSC tuition-free with the Florida College System's Homeless Fee Exemption. The Florida College System is a network of 28 community colleges, colleges and state colleges that provides a primary access point to higher education for Floridians.

LAHIA paid for his textbook, and Ed was off to college! He knows that learning how to use and fix computers will continue to be a valuable skill in the future.

Ed is improving his job skills so he can work well in the future. Ed's wife, Mary Ann, is enthusiastic about his efforts. With Ed at IRSC nearly every day doing his schoolwork, Mary Ann has lots of time for her favorite hobby — reading.



Say Hello to our New Intake Specialist, Maily!

After waiting for what seemed like forever for the right person to come along, turns out the right person was here the whole time!

Maily came to LAHIA first as a dining room volunteer (the 6th volunteer to be hired for a staff role). Maily heard about LAHIA from one of our volunteers and came to the office to find out more information. After only a few months as a volunteer, she knew that she wanted to be part of LAHIA's mission so she applied to a new role of Intake Specialist—and was promptly hired in June!

In her new role, Maily is the first contact for our new clients, who must do an intake with us so we know how we can best meet their needs. "Helping those in need is not just a vocation, it is a calling that can transform lives and communities," said Maily.

Although she just started in June, Maily is already an indispensable member of the Client Services team. Maily was born and raised in Venezuela and moved to the United States in 1998. She holds an associate's degree in business administration and has worked in the administrative field for over 20 years. Prior to joining LAHIA, she spent 18 years as a legal assistant in a law firm in the Miami area.

Maily learned the importance of helping those in need from a young age while volunteering at her church in her hometown, where she witnessed the struggles faced by many families in her community. These experiences ignited a passion in her to make a difference.

Maily loves spending time with her family and friends and enjoys reading, camping, and traveling.

Learn more at www.LAHIA.org, call us at (772) 781-7002
Like and follow us on Facebook for updates.

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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!