

# Love and Hope in Action

## 2024 Fall Newsletter

### Eric's Journey at LAHIA

Since the age of 14, I have time spent in and out of jail. Now, at 35 years old, after being released from prison on June 10, 2024, following a 38-month sentence, and just two days later after my release my mom took me to LAHIA, a place that offers free meals. She had been talking about it a lot during my time away, and I was eager to see what it was all about. From the moment I arrived, I felt welcomed and supported by everyone; the atmosphere was friendly, and they genuinely wanted to help me adjust. The food at LAHIA is incredible—a five-course meal with plenty of delicious desserts!

Within just a few days of visiting LAHIA, I decided to sign up to volunteer as a dishwasher. It felt good to contribute. I also went to a day labor office to find work. LAHIA was able to provide me with work pants, and work boots. The work environment was really nice there, although it was sometimes tough to find jobs on such short notice.

Immediately I was put on the schedule where I first started filling in and then became a regular volunteer every Monday after work. There was always a great meal waiting for me at the end of my shift! Volunteering at LAHIA has lifted my spirits, it has helped me move forward with future plans in life, setting goals and it has opened new avenues to my success!

In my free time, away from work and volunteering, I express my creativity through freestyle dancing, which I like to call Kraving. This dance style is a fusion between Krunk and Rave, and it's a passion and an outlet to express what I feel in my soul.

By August of 2024, I had saved enough money through work with day labor which allowed me to obtain a license. I am happy to say that it was reissued on the 30th of the month.

Back in 2018, I used to drive by a golf course in Hobe Sound and I always told myself I would be working in a place like that someday. Fast forward four and a half months, and I'm thrilled to share that as of mid October 2024, I landed my dream job at a local golf club. I am in charge of cutting and maintaining the greens. It feels amazing to be where I am now, and I take pride in my progress.

My next goal was to buy a car, which I managed to do so on October 27th. My next big goal is to own a brush removal business one day and to start the process to get an LLC.

Everyone at LAHIA has been wonderful and encouraging, and they suggested I share my story, to hopefully inspire others. So here it is! The greatest takeaway during my short period volunteering with LAHIA is the sense of accomplishment it has given me; I truly enjoy giving back.

Today, I am more self-aware and committed to making better life decisions, I have too much to lose and have come too far in such a short amount of time.

I'm optimistic about the future. I am focused on my health while navigating this path of self-discovery. I will continue to work hard as I move forward with life and continue to reach my goals.

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to LAHIA and give a special shoutout to everyone there for helping me and encouraging me along the way in this new journey!



### Shining a Light on Ravi, Our Superstar Volunteer!

LAHIA's volunteers have many talents (e.g., exceptional people skills, compassion, a great sense of humor) but occasionally, we find a volunteer on our team who really shines!

Ravi, who works for us weekly in the shower/laundry cottage, plays SIX musical instruments! Ravi plays clarinet, bass clarinet, contralto clarinet, trombone, violin and bassoon.

And most impressive of all? Ravi is an Eagle Scout-- the highest and most coveted award in all Scouting!

In addition to Eagle Scout projects, he has done beach cleanups and worked with Food for Families, the Big Heart Brigade, and the IRSC library. In his limited spare time, he enjoys reading and music—both playing and listening. He also enjoys spending time with his family and his dogs. He even enjoys collecting watches.

Lucky for LAHIA, Ravi hasn't lost his passion for serving his fellow humans—or the animals! He is studying at Indian River State College (IRSC) to become a veterinarian.

Ravi started at LAHIA in May 2023. Since then, he's seen plenty of changes. "Just after I started, major renovations began on the cottage," he said. "Now, we have a designated area for haircuts and are able to provide more showers for client."

He finds that he likes the interaction with the clients, "and, strangely enough, I enjoy doing the laundry."



## Revved Up for Good: Bikers Trade Leather for Ladles at LAHIA!

We love to have groups volunteer with us. Teens from area churches and schools come in and do a wonderful—and enthusiastic—job landscaping, cleaning, and organizing. A sea of realtors in bright red T-shirts periodically descends on the kitchen and dining room to prepare, serve and share a meal with our grateful clients.

Recently we welcomed a new group to our roster of LAHIA volunteer groups: the Revelation Riders Chapter #457 of the Christian Motorcyclists Association (CMA). CMA is an international organization started 49 years ago by a pastor with two motorcycles in Arkansas. They spread the Word through evangelistic outreach primarily (but not exclusively) to the motorcycling community and honor Jesus' teachings through volunteer and fundraising activities.

CMA has 200,000 members in the U.S. and chapters in every state. Revolution Riders has been rolling for 25 years and currently has 10 riders. Ron is the chapter president. "As a believer in and a follower of Jesus, I volunteer to help those less fortunate than myself," said Ron. "Scripture makes it clear: *For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me*" (Matthew 25:35-36) (NASB)."

Revolution Riders learned about LAHIA from a member who donated some clothes to our free clothing pantry. They contacted Jean, our volunteer coordinator, a date was set, and on October 12<sup>th</sup> they converged on our dining room and spent Saturday lunchtime preparing meals, desserts, pouring sweet tea, dishwashing, meeting and praying with our clients and cleaning up afterward. Not even Hurricane Milton could stop this group!



Ron and his team found LAHIA staff to be very friendly and accommodating. "They clearly explained the procedures of serving and clean-up," said Ron. "We were very pleased with how the facility was kept up and really enjoyed the fellowship with the other volunteers."

Revolution Riders meets monthly, but the chapter is normally doing something every Saturday, too, such as fundraising rides or social activities. Every ride begins with prayer for the event and for various public servants including police, firefighters, courthouse workers, paramedics, etc. They occasionally do a Prayer Walk

Ron invites men and women, riders and non-riders, of all ages to come to a chapter meeting and find out more. Meetings are the first Thursday of every month at the back room at Denny's, 230 Peacock Boulevard in Port St Lucie. Meetings start at 7:00 pm and run about an hour. You can also call Ron at (812) 204-6495.

"We'll be happy to have you," said Ron. "All you need is a heart for people."

## Jack's 15-Year Legacy of LAHIA Service: Compassion, Mentorship, and Honoring a Son's Sacrifice

Jack has been volunteering at LAHIA for 15 years—almost since it has been open! "When I wake up in the morning, I ask God, 'what should I do today?' And more often than not, He leads me right to LAHIA."

Jack works breakfast two days a week and does a weekly Chik-fil-A donation pickup. But his real work at LAHIA is heart-to-heart with our clients. Jack and his wife, Ginny, started [Bart's Blue Star Foundation](#) after their 24-year-old son, 1st Lt. Robert B. Fletcher (who went by Bart), was tragically murdered in the line of duty in Ft. Hood, Texas. On that day, Bart was the victim of a soldier who snapped, killing both Bart and himself.

One of the vital programs that the Foundation supports is the Soles for Souls program, which provides steel-toe work boots or non-slip restaurant shoes to our homeless clients so they can work. The proper shoes can be the lifeline that a client needs to work hard and get back on their feet. Over 1,300 pairs have been provided so far to very, very grateful clients. Every pair is delivered with a Blue Star Pay It Forward bracelet and the story of 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Robert B. Fletcher and his sacrifice for this country.

Jack tries to make himself a mentor to our new clients, using humor to lighten the mood and letting them know that they were chosen by God for him to talk to that day.

Jack remembers one client, Rocky, who lived in the woods across from LAHIA. "

"Maybe two or three times a week after volunteering for breakfast, me and Rocky would go to his camp and play dominoes; we did this for several years." "One day Rocky shared with me that he felt that I was his best friend, and that meant very much to me, and I'll never forget it. It was a good time of our lives. Rocky moved to live with his sister in Texas and I've tried to contact him with no success." "Clients come and clients go, but Rocky was one of the special ones and I will miss him."

Jack says it feels good to do the right thing while you're volunteering at LAHIA. "You get much more than you ever give."



Learn more at [www.LAHIA.org](http://www.LAHIA.org)

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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!*