

Expressions of gratitude
By David Moshier

According to the Treasure Coast Homeless Council, there are a minimum of 1,700 homeless people living in The Treasure Coast. Homelessness occurs for a variety of reasons, everything from unemployment to lack of affordable housing, physical or mental health issues, self-medication and addictions. Whatever the reason for their isolation and homelessness, the men of Camp Haven, Inc. are thankful for the second chance at life they have been given through the generosity of Indian River County residents.

At Camp Haven the men receive more than food and shelter, they become part of a family and bond over their choice to take responsibility for their lives. It's hard to imagine how difficult it is to return from the depths of despair and depression unless you've experienced it firsthand. Or to fathom the level of gratitude the residents feel when afforded the basic human necessities of acceptance, caring, sharing of food, shelter, clothing and healthcare.

"There are no handouts here. The men have to do their part to turn their struggles into successes," explained Camp Haven executive director Lalita Janke. "Without the overwhelming support received from the community, Camp Haven could not afford to provide all the services the men need to rebuild their lives. Kudos to all the agencies that collaborate with us minimizing the cost for services to this group that is often bypassed and overlooked." Janke continued, "Sure they have to put in the effort and work on themselves. Without the knowledge that the community believes in them, the miracles I see every day at Camp Haven wouldn't be possible."

Each of the men have a different story to tell as to how they find themselves where they are today, but the one thing they have in common is an undying feeling of gratitude for the kindnesses shown to them. As David, a program graduate says: "Camp Haven gave me the support and accountability I needed to change the direction my life was going and overcome obstacles I have been struggling with for many years."

"During Phase I, Camp Haven provides shelter, food, clothing, vocational training, counseling and life skills classes for the men," explained Jerney Gable, program director. "When a resident enters Phase II they live in an on-site efficiency-style room, pay rent, have minimal curfews and submit to random drug testing all while having access to the support systems and psychological guidance they've utilized throughout their time at Camp Haven. This part of the program allows residents to gradually transition, ensuring long-term success. The renovations for Phase II programs will be complete by the end of the month."

Resident Matt, a boat maintenance worker who will be entering phase II, said he's overwhelmed to have been given an opportunity to refocus and redirect his life. By attending school, he is now able to pursue a career and be a better father to his son. "It's a new beginning to be the man that I never tapped into until now. I am so grateful that Camp Haven was here when I needed it"

"Since Camp Haven opened its doors in 2014, 140 men have had their lives touched by the their Camp Haven experience. For many of them, the trajectory of their lives was completely changed for the better. Currently, in our Phase I Program we can house up to 17 men and with the completion of the renovation eight men will get the opportunity to move into Phase II of their transition. That means that eight more men can commit to transforming themselves by the grace of God, through the support of our board members, the encouragement of community leaders, and the generous support of the

community,” stated Janke. “Camp Haven is a testament to the idea that when the right people come together with good intentions, they make miracles happen.”

For further information how to support Camp Haven call 772-999-3625 or go to www.camphaven.net

Camp Haven, Inc., visit CampHaven.net.