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Diamonds in the Rough Gala

Submitted by Camp Haven

Camp Haven celebrated their success at helping homeless men of Indian River County rebuild their lives during the 6th annual Diamonds in the Rough Gala at the Grand Harbor Golf & Beach Club on January 26.

Brian Korkus, Camp Haven board president, noted that it all started on January 16, 2014, when Camp Haven opened up the former Citrus motel with five men as residents. "Over the coming years, the team learned and evolved in order to bring in more and more men and to improve the effectiveness of our program."

Since that time Korkus continued, "We undertook a major overhaul of eight rooms which brought our capacity up to 26 beds. During 2018 we hit almost full capacity with 25 men in our program." Since opening Camp Haven has helped 170 men recover their lives, served 60,000 meals and helped 95 percent of the men obtain employment.

A big part of Camp Haven's success can be credited to the dedication of donors and volunteers who have given of their time, talent and treasure explained Diamonds in the Rough event chair Linda Teetz. "We're a very generous community, as evidenced by all of you here this evening. It's easy to write a check, but it's much harder to give your time and your talent."

One couple stands out for their continued generosity. This couple brings meals for the men, prepares hygiene kits for new residents, brings clothing and supports the nonprofit financially, said Teetz before introducing the recipients of the inaugural Diamond Award: Bernadette and Timothy Longden.

"It is unbelievable what this organization is doing," said Timothy Longden. "This is the way you solve problems."

Adding his thanks to the Longdens and others for their support over the years, Chuck Bradley Camp Haven executive director said, "You've helped the men at Camp Haven with clothing, money, food and mostly love. We're about to show a video of one man's journey at Camp Haven. While watching this video keep in mind that the journey of homelessness is different for each individual. Sometimes it's people that end up at the wrong place at the wrong time."

Daniel struggled with drug and alcohol addiction, PTSD and mental health issues. He was a first responder at the Sandy Hook School shooting in 2012 after that tragedy his life spiraled out of control.

“Some of the motels I stayed in were horrible. They had bed bugs, hookers banging on the door at night, drug addicts and alcoholics walking around all night and roaches everywhere. I was tired of being a drunk. I was tired of being a drug addict,” he shared.

Finding himself homeless and alone Daniel knew the only way he would be able to regain his life would be with the support of others in a structured environment. That's when he made the call to Camp Haven.

“Knowing I had somewhere to be and knowing I had somebody wondering where I was kept me from even thinking about getting into trouble. Camp Haven offered that help to get everything together, especially when you have nothing and nowhere to go,” added Daniel.

Today, Daniel is back to being a full-time EMT/paramedic. He is saving money and supporting his children. “Camp Haven gave me back my life” said Daniel.

Wesley Davis did an outstanding job as our auctioneer raising \$22k with the live auction and call to the heart. All proceeds from the evening will fund program and provide for facility renovations at Camp Haven to rebuild the lives of homeless men in Indian River County.

Korkus shared exciting news about the nonprofit's plan to convert the current office space to three housing units and relocating the administrative offices, meeting, training, counseling and dining area to a new building on the south side of the property.

To learn more about Camp Haven, visit www.camphaven.net or call (772) 999-3625 for an appointment to tour the Campus.