



Saint Stephen's Way

A Community for Homeless Families with Schoolchildren

Summer 2024

NEWSLETTER

Issue #18

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OUR MISSION

Saint Stephen's Way provides affordable housing, along with supportive services, to homeless families with schoolchildren in Brevard County.

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Saint Stephen's Way is an active non-profit 501(c)(3) Corporation, Federal Identification Number 45-5390085, providing affordable housing with supportive services to homeless families with schoolchildren in Brevard County, Florida.

In Memoriam: The Heart of a Man

Deacon John was a successful man by any standard, but a good and godly man is measured by his love. **John was love-in-action every day.**

I first worked with John as Daily Bread's newsletter editor until he resigned as Executive Director in 2017, after being diagnosed with cancer. His life expectancy was measured in months, but God had something more for him to do. **The Great Physician, with some medical support, healed John from cancer and gave him a new job: Executive Director of Saint Stephen's Way.**

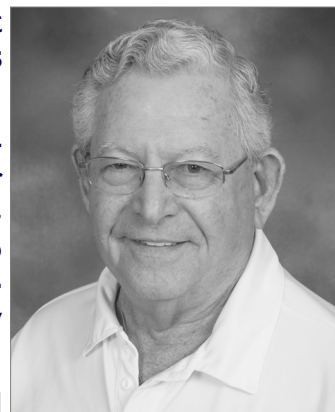
In 2018, John called and told me his healing story and about Saint Stephen's Way. I was amazed at his miracle and positively *thrilled* by what he said Saint Stephen's Way was going to do! He then asked if I would do the newsletter for SSWay. I told him I would absolutely love to work with him toward serving the needs of homeless families with schoolchildren. **I then shared my sincere belief that God had healed him for that very purpose.** There are few moments in life when joy overflows—*this was one of mine.*

Over the years I loved working with John. I appreciated his vision for SSWay and his relentless pursuit of it. **So many things happened that reinforced how blessed this project was,** like the astonishing donation of the \$2 million property. Then there's the extraordinary pool of talented and devoted people who have contributed their knowledge, skills, and hard work, along with generous donations, to bring SSWay to life.

Just because a great idea is blessed does not make it easy. That is why God chose John. I saw John in high spirits, but also dealing with many frustrations. I witnessed him inspiring others, navigating layers of legalities, finding funding channels, and tirelessly carrying the SSWay message across the greater Melbourne area. **A brilliant organizer, John energized people to do more than they thought they could, but he always did so with a loving heart.**

Reflecting on the recent past, **I sincerely believe SSWay would not now be in transition from construction to operations without John in charge.** His determined leadership and unrelenting drive saw the construction project through to completion. If John were here, he would honor all the people so critical to SSWay's success. **The best way for us to honor John is to serve and help elevate the families for whom SSWay was created.**

As with St. Paul, so with John: "The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." **Thank you, John, for showing the world how to love a great idea into being.** Larry Sills, Editor



Transition to Operations: Very Soon!

“Any day now we could receive SSWay’s Certificate of Occupancy,” says the incoming Executive Director, Henry Wertin (photo p.3). “We’re awaiting a few final signatures from the city.” The SSWay team has almost everything ready to begin the intake process for the first 10 families. **“This will be our soft opening; the Grand Opening will be mid to late summer. Stay tuned for a ‘Save the Day’ notice once the date is decided.”** About the *soft opening*, Henry says, “We want the first 10 families to move in, let operations run for a couple weeks, and then fill the remaining 30 apartments.”

After the CO is approved, the SSWay team will load the apartments with the basic necessities, clean any debris, and schedule each family’s orientation. **“The staff will welcome them, have them sign their lease agreement, go over rules and regulations, and show them their apartment,” says Henry.**

SSWay’s Executive and Advisory Boards have been working on an initial intake plan so Programs and Supportive Services are ready. **“Programs are for the family as a whole, while Supportive Services are focused on adults,” Henry says.** Programs provide career development, case management, life skills, tutoring, recreational activities, skill building workshops. Supportive services include assistance with job applications, budgeting, and so much more—SSWay will leverage the services available in Brevard for its families. **“The dream is big:** to eventually have total wrap-around services. But for right now we’re focused on the most important like case workers, job applications, tutoring, and healthcare.”

“This is Eddie Struttmann’s dream and it’s finally a reality,” Henry emphasizes. “The hours he put into this project, and the magnitude of the effort it took to get here, are incredible! **I can’t wait to see the campus full of families. These are very exciting times.”**

SSWAY ADVISORY BOARD

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“A Lot of People have a Great Big Heart!”



Henry Wertin

Henry Wertin says, “Volunteer opportunities are on the horizon as we hone in on the programs that will be available, but we won’t know exactly what volunteers we need until we start operations. And then I’ll be calling for specific help.” In the meantime, Henry has found volunteers he needs to help with the transition to operations.

Jeff Roselip had a conversation with Henry and learned there was a lot of uncertainty on how to handle furniture donations, with no place to put them. “So, I volunteered to create a furniture registry.” That’s how Jeff became the Furniture Coordinator for SSWay.

Jeff created the registry, but there are challenges. “A lot of people have a great big heart and want to help SSWay with furniture donations,” says Jeff. “People are asking if we want their furniture, and

that becomes a conversation.” Jeff always asks if they can hold that furniture until we get the Certificate of Occupancy and we have families who need it. “Around 80 to 90 percent are willing to hold onto it for a little while. Some say they’ll have to donate it elsewhere.”

Asked how the Furniture Coordinator role will change when families occupy all 40 of SSWay’s apartments, Jeff knows the need will continue. “There will be a perpetual need because client families will stay for a year or so, and when they leave they are entitled to take the household goods they have with them to their new home. Then the next family moving in will likely need furniture pieces themselves.” However, during transition this process is evolving. “We are also coordinating to have Love, INC and Ascension Catholic Thrift Store take furniture donations owners cannot hold.”

“If you have some furniture pieces that would benefit our incoming families, we’ll gladly accept it!” Contact Jeff by email at: jroselip@hotmail.com.



Jeff Roselip

Securing New Home “Basics” for Our Families



Mary Broderick

In January this year, Mary Broderick took the lead on a fundraising campaign to obtain the “basics” that every SSWay family will need to start living in their apartments. “I asked Mary to help get the apartments the minimum household items they will need on day one,” says Eddie Struttman. “Things like kitchen utensils, pots, pans, towels, sheets, blankets, brooms, and more.” Mary didn’t hesitate.

“Mary started at St. John the Evangelist church. Fr. John there funded the purchase of towels and sheets,” reports Eddie. Parish members there also got involved by making their own donations. Other churches were petitioned and responded as well,

adding even more donations. Eddie was impressed. “Altogether, Mary was able to collect enough donations to stock all 40 apartments. She did an amazing job.” Of course, the items will not be put into the apartments until after the Certificate of Occupancy has been approved, but they are already in hand to supply the baseline needs for apartment living. “Furniture donations are being handled by Jeff Rose-lip, our Furniture Coordinator,” says Eddie. (See above article.)

Mary did not do all the work herself: she had help from Kathy Cuccaro, Ginny and Tom Clark, and Mary’s husband, Deacon Rick Broderick. Our heartfelt thanks to Mary and her team!



Eddie Struttman

JAKUB's LANDING: River Access for SSWay

Jeff Roselip and his family learned about SSWay on New Year's Eve last year. "We went to Mass at St. John the Evangelist church in Viera," Jeff remembers. **"On our way in we saw a frenzy of people outside. It was about SSWay and how it was working to transform the lives of homeless school-children and their families right here in Brevard County."** Jeff's 26 year old son, Jakub ["JAY-cub"], led his family to St. John since he had been there the week before. **"Jakub asked during our Christmas meal if we had been there and was gushing over how wonderful it was."** Tragically, on that very night Jakub had a driving accident that took his life.



Jeff continues, "After church on New Year's Eve, we contributed to SSWay and we met Father John and Deacon Rick. We quickly bonded over the story of how our son, Jakub, led us to that church." The next day Jeff again met Deacon Rick. "I told him I wanted to get involved with SSWay. A few weeks later we met for lunch, which included Deacon Eddie, SSWay's President." **Eddie asked Jeff if he would be interested in helping with a project at SSWay to build an access ramp down to Crane Creek so that SSWay families can enjoy the outdoor splendor SSWay has to offer. "I told him it would be an honor."** Later Deacon Rick suggested that Jeff name the ramp **"Jakub's Landing"** in honor of his son. **"Such a worthy cause, knowing how it will lift the spirits of these families and their school aged children, and at the same time will honor our oldest son who passed on Christmas Day."** (<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/jakub-roselip-obituary?id=53952708>)

"The goal is to rebuild the dock, plus add a pier that leads from the Holman Community Center to Crane Creek. My family and I made a substantial donation, and with other donations we have just over \$17,000 dollars toward the \$75,000 cost to build it." **Jeff leads the fundraising campaign and tells a story to explain why. "Last summer I asked Jakub what he would do if he won the Mega Millions jackpot which was then worth over \$1 billion dollars. He said he would build housing communities in cities around the world to help end homelessness. This is just what SSWay is doing."**

If you would like to make a donation to help us build Jakub's Landing, please contact Jeff Roselip by email at: jroselip@hotmail.com.

