

## Fighting for Kids Takes Faith

Shelly Pond, Editor  
Good News

When caring for children in crisis, most agree that faith-based foster care services make a difference. When children are placed in a loving family with support from the community and the local church, a dire situation is infused with hope. Proper training and support is critical to success. Besides 4KIDS of South Florida, discussed on page 26, here are three other faith-based foster care agencies making a big difference in the lives of kids.

### Mount Bethel Human Services Corporation

Now in its 25th year of service, Mount Bethel Human Services Corporation (MBHSC) helps low- and moderate-income families in Fort Lauderdale by providing help, hope and healing to those who need it most. Securing safe homes for abused, abandoned and neglected kids by recruiting, training and licensing foster parents is just one of the many ways they support the community.

According to Dr. Rosby Glover, executive director, MBHSC was initially founded to address the issues of minority over representation in the juvenile justice system. It started with a program called TAC, Teen Alliance with Clergy, a mentoring program that partnered African American boys with mentors from the church. The relationships were able to change the trajectory of those youth's lives, and it was a highly successful program for about 10 years until the program was unable to secure state funding.

Today MBHSC maintains a contract with the Department of Juvenile Justice to provide diversion, intervention and prevention services for kids, including the following:

- CINS/FINS (Children in Need of Services/Families in Need of Services), which provides counseling, mentoring, family support and referrals for children with school-related issues, truancy, behavior issues beyond the control of parents, or pending delinquent allegations.
- FYRAC (Family Youth Aftercare)
- Project L.I.V.E. (Learning Interventions Vital to Existence) An aftercare program for youth ages 5 – 17 designed to provide effective diversion and intervention and activities to prevent juvenile delinquency.
- A Family Resource Center that offers a weekly community food pantry, case management and referral services
- SNAP (Stop Now And Plan) A training program for parents, children and sibling groups that helps family communication and emotional control.
- Foster Care recruitment, training, licensing and support.

If children have to be removed from their homes, they believe kids best benefit from the stability that comes from familiarity. "Our program is the only minority program and we do make every effort so that kids can go into homes where they'd have the same cultural experience as in the home with their parents," said Andrea Haugabook, director of programs at MBHSC. "For example, if mom and dad only speak Creole, that's a big part of their life and it means a lot, builds trust and makes them comfortable if things,

such as the meals prepared in the home, pertain to their own cultural experience."

Operating under the core values of spirituality, professionalism, integrity and excellence, MBHSC currently supports 14 licensed foster families with an additional five families expected to be prepared by the summer. They also encourage volunteers to "consider supporting a family by providing wrap-around services, such as donating supplies, babysitting, providing meals or transportation.

All are also invited to their 25th Anniversary Gala on Friday, May 18 at 6 p.m. at the Urban League of Broward County with guest speaker Tonier Cain, founder and CEO of Healing Neen, Inc. and award-winning author. The following day, they will gather at the sprawling Jacaranda Golf Club for their Silver Anniversary Golf Tournament. Players will have the opportunity to win several awards and prizes. For more information, visit [mbhsc.org](http://mbhsc.org).

### Place of Hope

Place of Hope is the largest faith-based, family-style, state-licensed children's organization in the region with more than 345 children and youth in their care. With a presence ranging from Boca Raton to Vero Beach, they serve children and families at several campuses. Through the Homes of Hope program, Place of Hope recruits, trains and supports foster families. In Palm Beach Gardens, West Palm Beach and Boca Raton, family cottages provide family-style residential foster care (emergency and long-term) with a focus on keeping sibling groups together. Joann's Cottage provides a family-style maternity home for young mothers and mothers-to-be. Youth aging out of the foster care system receive residential support and life-skills development through Villages of Hope. Throughout all of these programs, Place of Hope is providing human trafficking education, prevention and recovery.

Place of Hope is investing in the recovery of labor and sex trafficking victims and providing safety for them in their residential programs. They offer presentations, trainings and educational workshops to agencies, businesses and civic groups that have an interest in learning ways to prevent human trafficking. Place of Hope offers "My Life, My Choice" prevention and treatment curriculum provided by the Justice Resource Institute. This is used to empower youth to protect themselves from the commercial sex industry and predators, as well as support survivors in rebuilding their lives. Place of Hope is developing a social enterprise, Hope Coffee, to help combat human trafficking in our community. This social enterprise will create jobs for youth in their care, where they will learn essential life-skills.



Lucille Dixon with her adopted daughters, ages 10, 10 and 11. Ms. Dixon is a champion foster parent. With support from Mount Bethel Human Services Corp. and her church community, she has given love and support to numerous children over the years and raised four biological children of her own. "I've always wanted a big house full of kids, and I'm never happy if my house is quiet," she said.

To find out more, visit [placeofhope.com](http://placeofhope.com) or call 561-775-7195.

### His House Children's Home

Established in 1989, His House is a faith-based organization comprised of 14 residential homes in the Miami Gardens area. Over the past 28 years, His House has restored joy to the lives of more than 11,000 children. And in 2008, the agency opened its His House International program, providing residential care and case management to Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) from Central America and other countries worldwide.

Because they have enough large homes to accommodate boys and girls of all ages within the same community, about 60 percent of their population is comprised of large sibling groups. Here, the children can interact with their siblings every day, often having dinner together and shared activities. Children are placed at His House from Palm Beach, Broward and Dade counties. They welcome volunteers to assist at the homes and also recruit, train, license and support foster families.

Silvia Smith-Torres, executive director of His House, was a foster and adoptive mom as well. She admits, "Wounded children come with a lot of trauma. They need patience and a lot of love, but all of it is rewarding... I knew that for the time I had them, I would make a difference in their lives and a mustard seed of faith would be planted. That's why we need Christian homes."

For information on how you can become a foster parent, call His House Children's Home at 305-430-0085, ext. 240 or email [answerthecall@hhch.org](mailto:answerthecall@hhch.org).