



Saint Stephen's Way

A Community for Homeless Families with Schoolchildren

Spring-Summer 2023

NEWSLETTER

Issue #15

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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.

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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Congressman Posey Commends SSWay

"This is critical work; homeless families with children are among the most vulnerable," says Congressman Posey. He was very impressed with what he learned from SSWay Board members at his office in Viera on 21 February. "He was familiar with local homelessness," recalls Don Lees, "but surprised to learn there are around 3,000 homeless schoolchildren in Brevard County." Seeing the details of SSWay's plan for carrying out its mission, the Congressman expressed confidence in the project plan. "Asked about initiatives to



address lack of affordable housing in the 8th Congressional District, Rep. Posey responded, "I have been fighting to prioritize homeless families with children within federal programs and encourage partnerships with charitable organizations." He is glad to see SSWay's innovating way of helping.

When invited to perform the SSWay campus ribbon cutting ceremony, Rep. Posey replied, "If we're not scheduled to be in Washington, I would be honored." So, the Board is planning to make that happen!

Fundraising Target: The Building Loan

"The SSWay campus buildings are taking shape and the construction will be done soon," beams John Farrell. "We'll have our first tenants moved in before you know it!" What brought SSWay to this point is the building loan that greatly accelerated the construction process. "Our strategy to raise all eight buildings at once is working—our campus should be completed in July."

While construction and other preparations continue, John's focus for the ongoing fundraising campaign is on paying off the building loan. "This is a good news story," recounts John. "Three years ago we were dealing with COVID, increasing construction costs, supply chain issues, and realized we needed a new strategy to avoid much higher costs in the long run. We secured a low interest loan to pay for ALL the construction costs up front to get the campus built this year." (Article continued on page. 2 . . .)

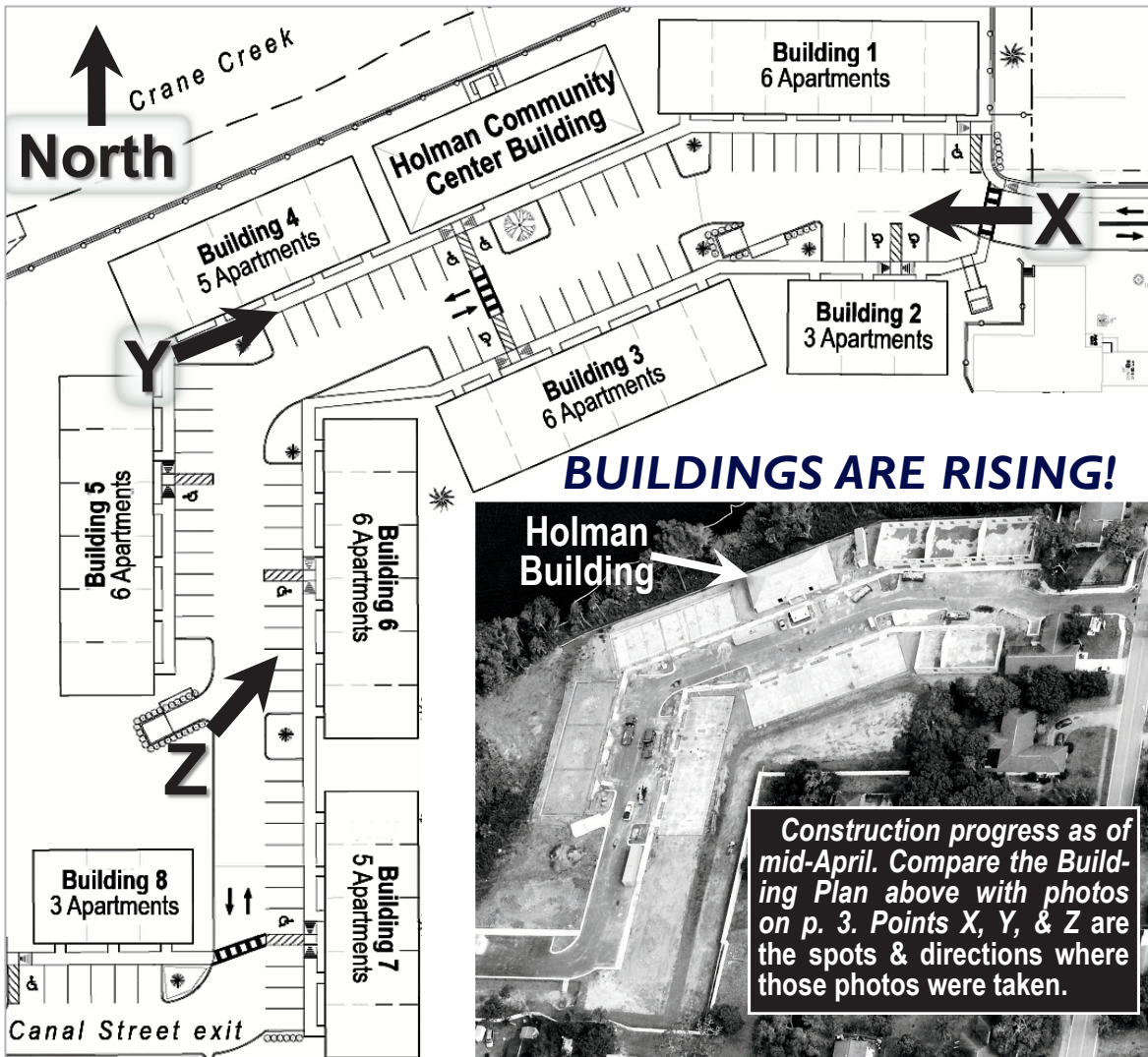
IN THIS ISSUE

▶ Rep. Posey Praises SSWay

▶ Targeting the Building Loan

▶ Buildings Rising!

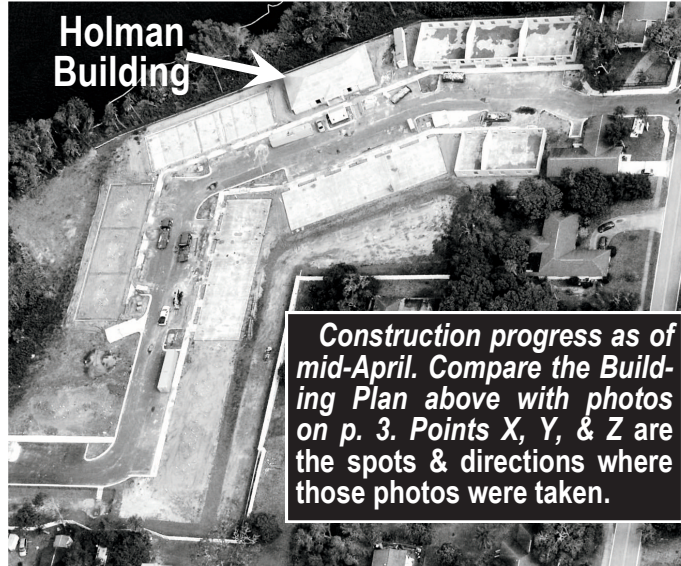
▶ Partners Ready their Support



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BUILDINGS ARE RISING!



John Farrell

(Continued from p. 1 . . .) **“Had we not changed strategy, it would have taken 2 or 3 years more to get the campus buildings completed.”**

Brevard County and Central Florida have very high housing costs, which underscores the need for affordable housing for lower income families. “Brevard County recruited a lot of high-tech companies to move and grow here, drawing higher paid people to this area,” John explains. “Property values increased along with that growth, making it tough for those in services and support jobs to find affordable housing. Without dedicated efforts to build dwellings affordable to the middle and lower income families, the problem has only grown worse.”

“Getting our buildings done years sooner helps in several ways,” John continues. “First, we can bring families into the program sooner, and begin doing

our mission in earnest.” Also, tenant families will pay rent with a portion of their income, and that money will help pay off the building loan. However, the best way to keep costs down is to pay the building loan off as quickly as possible, which brings John to his message from his heart and soul, when he says, **“I am so grateful to all you SSWay supporters who have stayed with us throughout our planning and building. Your faithful support is evident in what we’ve accomplished in just a few years. Just look at the pictures in this newsletter!”**

SSWay is only months away from taking in families and providing tailored support for adults and children: *the purpose of all our efforts!* **“Our fundraising focus from this point forward is paying off the \$8.25 million building loan,”** John emphasizes, **“and that will require your faithful support. Stand with us as we demonstrate to the world a new and better way to help homeless families with schoolchildren, St. Stephen’s Way.”**



Building 2

Community Center

Building 1

LOOKING WEST from just inside Lipscomb St. (Point X on the Plan)



Front Entrance to the Holman Community Center Building



Community Center

Building 1

Building 2

LOOKING Down the Sidewalk from Point Y on the Plan



Community Center

Rebar frame of Building 6 in foreground

LOOKING NORTHEAST from Point Z on the Plan

Services Partners Ready to Support SSWay Families



“SSWay has a great program focused on a problem in Brevard County and across the country,” says Austin Helton, CEO of Brevard Health Alliance (BHA). **“I’m glad SSWay is addressing it and offering the stability necessary for schoolchildren to succeed.”** BHA is a federally qualified community health center that serves 64,000 people—that’s 1 in 10 people in the county. **“We provide Primary Care services: family medicine, pediatrics, podiatry, denistry, psychiatry, psychology, among others, and have 5 pharmacies.”**

John Farrell contacted Austin a couple years ago, told him about the program, and asked if he would become a partner. **“I said ‘Yes,’ and the main place for SSWay’s patient services will be Heritage Park, 2550 S. Grant Street in Crane Creek,”** quite close to the campus. **“Our services are open to anyone. For the uninsured there is a sliding fee scale, depending on income and family size.”**

BHA will make the entire range of health care services available to SSWay’s tenant families. **“We are very proud of the partnerships we’ve created in Heritage Park, with the Department of Health, and the Evans Center, all to provide the best care and environment,”** explains Austin. **“Our partnership with SSWay will go a long way to getting families where they need to be.”**

Genesis House is another partner with SSWay. **“We provide shelter and housing case management to women who have children, are pregnant, or are seniors,”** says Krysten Snyder the Administrator. However, men and boys older than 12 cannot stay at Genesis House. **“Because SSWay focuses on keeping families intact, we will refer families with fathers and older sons to SSWay.”** Krysten recalls that Eddie Struttmann, SSWay President, was instrumental in supporting Genesis House by exchanging ideas for policies and procedures. **“I look forward to partnering with SSWay. It’s going to help fill a large gap in family populations served in Brevard County.”**



“There’s no act of kindness beyond our purview,” says Chip Mendez, the President of the St. Vincent de Paul Society (SVP). This is because SVP has a lot of flexibility in who and how they serve. **“We provide the homeless, downtrodden with food assistance and financial assistance for bus passes, auto fuel, rent, utilities, medical bills, car repair—whatever we deem appropriate. And we have 100 registered volunteers.”** Chip says they call their clients “neighbors because ‘clients’ implies arms-length help. We are like a neighbor since we get to know a lot of people well.” **Asked about SSWay, Chip says, “There’s nothing like it. Allowing families to stay together in affordable housing and providing a hand up and not a hand out is so needed. SSWay views the family in totality.”**



Jerry & Olga Kelly are the Directors at Ascension Social Concerns (ASC). **“We help families in need of assistance such as food, rent, utility bills, medication, gas, and more.”** Some 80 volunteers work at ASC and each year they help about 20,000 people and give out around \$400,000 in assistance, most of that coming from proceeds of the Ascension Thrift Store, and the rest from donations. **“This ministry does a world of good and we love working here,”** says Olga. **“There’s lots of joy and fulfillment.”**

The partnership with SSWay will help family tenants with the full range of ASC assistance as needed. **“We serve a lot of families living on the streets, out of cars—it’s a shame,”** says Jerry. **Olga offers, “SSWay will help address the plight of homeless families with schoolchildren, and help them so they can eventually get off the streets for good.”** *And that’s SSWay’s goal in a nutshell!*