



Saint Stephen's Way

A Community for Homeless Families with Schoolchildren

Fall 2020

NEWSLETTER

Issue #6

<https://www.ssway.org>

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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 referred by the Brevard School System.

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Survey of Families Quantifies the Need

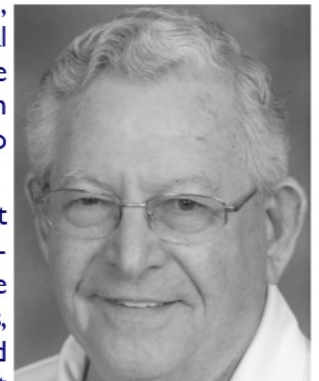
John Fazio attended a SSWay fundraising event in March where he made a donation and put his name in as a volunteer. "John Farrell called me months later and asked if I'd help him conduct a survey. He said Cocoa High School wanted to survey the parents who had children in their school and were homeless, so he volunteered to do it. John, Del Wiese, and myself made the calls. We told them we were looking to get information to see if they might qualify for affordable housing." Afterward, they compared notes and tweaked their call script. "Next, John Farrell got another 459 names to survey, and so he gathered seven more volunteers to help." The 10 of them went to work. "Some phone numbers didn't work, some people had moved, but a lot of them were very open with us." John Farrell analyzed all the information gathered. **Key facts learned:** responding families income levels were, 117 Extremely Low, 22 Very Low, 15 Low, and 9 greater than Low, and they averaged 2.1 children per family. Extrapolating these results to the June 2019 number of homeless students in Brevard, the projected number of Extremely Low and Very Low income families is 1,176, which is SSWay's focus. However, a family must have an income of at least \$2,000 per month to qualify for the SSWay program. There are 56 families from the survey who qualify. Extrapolating this number in like manner, **the estimated total homeless families in Brevard who qualify for the SSWay program is 341.** Since the first site will have 40 family units, it would take more than eight such SSWay campuses to meet the need.



John Fazio

Construction Phases and Site Plan Reviews

"We're close to getting construction permits now, so we need to get ready," says Don Lees, SSWay Executive Board VP. "Right now we are getting all the costs and phases defined for the Executive Board to consider in mid-September." John Farrell, SSWay's Executive Director adds, "As of 26 August we have the total costs for land development, building the Holman Center, and building the 40 family units, but we don't have these broken out into construction phases. We think our initial estimate of \$2.3M for the first phase looks to be pretty close, depending on exactly how that first phase is defined."



John Farrell

Regarding the review status of SSWay's site plan, the St. John's River Water Management District (WMD) required an archeological survey of the property be performed. SSWay hired Archeological Consultants, Inc. (ACI) who did the 3-day survey in August and provided SSWay and the WMD a 73 page report. The good news is the conclusion, which ACI's Vice President, Maranda Kles, Ph.D., explains. "This was an uneventful survey. There is nothing by our interpretation that would impede construction, but St. Johns Water Management District authorities must review the report and make their own determination." John Farrell, Executive Director of SSWay, characterizes the situation. "Because of COVID-19 impacts and some changes at the District, it's hard to know when site plan approval will come...maybe late November." After that, the Army Corps of Engineers will be the last to review and approve the site plan. And yet, no matter the timing, we are making progress—the permits will come!

Next Key Component: Raising Needed Funds

What is the fundraising strategy for achieving SSWay's goals? "BIG!" says Tony Catanese, Honorary Chairman of Fundraising. Recently Richard Ballantyne, a new Advisory Board Member and a former VP, General Counsel/Secretary at Harris Corporation, has joined the fundraising effort. "Our intent," says Richard, "is to talk to people and companies about dona-

tions." Tony adds, "Our focus is on larger donations from corporations and individuals." **This kind of fundraising is critical to raise the millions of dollars needed to create SSWay's new facilities.**

Right now, for potential donors, "We're still in the information-providing stage," explains Tony. "For example, talking with senior leaders at a local large corporation, they had not heard of SSWay. The first step is to let them know what it's about." John Farrell notes, "We're only at the beginning planning stages. We want to work the fundraising efforts at a pace that parallels the construction phases." Asked about a reasonable time period to raise the needed funds, Tony responds, "Can't even guess due to the COVID-19 ongoing impacts. Normally I'd work on planning dates for achieving fundraising goals, but it's very hard to project progress when engaging people is so difficult."

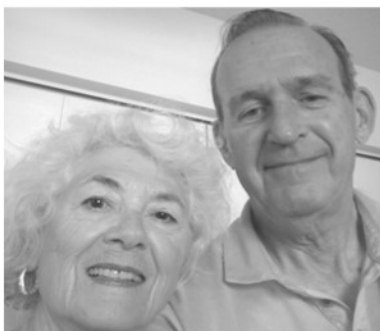
Considering SSWay overall, there are two kinds of funds needed. First are the funds that support the day-to-day and week-to-week work of SSWay. These typically come from fundraising efforts like mailouts, briefings to local organizations and churches, public fundraising events like Golf Tournaments and Golf Ball Drops, and online website donations at www.ssway.org. These funds make it possible for SSWay to do all the work to obtain all the permits, meet all the requirements, create the plans, and marshal local construction companies necessary to get ready for groundbreaking. **Second are the funds that come from corporate and philanthropic donors so we can implement the plans and bring this "Community for Homeless Families with Schoolchildren" to life.** These typically come from corporations and individuals who invest in the local community for the good of all. **Please consider what you can do to offer hope and a better life for these schoolchildren and their families. We are so grateful for every donation, especially during the hardships caused by COVID-19.**



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"It was Always about helping people to become whole"



Don & Linda Lees

In 2016, as Elders in the Tabernacle Church of Melbourne, Don & Linda Lees and Bob & Jan McCarthy felt a calling. Don remembers, "The four of us decided to go on a retreat to pray because the Lord was saying something to us about the property." The Holman Property on Crane Creek belonged to the church. "We felt a drawing, an inclination to use the property to help people in need." They fixed up the office building on the property and had several families in need live there over a couple years. However, they realized they couldn't make the best use of the property on their own, so they started praying for a partner. "It just so happened that John Farrell and Eddie Struttman, President of SSWay came by!" Linda recalls vividly when John and Eddie introduced the idea of SSWay to the Tabernacle Church. "Our hearts 'clicked' with theirs because, since the late 1960's, our church

wanted to see people become 'whole'—have successful relationships, be law abiding citizens, get skills for employment, better manage their affairs." So they did their due diligence, chose SSWay as their partner, and transferred the property. The Lees and McCarthys were all invited to be members of SSWay's Board, and have been ever since. "It was always about helping people to become whole," Linda stressed. "SSWay is a step forward with that by providing family housing and people services to help them become whole."