

Impact Maker

2018 \$100,000 Grant Recipient

Place of Hope: Providing Support and Second Chances to Community Members Who Need It Most

By Sandi Schwartz

While Palm Beach County is one of the wealthiest counties in Florida, you may be surprised to discover how many people are struggling to make ends meet in this region. According to Data USA, 11.6 percent of the population in the county live below the poverty line, a number that is lower than the national average of 12.8 percent. Hundreds of young adults are homeless and without a support system, and many experience abuse and neglect. On top of that, there is currently a severe shortage of affordable housing in this area, particularly for low-income families.

Fortunately, there is an incredible place for those who need support, services, and a safe home to go to now. Place of Hope is a faith-based, state licensed children and families organization offering housing and assistance designed to end the cycles of abuse, neglect, homelessness, poverty, and human trafficking. As one of the largest and most diverse residential children and families organizations in Palm Beach County and the Treasure Coast, Place of Hope helps heal and restore children, youth, and families.

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Charles Bender, Founding CEO and Board Member

Many of the children and families who come to Place of Hope have experienced serious trauma as a result of abuse and neglect. Through a variety of programs, the organization strives to foster hope and confidence rather than despair so they can go on to live healthy, productive lives free from fear, endangerment, and abuse. There are several programs spread throughout multiple campuses, including family-style foster care; emergency placement; maternity care; human trafficking prevention, education, and recovery; educational centers; fitness activities; community outreach; and more.

Over the years, Place of Hope has served over 20,000 children, youth, and families; placed over 360 foster children in forever homes through adoption; and helped over 300 aged-out or homeless youth and families find a place to live.

Founding CEO and Board Member, Charles L. Bender III, explains what makes Place of Hope such a special part of our community: "We are faith-based yet serve people of all backgrounds. This helps drive us to do everything in excellence. In everything we do, we try to emulate what a healthy family can be like. We work hard to try to break the cycles of abuse and neglect—things that can lead people in the direction of poverty, human trafficking, and homelessness. Healthy, personal responsibility is our focus."

In 2018, Place of Hope won an Impact 100 grant to support their Leighan and David Rinker Campus in Boca Raton. This transitional independent living neighborhood opened in February 2013 to provide housing for foster youth, homeless youth, and homeless families with children. Around the time the organization applied for an Impact 100 grant, the Boca campus was undergoing an extensive expansion and renovations. "We were down to raising the last \$100,000 for the Boca project. When the grant came through and we got selected, it ended up that we just needed that amount left. It was truly amazing timing," recalls Charles.

It was perfect timing when Impact 100 PBC's \$100,000 grant was awarded to Place of Hope. It was the exact amount they needed to raise to complete the project.

The Impact 100 grant was used to outfit and furnish one of the buildings, which includes eight two-bedroom units. At this location, Place of Hope provides a supportive and proactive living and learning environment with emotional and material support, goal setting, career planning, and education and employment opportunities for its transitional residents.

In 2021, the new building opened. Impact 100 helped provide bedding, furniture, televisions, kitchen supplies, and more for these eight family units. "Timing was amazing because once we got approved, we were seamlessly able to provide these critical homes and materials to additional residents. That building has been running ever since," said Charles. "This was a true collaborative initiative that resulted in all kinds of other things, such as volunteers and additional donors."

Charles is very happy with the outcomes. "Of the 60 adults living in those units, 95 percent received physical medical exams; 89 percent visited a dentist; 94 percent were employed; 97 percent received either a GED, high school diploma, or were working toward it; 77 percent were enrolled in post-secondary education, and 100 percent maintained stable housing within the first year of being part of Place of Hope."

Charles and his team are so grateful for Impact 100's support. "To be able to build a beautiful building and do it debt-free is incredible. It truly was a big, measurable impact."

Want to get involved? There are many ways to support Place of Hope, from volunteering onsite to organizing a collection to attending charitable events. Learn more at www.placeofhope.com.