

Words of Mercy

Legacy in Action Families Donate \$1.125 Million to Mercy Designated To Purchase 5-Acre Site of New Mercy Village



At a packed press conference on March 6, Mercy Support Services and Legacy in Action made a joint announcement that will change the future of Mercy and improve the lives of many Clay County residents.

At the event, Joelle and Ken Marquis announced Legacy in Action would donate \$1.125 million to Mercy to purchase a building and five acres of property on College Drive in Middleburg. The building, formerly the home of River Christian Church, will be used to house the Mercy administrative offices right away, while the land will be developed in the future for Mercy Village, a 67-unit housing community.

In addition to owning four Clay County companies (Action Roofing, Legacy Dock & Marine Construction, Action Construction, and Legacy Homes), Joelle and Ken, along with Robert and Lori Gunn, launched Legacy in Action. Through Legacy in Action, they're setting an example to inspire other accomplished business people to be more philanthropic with their talent and treasures.

(Continued on page 6)

CHANGES PROVIDE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

We are so excited to share with you the many changes happening here at Mercy! While these changes will bring about slight modifications in our Programs (all for the best!), the Supportive Housing Program remains at the forefront of what Mercy does. Our Call Center Care Agents are assessing and addressing the needs in Clay County daily. They work with our church and community-based partners to provide Clay County residents in crisis with appropriate resources, whether it is housing, food, medical care, veterans services, lending a helping hand and much, much more! Our hearts remain large and our vision to touch lives here in our Community is happening every day!

(Continued on page 5)

A Word From Patrick



Patrick Hayle

We have so much to share with you in this our first newsletter in 2020! The New Year started off with a bang! On the first Sunday of the year, Pastor Eric Jaffe at Journey Church presented us with a check for \$100,000 - designated for the move-in process for the property we had a contract on, but we had not raised the funds to purchase it...as yet! What a test of Faith! That started a chain reaction of very significant changes for us here at Mercy – An opened door for amazing expansion over the next few years, **to meet even more needs here in Clay County.**

Miraculously, God provided the processes and the funds specifically for the move. Today Mercy now owns an existing 7,000 square ft. facility for our offices and future wrap-around social services with land to build 67 apartments.

The article contained in this newsletter will provide more details on this tremendous investment in the future. Our Staff has been working diligently on the transition of our offices and our current residents, to position us for the exciting future that lies ahead for Mercy.

We were in the midst of savoring this wonderful blessing from the Lord, when the impact of COVID-19 got our attention. The world-changing pandemic shifted our focus, our day-to-day activities, and how we interact with others. The general response has been mostly panic and fear. However, the Lord has not forsaken us, so how do we respond?

As we all focus on protecting and securing our families, those of us at Mercy have also been continuously reminded of the many needs of our clients and the children in our system who have no permanent home address to even seek shelter. No means to buy extra food, and no jobs to work from home.

Our hope is that the Coronavirus will be contained quickly, and the changes that we have had to make will hopefully cause us to truly focus on what's really important, and not just continue with life as usual. The health, security and safekeeping of our family and loved ones are important, however, we should not miss the opportunity *to seek the face of God*, and not just His hand. He is our loving Father, protector and ultimate healer.

He gives us a heart for others and times like these can magnify the good in people, the hearts for the hurting, and the community working together to take care of neighbors, and even our invisible neighbors.

We hope and pray for you all – that this season is just a season, and that it helps us to remember our TRUE SOURCE, in good times and in bad. Our Lord and Savior is never surprised at the events we encounter. He loves us in the middle of the valley and all the way through it. We stand on Romans 8:28, and we thank you for your hearts for Mercy as we walk this out together.

May God bless you!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patrick".

R. Patrick Hayle

**SAVE THE DATE FOR THE
2020 NIGHT OF HOPE CELEBRATION**

The annual Night of Hope Celebration will be held Thursday, October 22, at Mercedes-Benz of Orange Park. Please mark your calendar so you won't miss this fantastic event!

A promotional banner for the 2020 Night of Hope Celebration. The background features a festive scene with warm white string lights and greenery. The text is centered and presented in a clean, professional font. The top part of the banner has a semi-transparent white background for the main title, and the bottom part has a white background for the event details.

Please Help Us Welcome Our Newest Board Members

Connie Thomas



Orange Park Mayor Connie Thomas is a Board Certified Licensed Clinical Social Worker both in Georgia and Florida and is presently a private practitioner at Grace House Counseling Center in Clay County.

During her time serving on the Orange Park Town Council, her work ethic and passion for her community has shone through her accomplishments, including:

- Waterways ownership and restoration expanded with continuity under the Environmental Quality Board
- Youth Homelessness resulting in the creation of the Clay Youth Connection
- Preservation of Mid-Century Modern homes and the activation of the now Citizens group TOP MOD
- Preservation of the Orange Park Normal School through the partnership of the Orange Park Historical Society with State Marker Placement at Town Hall
- Creation of the Orange Park Athletic Alumni Association to assist youth in financial need with the ability to play a sport
- Appointment to the Clay County Tourism Development Council and Chair of the Product Development Sub-Committee
- Appointment to Board of Directors of the Northeast Florida League of Cities

A graduate of Orange Park High School, Connie went on to complete her Bachelor's degree at Newberry College and earned her graduate degree at the University of Georgia. Connie and her husband, Tony Steve, reside in the Town of Orange Park, attracted to the beautiful Live Oaks and the surrounding waterways.

Brett Kirkland



Brett holds BS in Accounting & Business Administration and MS in Management degrees from Troy University. Since 2000, he has developed a passion for leadership, organizational development and health, employee engagement and culture development, strategic planning, and more. Brett is also a certified biblical counselor through the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors.

He has served as an accountant in the public and private sectors and held positions in sales and marketing. He then served as the President & CEO of a \$9 million organization. After a merger, God moved Brett into full-time vocational ministry, where he served in local missions with Sherwood Baptist Church, creators of the movies Fireproof and Courageous. While serving in this role, Brett also became a chaplain with Marketplace Chaplains. With a passion for business and ministry together, he joined Marketplace

Chaplains in a division director role for over six years, having the opportunity to be a part of a C12 group.

Now, God has called Brett to chair his own groups where he can invest time and energy into equipping other Christian business leaders to steward their lives and businesses well.

Brett lives with his wife, Carol, in Fleming Island, FL and they have two adult daughters. They worship at the Church of Eleven22, where they lead a home disciple group together, and where Brett serves on the care team.

Both Brett and Connie were elected to the Mercy Board for three-year terms beginning in 2020, and we are very blessed to have them join the Mercy family!

Mercy Support Services Golf Tournament Rescheduled to September 18

To protect the health of all of our staff, volunteers and supporters during the COVID-19 outbreak, Mercy Support Services has made the difficult decision to reschedule its annual Jack Myers Champions for Mercy Golf Tournament from May 8 until September 18 at Eagle Harbor Golf Club in Fleming Island. Watch for more information on social media. Sponsorships and players can still sign up on our website.

**For more information please contact
Jeff Boyer at 904.518.1276 or
Jeff.Boyer@MercySupportServices.org,
or visit the website at www.MercySupportServices.org.**

We Asked God for Mercy



We first found out that I was pregnant with our second child Jonathan. We both worked for Aramark at the time. Shortly after I began to have complications with the pregnancy. In order to prevent me from having a third miscarriage, the doctors advised me to go on bed rest. Even though my supervisors were provided with a doctor's note they only held my position for a week after I gave birth and then hired someone else. We didn't have an emergency fund, and we were slowly getting drowned by all of our bills. We received the notice of eviction shortly after that. My brother and his wife allowed us to stay with them until we got back on our feet. About a month or two after that my husband was let go from his position at Aramark but was able to find a part time position with Amazon delivery. Sadly, the income was not nearly enough to cover the smallest bills. After a couple of months two families in one household quickly became overwhelming for everyone involved. My husband and I knew it was time to move on, but to where. We had been praying for guidance since this began. I didn't want my children

to experience being homeless. My husband went to our Bishop for counseling to try and get a word of advice, strategy, or something but all he received was to pray for "MERCY." Needless to say, that wasn't an answer we were looking for, but we were obedient and did it anyway.

I began the search for a new place while both Christian and I searched for employment. My mom told us about a transportation company that was looking for drivers. Christian was first to get hired then shortly after I was hired. But we were still trying to find somewhere to go asap. Everyone I called told me that they were sorry they couldn't help and referred me to someone else, even Mercy. I was becoming discouraged, so I cried out to God again. "I don't know what else to do I've done the possible, now You have to do the impossible." The next day I received a call from Mercy Support Services saying that they wanted to help my family. All that I could do in that moment is cry tears of joy and say, "Thank you."

By being obedient to what our leader told us, it allowed the mercy of God to shine and come through Mercy Support Services. Since then we have built up an emergency fund, my husband has received promotions at work, we've graduated the program and are now in the Rapid Rehousing program, we've met some awesome Christians, and most of all our faith and trust in the Lord has grown substantially!

We want to Thank God for continuously protecting and providing for our family. Then we want to thank our spiritual leader, our Shepherd, Bishop Willie James Woods, for allowing God to use him to guide us to the right path, as well as Mercy Support Services for opening their hearts and doors to our family. God used each of you to bless us in a mighty way, Thank you!

The Brown Family

Watering Seeds



This program has been like no other I ever witnessed. The genuine outpouring of love and friendship I received here has watered the seeds I've planted for myself. Everything happens in God's timing and God knows your heart. God knew what I needed.

I left my abusive relationship on faith alone and I did not know where I was going to go, I just knew I had to trust myself and God would do the rest. Frances called me with a warm spirit and open arms after receiving my voicemail looking for help. I had a plan for how I would utilize the help offered to me, but you know what they say, "Tell God you have a plan and he laughs." God sat me on my butt many times. He had a plan for me.

I was so eager to start my life and leave the Program, but God was trying to show me something. I met Eva and Jim, my Care Coaches, and they loved on my family so much. If I had left the program, I wouldn't have found my job I have now. I was surrounded by people who appreciated my work and genuinely cared about me. I started to see that everything happens in God's timing. I thought I was going to be able to take over my family's old condo, but God knows my heart. He knows I'm stubborn and would have done anything to get back in my old home. He made sure to let me know that wasn't for me and I was refused that condo. The same day, I found an apartment 3 minutes away from my job and was approved that week.

Mercy Support Services truly aids you on your path to self-sufficiency - from the love you get, to the cleaning schedule provided, to the curfew. It all shaped a better me. I love you all.

- K.W.

CHANGES PROVIDE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH (Cont. from page 1)



HELP...Our call center continues to offer valued resources and assistance where possible to the public, with incoming calls growing daily



HOME...Our internal programs assist with Rapid-Rehousing, Eviction Prevention and Self-Sufficiency Housing where qualified



HOPE...Our Care & Financial Coaches are trained to guide and empower clients back to a place of confidence and HOPE for a bright future

The Coronavirus pandemic is unpredictable and evolving but our God is the same - yesterday, today and forever! It is in seasons such as this that we all have the opportunity to be the hands and heart of God as we help our neighbors in need. Many of our greatest supporters and local leaders have reached out to see how they may help or assist us in making a difference for others during this time. Mercy is seeing a significant increase in the community needs concerning rent, utilities and basic needs of gas and food.

If you feel that you would like to reach out and support these valued programs, give a donation or contact Melissa with your volunteer interests at mwhitaker@mercysupportservices.org

To reduce health risks for our employees and clients and to safeguard our operational and business continuity, the staff is working remotely from home and our office remains closed to the public. They may all be reached by phone and email, still in operation. If you or someone you know have basic needs or questions about resources available to you in Clay County, reach out to the Call Center at 904-297-4052. One of our Call Center Care Agents will respond or get back with you during the hours of 9:00AM until 3:00PM.

Mercy Operations:

- Stay tuned to our social media channels as we will continue to share local updates and opportunities that may benefit the entire community
- Local groups that are meeting by conference calls, by video conferencing such as Zoom, and GoToMeeting and are looking for a guest speaker, we are still scheduling presentations to share the Mercy Mission and impact. Email Jeff Boyer at Jeff.Boyer@mercysupportservices.org
- The Jack Myers Champions Golf Tournament has been postponed until September 18, 2020
- Our Night of Hope Celebration is still scheduled for October 22, 2020
- Our Guardian Partners will be receiving their quarterly update in APRIL which will include current needs and prayer requests. If you are interested in being a Guardian Partner, go to www.mercysupportservices.org/guardian-partners



Artist's rendering of Mercy Village apartments



Dr. Bob Cowie, chair of the Mercy Board of Directors

Legacy in Action Families Donate \$1.125 Million to Mercy (Continued from page 1)



Joelle Marquis announced a gift of more than \$1.125 million to Mercy Support Services from Legacy in Action

A capital campaign to raise about \$12 million will be launched later this year, according to Mercy Executive Director, R. Patrick Hayle. Mercy Village will be constructed in phases as the funds are available, he said, adding that the organization will not go into debt to build the community. Additionally, no government funds will be sought.

Plans are to build a 67-unit complex for Self-Sufficiency Program clients, while also providing affordable housing options for program graduates, veterans, seniors and others referred to Mercy Support Services. The first phase will include 24 apartments, followed by a second 24-unit phase, then a 17-unit apartment building. The administrative area also will include “wrap-around” services for clients including medical, dental, social services counseling, and child care assistance.

“Ken and Joelle have invested their time, talent and treasure in Mercy since 2013,” Hayle said. “They have been instrumental in

Mercy’s growth and development in lots of ways. Their response to the Lord’s prompt to give is an amazingly generous gift that prepares us to touch many more lives, changing futures.

“This investment will pay dividends for our community for generations,” Joelle said. “We did not make this donation lightly and believe we are following God’s call to action. We did our due diligence just as we would do any private equity deal in Manhattan. We’ve served on the board, we know its leadership, its succession plan, the financials, and operations, as well as the organizational development. We are very confident this donation will be a life-changing opportunity for many families in need.”

Joelle and her Legacy in Action partners encourage others who feel led to get involved, explore how they can create their own legacy, or donate to the work of Mercy Support Services and its Mercy Village, to visit www.legacyclay.com.

Hayle also expressed his appreciation to Journey Church and its pastor, Eric Jaffe, for its gift of \$100,000 in early 2020. Those funds were designated specifically for the move-in costs as Mercy transitions to the new facility.

Executive Director R. Patrick Hayle hugs Journey Church Pastor Eric Jaffe



Celebrating Our Champions For Mercy

On Thursday, Feb. 27, at 7:30 AM with a bright sunrise at Club Continental, Mercy held the third annual **Champions for Mercy Donor Appreciation Breakfast**, recognizing our top donors and supporters for 2019.



After an invocation by Todd Hickox, the Campus Pastor at Eleven 22, guests enjoyed a buffet breakfast overlooking a beautiful riverfront view. Joelle Marquis, the Board Secretary, shared a message on our mission of "Touching Lives and Changing Futures" and introduced a moving testimony by one of our clients.

Mayor Connie Thomas, an incoming Board Member, recognized the new 2019 Guardian Partners. Patrick Hayle, Executive Director, and Mike Serig, Board Chair, recognized the 2019 Champions and presented special awards for outstanding servitude to Dr. Bob and Diane Cowie and First Presbyterian Church of Green Cove Springs. Previous recipients of the award for Outstanding Servitude were: Ken and Joelle Marquis, Mike and Shelby Serig, Orange Park United Methodist Church and Grace Anglican Church

Dr. Bob Cowie, Board Vice Chair, inspired everyone with an overview on the move to our new facilities and the exciting future plans for Mercy Village.

The breakfast is always a special time for us to recognize those who are making such an impact right in their own backyard and we look forward to the continual expansion of our offerings to the community and the growth of this event!



Top Right: Patrick Hayle recognized members of the First Presbyterian Church of Green Cove Springs with a special award for their service to Mercy; Right: Board Chair Dr. Bob Cowie and his wife Diane receiving their recognition award from Patrick Hayle; Bottom Left: Orange Park Mayor Connie Thomas and Lisa Ashworth.

Mercy's Supportive Housing Program Needs Your Donations

Our Current Needs List includes:

CHRISTIAN DVDS

CHRISTIAN BOOKS/BOOKS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

CHILDREN'S BOOKS & SCHOOL REQUIRED READING BOOKS

BEDROOM LINENS

- ALL WHITE twin sheet sets (or fitted twin sheets)
- SOLID COLORED twin comforters

NEW PILLOWS

BATHROOM LINENS

- ALL WHITE bath cloths
- ALL WHITE bath towels
- ALL WHITE hand towels

WELCOME BASKETS FOR NEW FAMILIES IN SUPPORTIVE HOMES INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO:

- Full-sized bath soap/body wash
- Toothpaste, toothbrushes & mouthwash
- Shampoo & conditioner
- Deodorant
- Body lotion
- General Cleaning Supplies
- Toilet paper and paper towels
- Hand Sanitizers

LAUNDRY SUPPLIES

- Detergent
- Bleach
- Dryer sheets

Welcome to our new Guardians!!



...getting the right help to people in need!

(904) 297-4052

MERCYSUPPORTSERVICES.ORG

CONTACT US

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info@mercysupportservices.org

We kicked off the first quarter of 2020 by recognizing those supporters who have shown consistent financial giving, as our "Guardian Partners". Guardian Partners are supporters who make a planned commitment to give on a consistent basis - weekly, biweekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually (for the past 3 years)

The benefits of being a Guardian Partner:

- You receive a quarterly email report that shares a more intimate perspective of the needs, prayer requests and accomplishments of Mercy's day-to-day mission.
- You help us save with less paperwork and staff hours in the general budget. With the reliability of a consistent recurring income, Mercy needs fewer appeals, and less reliance on the outcome of events and auctions.
- You receive a welcome packet of promotional swag to help share the brand and educate others on the vital role that Mercy plays in Clay County.

As we pursue expansion with our new programs that change even more lives in Clay County for the better, the Guardian Partners' support and commitment is crucial to the continued growth of our ministry and mission. So, we are privileged to recognize these individuals, businesses and new Guardians. We truly appreciate all of you and your hearts for Mercy.

MISSION STATEMENT

Mercy Support Services is a Christ-centered organization serving the people of Clay County who are circumstantially in need by providing services that guide them to self-sufficiency through a network of compassionate-hearted people and organizations.