



# The Jupiter Courier

Florida's No. 1  
weekly newspaper,  
Florida Press  
Association 2007

THE COMMUNITY CHOICE FOR NORTHERN PALM BEACH COUNTY

<http://jupitercourier.com>

SUNDAY, AUGUST 12, 2007

50 cents

## Project gives hope to young adults

Kids aging out of the foster care system can find a home at Villages of Hope.

BY ERIN FIELDS

Posted on YourHub.com

What used to be a neighborhood eyesore and drug den now represents a dream come true for a young adult who has overcome challenges as a

child, navigating the state's foster care system.

For typical teenagers, the milestone of turning 18 is often happily anticipated, as they transition into the adult world either with a career or accept-

ance into college.

But a foster care child, who has "aged out of the system," is often left alone and out in the cold to find a job, shelter and security. Villages of Hope is just as it sounds, a community of hope for young adults to begin their lives.

The rundown and neglected duplexes off quiet Burma Circle in Palm Beach Gardens suf-

fered from boarded windows, dirt landscaping and plenty of pests.

Each unit, originally constructed in the 1960s, presented a great challenge to the newly incorporated Villages of Hope to create a suitable living space for the incoming residents.

Some units had holes through the walls and the

plumbing had backed up, spilling out into the common areas. As one may imagine, these abused homes needed plenty of work.

But Place of Hope, the state-licensed organization providing family-style foster care, saw potential for something great and the vision of Villages of Hope was born.

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### HOPE

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Shortly thereafter, Villages of Hope incorporated and acquired the property in September 2006. The donations of materials and time catapulted the renovations of the six duplex apartments, four of which are now complete. Once the final two are renovated, volunteer contractors will begin a similar project in the same complex to create an emergency shelter for children in crisis.

Volunteers Donal Livingston, Alex Delange, Donald Hearing, and John Glidden committed their expertise in general contracting, interior decorating, and architecture to making the dream a reality.

Each two-bedroom, one-bathroom unit is about 775 square feet and features tiled floors,

new kitchen cabinets and countertops, new plumbing and central air conditioning, as well as new windows and hurricane shutters.

The newly closed-in carports provide garage space that will house donated furniture for the new residents to furnish their own homes, once they have transitioned into true independent living.

The volunteer contractors work with various donations of materials received by local builders. Donal Livingston, general contractor for the project, took what he labeled "left-overs" and transformed them in to a state-of-the-art kitchen with granite countertops and maple wood cabinets, featuring a display window. The countertops in one cottage had to be cut from more than five different granite scraps, the cabinets from three differ-

ent sizes to fit the dimensions of the tiny kitchen.

"It's truly amazing to see the community coming together to impact the lives of these young adults, who need to transition in to adulthood gradually. They are all too often kicked to the curb because they have turned 18, when they should be able to learn the necessary skills in becoming adults," said Executive Director for Place of Hope Charles L. Bender III.

Villages of Hope is giving this opportunity to these former foster care children, who will now receive a real home base from which to grow.

Villages of Hope, located on Burma Circle in Palm Beach Gardens, provides independent living residential support and life-skills development for emancipated foster and other homeless youth. More than

just a place to live, it also provides a supportive and proactive transitional environment.

Place of Hope is a unique faith-based, state-licensed child welfare organization providing family-style foster care (emergency and long-term); family outreach and intervention; transitional housing and support services; adoption and foster care recruitment and support; hope and healing opportunities for children and families who have been traumatized by abuse and neglect throughout our region.

Place of Hope celebrated its six-year anniversary on May 1, 2007. It is located at 9078 Isaiah Lane in Palm Beach Gardens.

For more information, please call (561) 775-7195 or visit online at [www.placeofhope.com](http://www.placeofhope.com). Villages of Hope was founded in September 2006.