

ESTHER HOUSE REENTRY, INC. NEWSLETTER (#10)

JUNE 2020

These have been very unsettling times. I thought by the time I was writing this Newsletter all would be well – but that doesn't prove to be the case. COVID-19 continues to increase. We cannot be too careful. I don't think any of us could have predicted what the first half of this year would look like and the devastating effects of this disease. We were blessed to have volunteers who continued to cover shifts each day. It was very important to us that our Esther Women did not feel abandoned – especially during “a time such as this.” We tried to keep things as normal as possible, while at the same time ensuring they knew what was going on in the world around them. As human nature prevails, some people took it more seriously than others, but our goal has been always to make sure the safety of our Esther Women and Volunteers came first.

What Has Corona Virus Done FOR US??? - It has blessed us in so MANY WAYS!!!

It's easy to focus on the negative. Here at Esther House we try to focus on the positive. The Esther Women were incredibly wonderful throughout our entire quarantine. They took it seriously – they stepped up to the plate in the most positive way imaginable.

Corona Strong!!!

It started on March 13th when our Probation Officer let us know that we were not to come into the office during the isolation period. He would visit us. We set aside our own desires, took that information seriously and went into “lock down mode.” Our first on-site appointment at Probation was June 9th – almost 3 months later. Even that was extremely cautious

Volunteer Support - Some of our Volunteers continued to provide support, and followed our safety procedures. They came, facilitated classes, covered shifts – day and overnight. Many gave more of their time by covering multiple shifts. All we had to do was ask and they responded. Not only were they called by God . . . they answered that call . . . they understood the need to make sure we did everything in our power to keep our Esther Women safe and free from disease. PRAISE THE Lord!!! We couldn't have kept our doors open without them!!! We thank the Lord for each and every one of them and for His protection during this very difficult time.

Protection from germs – When everyone experienced a backlog in purchasing masks one of our Volunteers led the way in helping them sew masks and make homemade sanitizers.

Recovery Meetings - Instead of going out to attend, we ZOOMed them in the house and became proficient at holding our own meetings.

We Are the Church! – A local church has housed our weekly Bible studies for 11 years (WJTTB – Women Journeying through the Bible). When the virus caused them to close their doors, we began holding our classes on Revelation at the E.H. AND about a dozen people have been joining via ZOOM – we didn't skip a beat, but remained in the Word. Praise the Lord for technology!

Church services and communion - We heard the weekly message by attending online church services from the E.H. We even held Communion together. One of our ladies served us juice and Pepperidge Farm Fish for our elements.

Spending extra time with the Lord – we have taken advantage of this extra down time by each picking something from the Bible to do a deep-dive study about – a few verses, a story, a person. Each spent time reading Scripture, researching and documenting what they have been learning. As ready, this was shared with their housemates on Sunday mornings. We have even challenged our Bible study attendees to see what they might “deep-dive” about!!!



Giving Back . . . Food

We have been blessed by so many and wanted to give back to others in need. We went through our food supplies, culled down our



inventory and tightened our belts so we could give to others. We were made aware of a need by a local couple whose 32-year old daughter overdosed and died in NC. After driving north to bury her, they brought her 3 children (their grandchildren) down here to live with them in their 2-bedroom Wildwood home. Not many can sustain a family of 5 on a food budget for 2. They spent HOURS waiting on the Food Access line to apply for food assistance – only to be disconnected!!! Isaiah 58:10 tells us to “*Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon.*” We were blessed to be the light shining in an otherwise dark place. Seeing the smile on the family’s faces as they loaded our food into their truck was a blessing indeed!



Giving Back . . . Community Service

Even though we couldn’t go out to serve in the community, we had the community brought to us. We sorted and boxed up many pieces of clothing for a local church that provides a monthly give away to those in need. Needs don’t go away because of a virus. Once again, we were blessed in the midst of this pandemic with the opportunity to help others.

Giving Back . . . Crocheting for a Cause

Proverbs 16:27^a (TLB) tells us “*idle hands are the devil’s workshop.*” I



can’t begin to tell you the love that flows from these precious women – how they fill their time and heart with ways to show love to others. They keep busy all the time. Some used their spare time working on tummy time blankets for infants at Leesburg Hospital; prayer blankets - prayed over and given to those who are hurting or ill; infant slippers and hats for Red Cross and mats to sleep on in the forest (front and center in gray). These mats started as plastic shopping bags – cut into strips / tied together and crocheted for those who have no other place to sleep than on the ground.

Always Learning . . .

UCF - Who wouldn't be proud of our Esther Woman for registering at the University of Central Florida? She has already completed one semester (3 classes in Legal Studies). Her final paper for one class was so good that her Professor suggested she submit it to the UCF Department of Legal Studies undergraduate law journal for publication. WOW! And now she is already halfway through her second semester (2 summer classes). Oh! Did I mention that this is in addition to the twice daily classes as part of the E.H. program?

Esther Women are always learning new skills. This quarter we brought in 4 new classes. We are even having fun with Emily Post's Etiquette and Manners. Even though she originally wrote this in 1922, it's been updated 19 times so it is very current. We have a lot of laughs – use props and act out scenarios. I would highly recommend this book for everyone!!! You don't know what you don't know.

How does YOUR garden grow?

A House Mom (also a Master Gardener) has taken one of our Esther Women under her wing, and brought out her green thumb. We have been enjoying the fruits (pun intended) of their labors with fresh veggies. Stay tuned for more outdoor plantings . . .



Mother's

Day

05/09 – 05/10 – Our Esther Women's special day began on Saturday afternoon with the delivery of pizzas, garlic rolls, salads, cinnamon rolls, soda (a rarity) and movie watching. Sunday morning, they were surprised with a masked visitor (hair stylist). Each was treated to a haircut (much needed during this pandemic).

Sunday afternoon they received another surprise when one of our Esther House alumnae and her mother blessed them with a treat (no contact): NY strip steaks, potatoes, corn on the cob, fresh veggies, juices, watermelon and a cake to celebrate them as mothers. This made our hearts swell. It was a huge compliment to the Esther House Program - what a beautiful testimony and blessing to have one of our



alumna asking for the opportunity to give back to her Sisters!!! She even got a well-deserved dose of hugs while visiting with the “Esther Queens” (as our kittens are referred to).

Bursts and Clogs . . .

Since November we’ve been talking about our main bathroom with the cast iron pipes that burst underneath the bathtub. We learned

about patience as we experienced demolition and the waiting for renovation. FINALLY . . . after 7 months . . . we are back in business thanks to: Dove Plumbing, Rodgers Handyman, Lowe’s, Escalante Tile, Inc. and George’s Glass. Here are the before, during and after pictures. What a difference 7 months makes!!!



We continued to have monthly septic issues over the last few years. The time had finally come where we had to decide between the constant issues and monthly service calls or a replacement. As you can see below – we finally chose the replacement and installed a larger septic system. Thank you to All Out Septic Company!!!



Who is in our Spotlight this quarter???

Our Esther Women!!! I think you get what amazing troopers they were throughout this pandemic “lock down.” Their positive, happy

and cheery attitudes were a wonderful example to all who interacted with them. They got along tremendously – they were gracious to the changing rules based upon our Governor’s phases – they did it ALL with a huge smile on their faces. We couldn’t be more proud of them!!!



Our Probation Officer for keeping all of us safe, protected and germ-free by making all his client visits to their homes. In spite of his challenges, he was always cheerful and showed concern for all at the Esther House.

Our House Mothers, Facilitators and Counselors who were able to continue to support us by keeping their own shifts and picking up extra shifts to cover the gaps. As I said earlier, we never wanted our Esther Women to feel abandoned and YOU made them feel loved.

Much of this would not have been possible without our **Leadership Team** attending daily ZOOM meetings to stay on top of and discuss what was happening in our state and county. There were difficult decisions to make – some we knew people wouldn't like – but protection of our Esther Women had to be our priority.

And, of course . . . the largest spotlight always shines brightest upon our **Lord and Savior for all He has done to keep us safe, healthy and connected during this most difficult time!!!**

THANK YOU!!! So many of you have blessed us with your donations this quarter:

"The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed; those who help others are helped." Proverbs 11:25. We thank God for you!!!

† *Individuals*

♡ Individual donors

† *Food Support*

♡ Beyond the Walls

♡ Episcopal Church Women of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church

† *Churches and Groups*

♡ Residents Encounter Christ of Central Florida – special Corona gift

♡ Sacred Fire Ministries

♡ Calvary Chapel Villages

♡ Faith Presbyterian Church

♡ GAP – Your Cause Match Program

You can visit us at <https://estherhouseentry.weebly.com/> Donations may be made to Esther House Reentry, Inc., P.O. Box 682, Fruitland Park, FL 34731. Please continue to keep us in your prayers.

Blessings and love . . .

Judi Courter, Executive Director