



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**St. Matthew's House breaks ground for Fort Myers  
Women & Children's Shelter**

**Naples, FL – January 19, 2024** –St. Matthew's House announces that plans for a Women & Children's Shelter in Fort Myers are underway. A groundbreaking ceremony was held on January 16 to begin renovations on an 8,000-square-foot facility that St. Matthew's House is leasing from Next Level Church. Completion is projected for summer 2024.

PBS Contractors, a Naples-based residential and commercial contracting company, is the general contractor for the renovation project for the new shelter. "We are honored to be a part of the team for this project", says Mario Valle, Senior Relationship Manager with PBS Contractors. "This is the perfect project that reflects our Corporate Promise of "Building Better Lives for Our Team, Our Clients and Our Community."

The Fort Myers Women & Children's Shelter will provide 11 private dorms for women with children and 28 beds for single women. It will include shower and laundry facilities, a central kitchen, playroom, and staff offices. It is anticipated that the shelter will serve approximately 300 residents annually.

According to St. Matthew's House CEO Steve Brooder, the Fort Myers shelter will provide greatly needed services for homeless women and children in Lee County. "The homeless population in Southwest Florida has grown as the lack of affordable housing has reached a crisis stage," notes Brooder. "All of these factors have come together to create a perfect storm of issues for those already on the borderline of economic instability. We also are seeing many first-time homeless, including families and senior women."

"We are privileged to be able to partner with St. Matthew's House as they expand their shelter services into Lee County," notes Michael Overway, Executive Director of the Hunger & Homeless Coalition of Collier County. "The need for these beds has become exponentially amplified over the last year and a half due to the high rent rates and the hurricane impact in our community. St. Matthew's House offers single women and mothers with children new hope and a future filled with new opportunities!"

St. Matthew's House currently operates the only homeless shelters in Collier County – the Campbell Lodge and Immokalee Friendship House – sheltering over 250 men, women and



children every night. The new shelter will serve single women, senior women, and women with children who are experiencing homelessness.

## WOMEN & CHILDREN'S SHELTER ADD ONE

The St. Matthew's House shelter program provides basic necessities, including beds, nutritious meals, shower and laundry facilities, and vouchers for clothing and transportation. All individuals complete an intake assessment to identify unique needs and vulnerabilities. They then work with staff to develop short-term and long-term goals while benefitting from case management, advocacy, accountability, and resource coordination to help them to achieve their goals.

In addition, St. Matthew's House operates community meal services, mobile food pantries, transitional and permanent supportive housing facilities, substance abuse recovery programs, and innovative employment training initiatives.

The goal of all St. Matthew's House programs is to eliminate obstacles and increase access to resources that every individual needs to thrive. Through partnerships with a variety of additional service providers, shelter residents have access to medical and mental health care, job training and placement, educational opportunities, benefits enrollment, life-skills and financial literacy classes, spiritual development, legal assistance and more. With this support, residents begin moving from a position of instability to stability and can direct their attention to achieving long-term self-sufficiency and independence. For information, visit [stmatthewshouse.org](http://stmatthewshouse.org).

### **Dropbox link to images:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/uuw1sxtv7l8fpnck3xpd2/h?rlkey=3wmp10eyyhpmgiv0vw24cuhwt&dl=0>

**Photo credit:** Photos courtesy St. Matthew's House

### **Photo captions:**

- 1) Commander Morgan Bowden, Rick Fumo, Hillary Lemaster, Councilwoman Teresa Watkins Brown, Mayor Kevin Anderson, Steve Brooder, David Minton, Pastor Matt Keller
- 2) Groundbreaking guests participated in signing the wall in the new shelter building.

### **About St. Matthew's House**

St. Matthew's House is a faith-based 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that, for 35 years, has provided innovative solutions to help those experiencing homelessness, hunger, substance abuse, and poverty in Southwest Florida. St. Matthew's House has developed a unique social enterprise model that helps cover administrative expenses so that donations go toward programs and services to help those in need to realize fuller and more productive lives. The organization operates a Food Assistance Program that feeds nearly

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Matthew 25:31-46



15,000 people every month; two homeless shelters; two temporary housing facilities; eight thrift stores; an award-winning commercial catering team, and LuLu's Kitchen, a full-service restaurant that is open to the public. For more information, visit online at [www.stmatthewshouse.org](http://www.stmatthewshouse.org), call 239-774-0500 or follow the organization's social media and YouTube pages.