



St. Matthew's House®

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**You Bring Comfort, Joy,
and Dignity at Christmas**

Christmas Market Creates Special Mornings for Families



Christmas is always a joyous time at St. Matthew's House.

This year, we plan to spread the good cheer in a brand-new way. Our Christmas Market on December 13 will bring men, women, and children from all our residential programs together for an unforgettable holiday experience.

This 12-hour event is more than just a party. There will be plenty of food, music, face painting and cookie decorating for everyone to enjoy. We heard Santa Claus will also make an appearance! However, the main reason for the festivities is to allow our residents to enter into the true spirit of Christmas: by giving.

The Christmas Market is filled with quality donated gifts that residents can buy for family and friends at about 10% of their retail cost. They will have a set budget of their

own cash and "St. Matthew's Cash" they can earn by doing extra chores around our campuses. A volunteer personal shopper will help to select and carry their gifts. Once they have finished shopping, their gifts will be wrapped, and they can join in the festivities!

Because we have 435 residents at our campuses, there will be a limit of 10 shoppers at a time. But the inventory will be continually replenished by volunteers, ensuring that those who shop at the end of the day have the same wide selection as those who came in first.

Bill Curry, Vice President of Development, is leading the charge of this new event. "Everybody gets to be a part of the joy of Christmas," he says.

"They're creating a Christmas morning for a lot of families — even kids of those in our recovery program will be able to open up gifts from their parent who probably hasn't had the chance to give them gifts in a long time when they've been battling addiction."

Ben Bridges, new President & CEO, is excited about this new model. Like Bill, he has been involved in similar programs and believes the Christmas Market model is especially well suited to St. Matthew's House. "It fits well with the crisis to contributors theme," he says. "Even at Christmas, the people in our programs are not objects of charity; they're in developmental programs to relaunch their lives. And being a giver is a part of that relaunch."

Would you like to be a part of our Christmas Market?
Find out how you can help at
stmatthewshouse.org/christmas-market



Family Restoration Program Offers Hope and Healing

When someone is in the grip of addiction, they're not the only ones who suffer. Their families are also deeply affected.

To offer healing for all, St. Matthew's House started the Family Restoration Program for residents of Justin's Place® Recovery Program and their loved ones.

Program Director Liz McDowell (pictured) is a family member of a Justin's Place alumni. "My brother came through the program in 2011, after our older sister passed away from a drug overdose," she says. "I understand the hurt and the pain. I have a heart and a passion to provide support, comfort, and encouragement, to let other family members know they're not alone."

Liz tells us the Family Restoration Program helps residents and their families strengthen their relationships as they learn, grow, and heal together.

"The opposite of addiction is connection," Liz says. "When the family is able to spend time with each other, to go from being disconnected and in isolation to being connected, it gives them a lot of hope. Especially for our men and women who have so much guilt about their pasts. Having the hope that they can reconnect with their children and families gives them a lot of motivation to stay on track with their recovery."



The Family Restoration Program offers a number of resources, including workshops, support groups, and connections to the local recovery community. Residents in the Justin's Place Recovery Program also have access to DCFS-approved parenting classes and a partnership with Level Up Dads, a fatherhood mentorship program.

During the three years the program has been in place, Liz has seen many families heal. She recalls one graduate who now works at our food warehouse and lives in Justin's Village. "This past Christmas, he got to see his children in another state, and that was the first time he'd spent Christmas with them in seven years." She also tells us of a recent Justin's Place graduation with four generations of family present.

If you would like to help more families heal from the trauma of addiction, please make a gift to St. Matthew's House or support our Christmas Market and help make the holidays special for these families.



You Bring Comfort and Joy at Christmas

Dear Friend,

For many here in Southwest Florida, the Christmas season is filled with family gatherings, festive celebrations, good food and joyful worship. It is a time of warmth and light.



BEN BRIDGES
President & CEO

Yet for so many others, the Christmas season is not unlike any other time of the year. Families struggle to make ends meet. Parents have no means to bring a tree or presents into the home. Still others simply have no place to call home. Family members long for restoration but find themselves alone. These stories are heartbreaking ... especially at Christmas!

The good news is that St. Matthew's House is here to help those same men, women and children. We have the resources and compassion they need to move forward in their journey toward restoration. And we can provide the care they need to heal, recover and transform their lives. That includes being able to celebrate the holidays with joy and dignity.

This will be my first Christmas as President and CEO of St. Matthew's House, and I'm excited about the new Christmas Market. I really hope you'll help stock the store and be a part of making Christmas special for the men, women and children in our programs.

Thank you for your support. Your generosity brings comfort and joy to those who need it most. May God bless you this Christmas and in the new year!

Sincerely,



May the God of hope fill you with
all joy and peace as you trust in Him,
so that you may overflow with hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.

— ROMANS 15:13



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St. Matthew's House

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