



NEWS IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**St. Matthew's House Celebrates
First Anniversary of Shelter for Women & Children**

Naples, FL — January 15, 2026 —On January 15, St. Matthew's House marked the New Year by celebrating the first anniversary of the non-profit organization's Shelter for Women & Children located in Fort Myers. Attendees included donors, community partners, volunteers and shelter residents.

The Shelter for Women & Children is located at 3637 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. It provides 11 private dorms for women with children and 28 beds for single women. It also includes shower and laundry facilities, a central kitchen, playroom and staff offices. It is the first St. Matthew's House shelter in Lee County.

During its first year, the shelter served 482 residents, including 340 women and 142 children. All residents had their needs met for the duration of their stay with 413 residents also being connected to additional resources to assist them with their unique individual needs. In addition, 179 residents transitioned to housing of their own or other supportive services, and 118 residents gained or maintained employment during their stay.

St. Matthew's House provides the full range of services and resources vital to ensuring that no one experiencing homelessness, hunger or addiction is alone or without a pathway for their journey from crisis to contributor. The organization operates the only homeless shelters in Collier County — the Campbell Lodge and Immokalee Friendship House — that shelter over 250 men, women and children every night. In addition, St. Matthew's House provides community meal services, mobile food pantries, transitional and permanent supportive housing facilities, substance abuse recovery programs, and innovative employment training initiatives.

According to St. Matthew's House CEO Ben Bridges, "We are seeing many people experiencing homelessness for the first time, including families and senior women. The first anniversary of the Shelter for Women & Children is a milestone that marks a year of hope, healing and transformation for many previously unhoused families. The population of people experiencing homelessness in Southwest Florida has grown as the lack of affordable housing has reached a crisis stage and inflation has increased. These factors have created enormous challenges for many individuals and families — especially those already on the borderline of economic instability."

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 their 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.

(more)

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ADD ONE

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.

About St. Matthew's House

St. Matthew's House is a faith-based 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that, for over 37 years, has provided innovative solutions to help those experiencing hunger, homelessness, and addiction in Southwest Florida. The work of St. Matthew's House includes the five pillars of food assistance, homeless shelters, addiction recovery, transitional housing and workforce development. St. Matthew's House has developed a unique social enterprise model as part of their job training and workforce development initiatives. Social enterprises include thrift stores throughout Southwest Florida, Delicious by Design commercial catering and LuLu's Kitchen, an open to the public restaurant. Social enterprises also generate income to help fund operations. For more information, visit www.stmatthewshouse.org, call 239-774-0500 or follow the organization's social media and YouTube pages.