

The PELICAN

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Will you help? Gateway Community Outreach needs sponsors for April 25 Festival of Giving

Making A Difference



Phyllis J. Neuberger wants your suggestions about people making a difference. Send your recommendations for this column to pelicanfrontdesk@gmail.com

By Phyllis J. Neuberger

PELICAN STAFF

Gateway's President and CEO, Carol Ray, founded this 501c3 agency in 1995. Ray and Gateway's programs have been recognized by Deerfield Beach and Broward County many times for their successful outreach and financial/case management crisis intervention.

The organization's once a year fund raising event, The Festival of Giving, happens Friday, April 25 at the Parkland Golf & Country Club, 10001 Old Club Road.

Guests will dine on great cuisine from about 30 top local restaurants and dance to the beat of Caribbean music. There will be silent auctions, raffles and a chance for a ride on the Good Year Blimp.

To be a sponsor for this event that celebrates 24 years of community consciousness and giving, call Ray at 954-725-8434.

Gateway Community Outreach *The Pelican* interviewed Ray to learn about this agency and what it does. Ray describes the agency she founded.

"Our outreach program is a crisis intervention program for people who suddenly face an economic disaster. A handout when it's needed can avert a family crisis, but it's the hand up that makes us a success. Last year, we serviced 16,000 families affecting 35,000 individuals. In addition, we were able to assist 14,868 seniors."

The main office is located on the second floor of 291



Carol A. Ray [left], founder, president and CEO of Gateway Community Outreach. Last year's Festival of the Flutes charity fundraiser [right] was attended by 350 guests. [Courtesy]

SE 1 Terrace in Deerfield Beach. There are 8 satellite church offices manned by 350 volunteers.

Elizabeth Sinatra, Gateway volunteer and former principal of SOTB Montessori School in Deerfield Beach, had this to say: "Volunteering at Gateway Community Outreach has opened my eyes to the dire need for our community to assist families and individuals who are struggling to attain basic needs.

"I am humbled by the dedication and passion exhibited by Gateway's employees.

"As I interact with the families who come to receive food or holiday gifts for their children, I am reminded that our similarities are greater than our differences and I too rely on human kindness to see me through my day. Gateway insists on preserving the dignity of the families they serve; they work tirelessly as though this is their privilege and not a duty."

Surrounded by stocks of food and supplies, Ray says, "We function with a minimum budget and manage to be a very effective help agency that aims to get our clients back to self sufficiency.



We have a staff of four full-time and one part time person and that includes me. Our volunteers are trained to do intake, the basis of our 90-day plan. They arrange for help with immediate needs and they create a 90-day plan that helps clients regain their places as self-supporting members of the community. We are proactive, focusing on the prevention of homelessness.

"Our clients submit information on income and expenses. They are referred to other agencies for clothing, furniture, eyeglasses, financial and medical assistance if needed. Our goal is to help those facing economic crisis to get the services that will stabilize their households and keep them functioning."

Disasters that can quickly destabilize a family might be loss of a job, an injury, a prolonged illness, a divorce, a fire or some other damaging disaster.

The family that has been getting by is suddenly under tremendous financial pressure. Within a short time their home or lives are torn apart.

Gateway steps in with food, may help with a mortgage payment, water bills, rent and referrals. Education in budgeting and managing finances is included in the 90-day plan.

Ray says, "We are not just for the obvious needy. We help

everyday folks like you and me. For example, we had a school principal who lost her job when her school became a charter. She got behind on her mortgage payments while searching for new employment. Gateway partnered with Consolidated Credit who arranged for a "Hardest Hit Grant" to pay her mortgage for six months. She was eventually hired as a principal for another school and will repay her loan with small, manageable payments.

"Food donations come from many sources such as Whole Foods in Pompano Beach, Publix, Papa John's, Project Life Line, KFC, Wawa in Deerfield Beach and Jimmy John's.

Ray says, "We are supported by private foundations and the federal government program, EFSF [Emergency Food and Shelter Program]. I am the chair of this program."

Asked why she founded this organization, she replied, "I recognized a need through my church. I guess I began caring when I was 13 and lived with my family in the Philippines where I assisted in childcare in a leprosy colony. Gateway has grown into a big agency and operates like any business but there is no profit taking here. My heart and soul is here. My reward is the success of our clients and seeing them regain their independence

and dignity."

Clients say

Larry says, "Gateway Community Outreach has been a tremendous help to me. Over the years, they helped me with food, rent and most of all I am in touch with some of the greatest people."

Claudia writes, "I want to thank Gateway Community Outreach for their prompt assistance in helping me with my rent. I had contacted other agencies and got no help. When I called Gateway, a friendly voice answered and connected me with a wonderful caseworker who was willing to listen and help. I was assisted the same day. They helped me in an urgent matter. This is a caring agency and you are five stars with me."

Nora writes, "Gateway saved my life when I was kicked out of a home I lived in for 20 years. Thank God for angels like Gateway because without them I would be living in a car with my family. Not only did they help me pay my rent; they also provided me with food to feed my family. I'm so grateful to them for helping me get on my feet and keep me on my feet by allowing me to get groceries every week. They truly are angels in disguise."

Thank you, Gateway, for the services you provide to so many in the community.