



The

PELICAN

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Deerfield Beach names a special day as Gateway Community Outreach day



Carol A. Ray, founder, president and CEO of Gateway Community Outreach, helps people in crisis with immediate assistance and then a path to getting them 'back on their feet'. [Photos courtesy of Gateway]

By Phyllis J. Neuberger

PELICAN STAFF

"We are honored to be recognized by our city that we have been serving for over 21 years," says Gateway's President and CEO, Carol Ray, who founded Gateway, a 501c3 agency in 1995. "Our outreach program is a crisis intervention program for people who suddenly face an economic disaster. A hand out when it's needed can avert a family crisis, but it's the hand up that makes Gateway Community Outreach the success it is."

The main office is on the second floor of its warehouse at 291 SE 1st Terrace in Deerfield Beach. There are six satellite church offices, two in Pompano Beach, and one in Coral Springs, Deerfield Beach, Lauderdale and Greenacres.

The Pelican sat down with Ray, a charming and dedicated woman who sits in her office on the second floor of the agency warehouse that's stocked with food and supplies. She says, "We function here with a minimum budget and manage to be a very effective help agency that works to get our clients back to self sufficiency. We have three full time and one part time staff and that includes me. We have about 296 volunteers who help us in a number of capacities. Some are trained to do intake which is the hub of our 90-day plan. Last year we serviced 9,700 families or individuals plus 3,000 seniors who needed help."



Zadia is a volunteer intake worker helping a client with a 90-day plan

Asked how these people find Gateway, she smiles and answers, "through word of mouth, from the 211 phone line and other agencies who refer them to us."

As to where the money comes from, Ray explains, "We are supported by private foundations and the federal government program, EFSC, which is an acronym for Emergency, Food & Shelter Program. I am the chair of this program."

She goes on to talk about the 90-day program that returns people to self sufficiency. "Our intake people not only arrange for help with immediate needs; they also create a 90-day plan that will help clients regain their places as self supporting members of the community. We take a proactive approach that is focused on the prevention of homelessness. Our clients are interviewed and submit information on income and expenses. They are referred to other agencies for clothing, furniture, eye glasses, financial and medical assistance if needed. Our goal is to help those facing an economic crisis to get comprehensive services that will stabilize their households and keep them functioning."

Disasters that can quickly destabilize a family might be

the 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 months their home or lives are torn apart. Gateway steps in with food, and may help with mortgages, water bills, rent and referrals. In the 90 day plan, education on budgeting and how to manage finances is included.

Ray points out that "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 'The Hardest Hit Grant' to pay her mortgage for six months. She was eventually hired as a principal for another school. She will repay her loan with small, manageable payments."

In another case, she cited a musician who was very successful until family illness ate up all of his capital and forced him to relocate. He was in need until he reestablished his musical career. He has since provided entertainment at several fund

raisers in appreciation for the help he got.

Food donations come from many sources such as Whole Food Market in Pompano Beach, two Walmarts in Pompano Beach, Publix, Papa Johns, Winn Dixie, Project Life Line, TLX Company and more.

About Carol Ray

"I guess my caring began when I was 13 and living with my family in the Philippines where I assisted in child care in a leprosy colony. I've volunteered all through my life. This organization came to be because I recognized a need through my church.

"Gateway has grown into a big agency and operates like any business only there's 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 write

"I would like to thank Gateway. I am a single mother with seven kids who were about to become homeless. Thanks to Gateway we were able to keep our home.

"I don't know what we would have done if you hadn't stepped in and helped.

God bless you." Ladell Ragan.

"Thank you Gateway

Community Outreach for providing bill assistance and Wal-Mart gift cards. As a small business owner, dependent on the weather, sometimes it is difficult to be able to keep up with the bills. It is nice knowing that there are places out there that help the community with compassion." Roxanne

Thomas Gaca needed assistance due to high prescription expenses. He and his fiancée are both cancer patients. GCO provided case management, mortgage assistance, food and referrals. NE Focal Point provided clothing and Liheap helped with utility assistance. They were able to buy their medications, maintain their health during chemotherapy and were spared becoming homeless.

In appreciation, he wrote, "I was a client of the FBC food pantry. Without the help of Gateway I don't know how I would have made it. They helped me with referrals to other agencies to receive the help I needed. Thank you for being there in my time of need."

Congratulations on the proclamation, Gateway Community Outreach, and thank you for your service to so many in the community.