

Notables

Society, Charity & Service



GL Homes Director of Community Relations Sarah Alsofrom, GL Homes President Misha Ezratti, 211 Helpline President and CEO Sharon L'Herrou. Photo taken at Boca Bridges, a GL Homes community. [TRACEY BENSON PHOTOGRAPHY]

211 Helpline celebrates 50 years providing the gold standard of caring for the community

"We are here for you." Three numbers, 2-1-1, will access these five reassuring words.

For 50 years, these five words have been the bedrock of a crisis hotline that has steadfastly served our community.

The 211 Helpline is a free, anonymous, 24/7 community helpline and crisis hotline that provides suicide prevention, crisis intervention and referral to community services.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the 211 Helpline has shifted its focus away from hosting hundreds at annual galas. Instead, the agency will spotlight its many services throughout 2021 via virtual platforms and social media.

The founder's daughter, Sarah A. Alsofrom, is honorary chair of the 50th Anniversary Celebration, and her employer, GL Homes, is the premier anniversary celebration sponsor.

Dorothy and Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradshaw along with Jessica and Trent Swift, Taniel and Arsine Koushakjian, and John Deese and Steve Locante are this year's



Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric and Dorothy Bradshaw

chairs. Together, this team will use their time and creative energy to showcase 211's gold standard

of excellence.

Proceeds raised from the 50th Anniversary Celebration support the 24/7 operation of 211 Helpline's Resource Center. It's a lifeline to many.

Charlotte Cohen, 97, knows all about this important lifeline. Since 2008, she has been receiving a daily Sunshine call from 211. Sunshine is 211's free telephone reassurance program to check on the well-being of seniors, the homebound and disabled. For those who wish to remain independent like Charlotte, this communication starts her day off right.

"All of the Sunshine callers are so wonderful, and I look forward to a call every morning," said Cohen.

Founded in 1971 by the late Dr. Robert K. Alsofrom, a clinical psychologist, the organization was originally called Crisis Line. At the time, Dr. Alsofrom, Sister Mary

See 211, 2D



NOTABLES COVER STORIES highlight local businesses, philanthropies, charities and individuals. Stories are sponsored. To be featured, contact Notables Editor Krystian von Speidel at notables@pbpost.com.

Frances Seeley and John Deese trained volunteers to answer the phones. The late William J. “Bill” Brooks was the agency’s first executive director in the early 1970s.

Fast forward 50 years when professional staff handled more than 100,000 calls, texts and emails last year from people living in Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River and Okeechobee counties. That’s 24 hours a day, seven days a week — including holidays. The sun never sets on the 211 Helpline.

Highly trained resource specialists listen to each individual’s situation to provide critical information on available social and community services. Resources include food assistance, medical clinics, foreclosure prevention, parenting information, services for teens and veterans, along with free Sunshine calls for seniors and more. Specialists are fluent in English, Spanish and Creole.

Florida’s largest private homebuilder, GL Homes, is the 211 Helpline’s 50th Anniversary Presenting Sponsor. With a \$20,000 donation, GL Homes gave 211 a shot in the arm to kick start the



Trent and Jessica Swift
[CAPEHART PHOTOGRAPHY]



Arsine and Taniel Koushakjian



211 Helpline Sunshine Call Recipient Charlotte Cohen.



John Deese and Steve Locane

nonprofit’s fundraising efforts for much-needed crisis services that have been stretched thin during this year-long pandemic.

Sarah Alsofrom oversees the homebuilder’s philanthropic efforts, which supports many worthwhile causes throughout Florida and beyond. The company takes great pride in its charitable initiatives, paramount to the GL Homes culture of giving. “So many people have reached their breaking point in the past year. We want to show our community they aren’t alone. 211 is the light at the end of the tunnel.”

TICKET INFO, CHAIRS AND SPONSORS

When: Wednesday, March 24

Where: Virtual

Honorary Chairwoman:

Sarah Alsofrom, GL Homes

Chairs: Dorothy and Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradshaw; Jessica and Trent Swift; Taniel and Arsine Koushakjian; John Deese and Steve Locane

Presenting Sponsor:

GL Homes

Sponsors: Dorothy and Ric Bradshaw, Florida Power & Light Company, Retreat Behavioral Health, Guardians Credit Union, Hardrives, Inc., Kelly A. Cambron Attorney at Law, Jaime and Nancy Lambrecht, Robert and Anne Van Gieson

Contact: Sharon L’Herrou, sharon@211pbtc.org

Website: 211palmbeach.org

FAST FACT

Since the pandemic began, the 211 Helpline has responded to more than 94,000 requests for help. That’s an average of 290 requests each day, representing a 20% increase over the prior year. (March 16, 2020–Jan. 31, 2021)