

Notables

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From left: Adopt-A-Family CEO Matt Constantine, GL Homes VP of Community Relations Sarah Alsofrom with Adopt-A-Family children, Angel and Emely, and GL Homes President Misha Ezratti at Adopt-A-Family's campus in Lake Worth.

'Tis the season for Adopt-A-Family of the Palm Beaches' 40th Annual Tree Lighting Celebration

Proceeds from tomorrow night's event will help fund the myriad services the organization provides to help support and strengthen local families and children in need.

By Steve Dorfman • Notables Staff Writer

For Palm Beach County's philanthropic community, the countdown is on for one of its most beloved traditions: Adopt-A-Family of the Palm Beaches' Annual Tree Lighting Celebration.

And tomorrow night's event at The Sailfish Club in Palm Beach carries extra significance as it marks the 40th anniversary of what has become the de facto kickoff to the season of holiday giving.

"As we celebrate our 40th Annual Tree Lighting Celebration, we reflect on the impact this event has had in our community," said Adopt-A-Family CEO Matt Constantine, who has been with the organization for 22 years, including the last 11 in his current role. "This gala will not only be a celebration of our past achievements but also a catalyst for future endeavors."

Adopt-A-Family was created in 1983 when three local residents (and friends) — Lucy Runyon, Jayne Ellison and Kay Mansolill — heard a gut-wrenching story on a local radio station: A family of four was moving from Texas to Florida, but during their journey, one of the children fell seriously ill. The child required hospitalization and the family's savings were quickly drained as the parents, desperate to care for their child, were faced with crushing medical bills. The family eventually arrived in West Palm Beach destitute and unable to afford housing. They took shelter under The Royal Park bridge.

See ADOPT-A-FAMILY, 2D

ADOPT-A-FAMILY

from 1D

Runyon, Ellison and Mansolill knew something had to be done to protect this family. The three women quickly assisted the family, finding them an affordable home and helping them secure employment. In doing so, the threesome also helped the family reclaim their dignity.

And thus, the nonprofit Adopt-A-Family of the Palm Beaches was born.

Since then, the organization has provided a lifeline to more than 58,000 families — including a variety of services and support to some 4,300 clients in the past year. Here's just a brief sampling of how Adopt-A-Family impacts our community:

- It maintains 112 supportive housing units in Lake Worth, offering affordable housing options for low-income families with minor children.

- Its Housing Stabilization Program provides short-term rent/mortgage assistance paired with case management for families experiencing a crisis that has caused them to fall behind on their housing payments.

- Project Grow, an out-of-school program for elementary students, focuses on reversing the debilitating effects of homelessness and poverty through a holistic approach centering on academic support, emotional development, parental engagement and life-enriching experiences.

- The agency also operates the Program REACH emergency shelter, with 19 units of 90-day interim housing for families experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

The work Adopt-A-Family does is so important that it's no surprise that numerous community partners are also eager to work with them.

For instance, in October, a \$10,000 donation from GL Homes enabled Adopt-A-Family and Feeding South Florida to provide a pop-up breakfast for more than 120 working families at Adopt-A-Family's Lake Worth campus.

"It's been an easy decision for GL Homes to support the largest service provider for homeless families in Palm Beach County," said GL Homes President Misha Ezratti. "Adopt-A-Family transforms lives, ensures stability and keeps families together. Adopt-A-Family provides safe, affordable housing surrounded by



Tree Lighting Event Chair Nancy Kyle and Adopt-A-Family Director of Agency Relations Layren Calvo.

[TRACEY BENSON PHOTOGRAPHY]



Alice Tarone, Paula Michel and Beth Hennessy [TRACEY BENSON PHOTOGRAPHY]

IF YOU GO

What: Adopt-A-Family of the Palm Beaches' 40th Annual Tree Lighting Celebration

When: Tomorrow, 6 p.m.

Where: The Sailfish Club of Florida, 1338 North Lake Way, Palm Beach

Website: aafpbc.org

Contact: Call Sydney Parmet at 561-444-0399 or email sparmet@aafpbc.org



Adopt-A-Family residents Lara Perez with her children, Emely and Angel.

wraparound services, key ingredients that make self-sufficiency possible."

They also provide these services while treating all of their clients with the respect they deserve.

"Adopt-A-Family changes lives every day — and does so with extraordinary compassion for people who are experiencing some of the toughest times of their lives," said GL Homes Vice President of Community Relations Sarah Alsofrom. "During the holiday season, we hope everyone will consider making a donation to this one-of-a-kind charity."

Adopt-A-Family CEO Constantine is always quick to point out that "the work we do is not possible without the support of our community. And that's why we're so grateful to GL Homes and all our partners for walking with us as we help support families in crisis. Collectively, we are making a difference — every single day."