



WOMEN'S REFUGE
OF VERO BEACH

Psalm 46:1 God is our refuge and strength

June 2024

From Rescue to Redemption

Growing up, God's name was spoken, but His love was not felt. Legalism ruled my life. I was raised to stay on God's good side, constantly fearing His wrath. I experienced all types of abuse at the hands of my mother. The person who was supposed to love, protect, and nurture became an instrument of fear, punishment, and control. I learned to see God through that same lens. And while I called myself a Christian, I would have summed up my walk with the Lord as a duty to do right and judge those who did wrong.

As a teenager, I got a glimpse into a different type of faith. Reading the Bible, I learned about grace; something different from the twisting of Scripture I heard at home. God gave me courage to share about the abuse my siblings and I endured. Child protective services became involved, and I went to live with another family at 17 years old. I left my siblings behind, something that I had dreaded from the moment I spoke up and carried the guilt for years. Though I tried to stay in contact with them, my mother kept me from speaking to them. Because my role as a big sister was stripped away, I didn't know who I was or what my purpose could be. My college roommate told me about the Refuge along with how it had changed her and her sister's lives. Could it have the same effect on me?

I first came to the Refuge in 2019. God worked wonderfully in those two weeks and showed me how much I needed Him. Later, I returned to complete the three-month program and found a level of healing that I didn't know was possible. I took an honest look at what I had endured, rather than trying to hide it away or cover it with spiritual platitudes. I realized my desires for love, affection and safety were meant to be fulfilled ultimately through Christ.

Finally, I began to feel the Lord more fully. I now saw Him as the Good Shepherd who loved me dearly, whose heart broke with mine over the injustice in the world. The Refuge helped me to realize that while God does orchestrate trials to refine us, our good and His glory are always at the center.

Complete surrender to God felt like the scariest thing I could do. However, with the support of the Womens Refuge, I made that step towards trusting God as He wrote my story. My healing has not been perfectly linear. Like most survivors of abuse, I have had ups and downs, relapses, and victories. I now work as a nurse in Virginia. I'm writing a book about my journey to freedom and am involved in helping children in the foster care system. The Lord brought redemption and beauty from the brokenness. I am thankful He has restored my relationship with many of my siblings, as well as my biological father. If you are reading this and wondering if you too can find healing, the answer is yes. Believing in Jesus doesn't make all your problems go away. But you will never again be alone in your pain. God tells us clearly in Scripture that no one is too far gone. I am proof of that, and you can be too. While you are still breathing, there is still time for hope. Would you consider surrendering today?

Autumn Carlson
Former Resident



Monthly Message from the Executive Director

In our April newsletter, I took a step of faith in making an appeal for additional funding to meet our necessary budget needs. We were at a critical junction with our budget \$50,000 short. The outpouring of response to the request was an answer to our prayers! In addition to some seasoned partners, we received new contributors to our ministry that truly renewed our hope in those who believe in what God is doing through this ministry.

This ministry is unlike most others in that we meet with deeply wounded souls who desperately need to be heard, offered the hope we know is in Christ and guided on the healing path through biblical

counsel and support. I'm encouraged by the life-changing lessons learned and applied such as you will read in the testimony of Mark and Florinda in this newsletter.

Because of your faith in God and in this ministry, many lives have and will be positively changed with the help of the Holy Spirit through the Women's Refuge. We have reached a positive balanced budget which was approved by our Board. Thank you is such a small way to express my deepest gratitude for the outpouring of support we have experienced. Your kindness has meant so much to us.

God bless you, *Diane A. Ludwig* – Executive Director

Forgiveness Sets Us Free

While Mark and I sought counseling at the Refuge, our counselor guided us through some very painful childhood memories. After learning what God's meaning of forgiveness was, we were able to forgive the people who have hurt us in our past. We also recognized that those childhood hurts were carried into our 47-year marriage and we needed to forgive each other. That's when the work really began!

Mark and I learned what the gospel says about trauma. We're learning how to address brokenness and find healing, God's purpose for marriage, steps to resolving conflict and how to communicate more effectively in marriage.

The most powerful and hardest thing for me to accept was "Who am I" in Christ. I couldn't trust anyone and had no close friends I could confide in. I realized that I didn't even know how to describe

what feelings I had because I was too busy trying to survive and raise our family. What I have gained so far with biblical counseling at the Refuge is I have no secrets from Mark, I am able to trust him more, and he is now the best friend I have always wanted.

Mark learned that his severe emotional and physical abusive childhood drove his alcohol and drug addictions for 60 years. He has gained freedom in Christ and knows his Heavenly Father loves him. Our marriage is the healthiest it has ever been after a lot of hard work together with the Refuge.



Mark and Florinda



We were blessed to be invited to the Women's Tea at Fellsmere Bible Community Church on May 4th. We thoroughly enjoyed a wonderful time of fellowship, delicious food, and the beautifully decorated venue and tables. A special thanks to Linda Mein who is our liaison and prayer warrior for the Refuge.

Thank you, ladies, for a special time together!



GOLF 25TH ANNUAL TOURNAMENT
BENT PINE GOLF COURSE

SAT 9/21 2024 SAVE THE DATE

WOMEN'S REFUGE OF VERO BEACH

Monthly **MEET & GREET**

CAMPUS TOUR • MEET THE STAFF • LEARN MORE

When?
WEDNESDAY
May 29, June 26, July 31
10:30-11:30 AM

Where?
WOMEN'S REFUGE CAMPUS
1850 LEMON AVENUE
VERO BEACH, FL 32960

RSVP: (772) 770-4424

WWW.WOMENSREFUGEVB.ORG

SHOP • DONATE • VOLUNTEER

Proceeds Benefit Women's Refuge of Vero Beach

WOMEN'S REFUGE RESALE SHOP

1615 10th Ave. VB, FL
(772) 567-3598 | wrstore@gmail.com
Mon: 10 AM - 3 PM
Tues - Fri: 10 AM - 4 PM
Sat: 10 AM - 3 PM

Unique Finds

VINTAGE, ART WORK, HOME DECOR

Located directly across from our Resale Shop
(772) 610-5017
Mon: Closed
Tues - Fri: 10 AM - 4 PM
Sat: 10 AM - 3 PM

poshmark.com/closet/womensrefuge | chairish.com/shop/wrresale

Unique Finds Close Out Sale

The time has come to consolidate and move our operations into the Women's Refuge Resale Shop. The closing date for Unique Finds is the end of June. **The Resale Shop is not closing!**

We'll continue selling on the Chairish web site and the Resale Shop will feature a special Chairish section displaying our unique and vintage items. We are thankful for the amazing donations we continue to receive from our community!

Come and check out the great sales! All furniture is 75% off until the end of June and everything else is 60% off.

Come see an amazing one-of-a-kind pool table at our store. The table has quite a history steeped in theater and film, previously owned by James Goldman, an award-winning playwright and screenwriter who hosted gatherings with actors and celebrities. It boasts a custom made wooden sectional top that converts to a dining table that seats 18 people.

Thank you again for your continuing support.

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