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Mary's Shelter Provides Young Mothers Much More Than Housing

Stuart, Fla. – Recently, three very special young women received their GED's through the Martin County Adult High School program. What makes their story different from the many other graduates on the Treasure Coast is that in addition to being dedicated students, these women once found themselves pregnant, homeless and unsure of how their futures would unfold.

The three women found help and guidance from Mary's Shelter of the Treasure Coast. Mary's Shelter is a transitional home that provides residential and non-residential services for pregnant women and women with newborns. Many of the women who seek assistance from the local nonprofit are in need of a supportive environment because they lack suitable housing or favorable family relationships. All pregnant women who are 18 or older are welcome regardless of race, religion or nationality.

In 1983, Jan Lindsay founded the first Mary's Shelter in West St. Paul, Minnesota to give struggling pregnant young women a place to stay. Since the opening of that Minnesota shelter, four Mary's Shelter's have been opened in cities across the United States. Mary's Shelter of the Treasure Coast has welcomed young mothers in need since 2010.

From the outside, the shelter looks just like any other home in its Stuart community. But on the inside, up to 10 women are learning valuable skills that will not only help them become independent, but also teach them how to bring a healthy baby into the world.

The organization prepares mothers with newborns for independent living situations and works with them to build a vision of hope for their future through empowerment, education and training. The first step in this process begins as soon as the women are connected with Mary's Shelter. Staff and volunteers help with goal setting to develop a plan of action for each woman, focusing on achieving the skills necessary to live independently. While some mothers choose to

take an educational route by completing a GED program or pursuing higher education, others choose to volunteer and receive job training in order to enter the workforce.

“Our overall goal is to help our mothers become independent and successful in all areas of their lives,” says Executive Director Gina Thompson. “By assisting these young ladies with advancement opportunities, we can ensure that they will have the skills necessary to become self-sufficient, productive members of the community.”

A tenet of the shelter is “a hand up, not a hand out.” The residents at Mary’s Shelter are enrolled in a point system that reinforces education on budgeting, while allowing them to pay for rent, food and supplies for their babies. The young women earn points after successfully completing volunteer hours, shared shelter chores or completing hours at their place of work.

Since the shelter began accepting residents in April of 2010, more than 60 women have been helped, 23 healthy babies have been born and all of the mothers served have left the shelter as stronger and independent women.

For more information about Mary’s Shelter, or for volunteer opportunities, contact Gina Thompson at 772-223-5000 or visit www.maryssheltermc.org.

About Mary’s Shelter

Mary’s Shelter of the Treasure Coast is a transitional home centrally located in Stuart, Florida that provides residential and non-residential services for pregnant women and women and their newborns who are in need of a supportive environment because of a lack of suitable housing or favorable family relationships. While caring for women in need, Mary’s Shelter prepares mothers with newborns for independent living and a vision of hope for the future through empowerment, education and training.

To connect with Mary’s Shelter visit www.facebook.com/maryssheltermc. For more information, call 772-223-5000 or visit www.maryssheltermc.org.

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Suggested Photo Caption: Tierney Mackey, Judith Teater and Ruth Hill are the most recent residents of Mary’s Shelter to receive their GED.