

spring 2024

## *Rising Above:* Krystal Phillips finds Hope and Stability in Greater Heights Affordable Housing

In the heart of Florida, where sunshine and struggles at times intertwine, one woman's journey stands out as a testament to the transformative power of affordable housing. Meet Krystal Phillips, a resilient individual who, after escaping domestic violence, embarked on a path toward a brighter future at Neighbor Up's Greater Heights apartments. Krystal's story unfolds in March 2022 when, seeking refuge from an abusive situation, she found herself in Florida. After navigating through three different shelters, Krystal heard about Greater Heights. Hopeful for the prospect of a better life, she saw a photo that sparked a glimmer of optimism. "Wow, those apartments are really nice and quaint," she thought. Shortly thereafter, Krystal made the life-changing decision to move into Greater Heights. "It's been the best thing that's ever happened to me," she shares. With her daughter Amelia, aged 3, by her side, Krystal describes a sense of peace and stability. "I feel safe with her walking around and riding her bike," Krystal affirms, highlighting the significance of a secure environment for both physical and emotional well-being.

The Greater Heights Apartments offer affordable housing for workforce families and seniors on the site of what was once a block notorious for criminal activity. In a joint project with the City of Melbourne, Brevard County, the Florida Community Loan Fund, and generous area development professionals, the dilapidated, asbestos-riddled structures were demolished; in their place is now a haven of clean, well-maintained, and colorful apartments, where 53 residents find refuge. Rents are set on a sliding scale, based on income. This assures parents that they will be able to afford a place to live – a place where their children can grow and flourish!



Having dependable, affordable housing has allowed Krystal to focus on rebuilding her life. She currently works at a local retirement community. Having a stable home has become a cornerstone for her personal and professional growth. "Thanks to the security of a roof over our heads, I can work full-time, send my daughter to a daycare, and continue my education; I am truly blessed to be working towards a brighter future for my family through Greater Heights... people here are kind, quiet, friendly, and it's a respectable community." When asked about dreams for the future, Krystal says, "My aspiration is to own a property, advance my career, and provide my daughter with a happy and healthy childhood."

Krystal's journey exemplifies the transformative impact that affordable housing can have on individuals and families escaping adversity. It is more than just shelter; it is a catalyst for personal development, empowerment, and the pursuit of dreams. Through stories like Krystal's, we witness the importance of providing affordable housing as a stepping stone toward creating thriving communities and empowering individuals to break free from cycles of hardship.



# Nurturing Potential:

## The Transformative Power of Mentorship in Afterschool Youth Programs

Ask a child in Neighbor Up Brevard’s DOCK program what they like most about the DOCK, and you’re most likely to hear someone’s name. They may cite “Mr. Flores”, the DOCK Youth Program Manager. Or “Mr. Kevin”, the DOCK Teen Program Manager. Or it may be cooking instructor “Chef Vallette”, or “Ms. Sherry” who greets them each day at the reception desk and helps them sign in. They might tell you about one of the Garden Club by the Sea volunteers who have introduced them to the wonders and beauty of gardening. Or “Ms. Talia”, the licensed mental health therapist who leads group and individual sessions for children facing ACES (adverse childhood experiences). You might hear about a tutor who they look forward to seeing, whose investment in their lives has helped them achieve academically. Or they may tell you about the leader who makes Bible stories come alive and who has helped them know more about God’s love.

In the realm of afterschool youth programs, the role of mentorship emerges as a powerful force. According to [youthmentor.org](http://youthmentor.org), students who meet regularly with a mentor are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and 46% less likely to use illegal drugs. Mentorship not only provides guidance but also instills confidence, resilience, and a sense of belonging in kids. Mentors become role models, offering insights, encouragement, and a listening ear.



Mr. Kevin Demarais, Teen Program Manager with DOCK youth.

At the DOCK, 92% of participating families are led by single mothers. Therefore having male mentors, like DOCK Program Managers Emmanuel Flores-Rivera and Kevin Demarais is especially important. Male mentors can serve as relatable figures, demonstrating resilience, perseverance, and success despite potential challenges. To Emmanuel, this rings true; “When mentoring young minds, I aim to inspire. Once inspired, children start dreaming and setting goals. Through mentorship, we instill the importance of continuous improvement and growth, essential for realizing their dreams. The diverse activities and events at the DOCK aim to spark a lifelong love for learning and cultivate individuals ready to chase their dreams!”

Positive mentorship also contributes to the development of crucial social and emotional skills. Through meaningful interactions with mentors, kids learn effective communication, conflict resolution, and teamwork. These skills are not only vital for academic success but also lay the foundation for their personal and professional lives.

As these children grow into responsible citizens, the positive ripple effect of mentorship becomes evident in their contributions to the community. To Mr. Kevin Demarais, mentoring is all about pouring into our youth,

*“My greatest joy is to educate, encourage, and empower future leaders. Every day I am motivated by every opportunity to draw out the gifts that our future leaders have yet been able to tap into.”*

Would you like to know more about volunteer or mentorship opportunities at the DOCK? Please contact Millie at [volunteers@neighborupbrevard.org](mailto:volunteers@neighborupbrevard.org) or 321-253-4214 x202.



Mr. Emmanuel Flores, Youth Program Manager with DOCK youth.





## LaShaundra McGhee:

### A Visionary Leader Takes the Helm at Neighbor Up Brevard

In a momentous announcement for the Brevard community, LaShaundra McGhee is set to assume the role of Executive Director at Neighbor Up Brevard, beginning April 1, 2024. With a wealth of experience in the nonprofit sector dating back to 2000, LaShaundra brings a proven track record of leadership and community engagement to this significant position.

LaShaundra's journey in the human services sector has been nothing short of impressive. She has held various leadership roles such as Director of Quality Assurance at the Early Learning Coalition in Brevard, Director of Home and Community-Based Services at Aging Matters in Brevard, Director of Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency at Housing Authority of Brevard County, and Campus Support and Outreach Director at Elevation Church- Melbourne. In each role, she demonstrated her dedication to community building, cultivating meaningful relationships, creating high-quality programming and services throughout Brevard County, and fostering a positive change in the community.

In May 2021, LaShaundra was appointed as the Operations Director at Neighbor Up Brevard. In this capacity, LaShaundra has continued to demonstrate her ability to lead with vision, passion, and a deep commitment to the community. She has played a significant role in elevating the overall performance of the organization; developing and implementing strategies to strengthen programs and services; and, streamlining and integrating processes to improve efficiency within the organization.

LaShaundra is a proud graduate of Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University (FAMU). While attending FAMU, she also served in the Florida Army National Guard then subsequently enlisted in the United States Army Reserves. LaShaundra's military background is as diverse and impressive as her professional journey. She served as a military police officer, automated logistics specialist and contact manager before being honorably discharged after twelve years of service.

With a rich history of accomplishments, a commitment to community development, and a passion for making a positive difference, LaShaundra McGhee is poised to lead Neighbor Up Brevard forward. Her appointment marks not only a personal achievement but also the start of a promising chapter in the ongoing story of community development and collaboration in Brevard County.

As LaShaundra prepares to take on the role of Executive Director, the Brevard community can anticipate a continuation of her exceptional leadership. LaShaundra notes, *"I am excited to succeed Lynn as the next executive director of Neighbor Up Brevard and look forward to leading the organization into a new phase of growth and impact!"*

In 2022, **Community Foundation for Brevard** supported a pilot project, enabling us to provide mental health services. We contracted with a licensed counselor to provide weekly trauma-informed individual and group therapy onsite at the DOCK. Not only did this prove very helpful for the youth, their parents/caregivers began to express interest in receiving therapy too. A Christian counselor volunteered to serve older adolescents and adults on a weekly basis at the DOCK. Seeing the positive impact, Neighbor Up secured a grant from **Health First Foundation**. This has allowed therapy to continue and even expand at the DOCK!



Neighbor Up Brevard team receiving a check from Paula Just, CEO with Health First, for Mental Health Programming.



Hope inspired. Community driven.

## Board 2024

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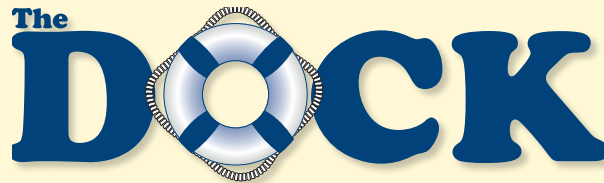
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# Impact Report



**DORCAS OUTREACH CENTER for KIDS**

The DOCK served **128** unduplicated youth, ages 5-19 after school and for summer camp.

The DOCK provides safety, academic support, and myriad enrichment activities. Most DOCK youth face the challenges and disadvantages of living in poverty. The DOCK is helping to level the playing field and setting youth on a path for academic and lifelong success!



**92%** of households are led by single moms.

**97%** of families served by the DOCK live in low-income households.

**89%** are racial minorities.

*The DOCK is leveling the playing field and setting youth on a path for academic and lifelong success!*

The DOCK graduated **6** seniors in **2023** and has graduated **34** since the teen program opened in 2018.



The average GPA of DOCK youth is **2.77**.

**100%** of DOCK students advanced to the next grade for school year 2023-2024.

### How we do it:

- A **holistic program**, aimed at cognitive, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual development.
- The DOCK was **open as a safe haven for 908 hours** after school and during the summer.
- DOCK youth received over **220 hours of academic support** and **80+ hours of character education**.
- The DOCK served over **2,000 lunches** and over **8,000 healthy snacks**.

# 2023



**Greater Heights**  
Apartment Community

**Affordable housing matters!**



The **average fair market rent** for a two-bedroom in Brevard is **\$1,492.**

The **full-time wage necessary** to afford such an apartment is **\$28.69 per hour, or \$59,660.**

For a **single mom working a minimum wage job (\$12/hr)**, that would require a **95.6 hour work week.**



The **average household income at Greater Heights is approximately \$17,352** and **rents are based on income.**

Total number of Greater Heights **residents: 53** (32 adults, 21 children).

*Greater Heights is a great place to live!*

Crime-related calls to the police **have dropped by 92%** on our block since the DOCK and Greater Heights were built.



*Gifts From The Heart*

**Seasonal Christmas stores stocked with affordable toys**

**2 Locations.** Parents from over **195 families** purchased gifts for their children.

This program is the effort of **7 partner agencies.**

**515 children** received **3 gifts each.**

**Number of volunteers: 95**

Quote from a GFTH customer:

*"This was an amazing place and team. Without this program, my kids wouldn't have anything under the tree. Your team is wonderful and truly a blessing."*

## Steve Lum:

### Stepping Up for Slug-a-Bug and the Community

When Steve Lum took over the Slug-A-Bug business he had already absorbed the importance of philanthropy. His Christian faith spurred him to help those in need. Also, he had watched as Slug-A-Bug's founder had embraced a philosophy of caring for others, fostering deep community connections. "Take care of your brothers, and they'll take care of you," became Steve's guiding principle.

To that end, Slug-a-Bug's success is measured not just in profits but in the positive impact it has across our county. At Neighbor Up Brevard (NUB) Slug-a-Bug offers discounted services, participates in our special events, and provides monthly "Community Partner" financial contributions.

Steve points out that Slug-A-Bug's commitment to Neighbor Up goes beyond business strategy; it's rooted in the belief that sometimes people need a "hand up". Also, giving *changes lives*. "From the standpoint of giving, you give – it changes you. And it changes the trajectory of who and what



you're investing in," he states. Steve sees this especially at play in the Neighbor Up's DOCK program. "The positive changes, especially in the lives of children, showcase the organization's ability to change trajectories," he says.

In a world where corporate social responsibility often feels transactional, Steve's story stands out as a testament to genuine community commitment. His legacy goes beyond business success, emphasizing the importance of leaving behind a thriving and uplifted community.

Gratitude abounds for partners like Steve Lum, whose contributions empower programs like the DOCK and Greater Heights for the betterment of Brevard. To explore how you can become a Community Partner, reach out to Andrea at [development@neighborupbrevard.org](mailto:development@neighborupbrevard.org) today.

### Special thanks to our Community Partners—donors who make a monthly pledge to Neighbor Up Brevard and provide necessary operating funds for the organization:

Mary & Rick Blucker  
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**GIVE WITH CONFIDENCE!**



Neighbor Up Brevard is proud of our Guidestar platinum seal.





Lynn pictured with Zh'Kari Cobb, a former DOCK student who stopped by to visit while on a college break.

## Letter from the Executive Director

Theologian Frederick Buechner once said, “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” For me, over the past 23 years, that place has been Neighbor Up Brevard and the communities and people we have served. As founding director, I’ve had the joy and privilege of having a front row view of the incredible things that the Lord has done! The Biblical prophet Isaiah told the Israelites that if they embraced humility and generosity, and sought justice for others, God would enable them to become “repairers of the breach, restorers of streets to dwell in.” (Isaiah 58:12).

This admonition was a driving force for the founding board members, and continues to inspire our board and staff. Neighbor Up seeks to walk alongside community leaders and bring resources to bear on the needs that they have identified in their neighborhoods. To date, this has resulted in construction and operation of a variety of programs that are vital to neighborhood restoration. Neighbor Up programs have been aimed at after school & summer child care, teen mentoring, affordable housing, crime reduction, food security, and health & wellness.

To those of you who have been partners to Neighbor Up Brevard, **THANK YOU!!** Your support has brought hope and opportunity... and that has positioned children and families to thrive!

Recently I announced my upcoming retirement. I am so grateful to have been called to Neighbor Up! And I am super confident and excited for Neighbor Up’s future as LaShaundra McGhee takes the leadership baton! We have worked closely together for almost three years and I can attest to her faith, heart, and skill. (Check out the article in this issue about LaShaundra.) While I won’t be coming into the office, my support for Neighbor Up will not be absent! Michael and I will continue our prayer and financial support. We are Community Partners, pledging to give monthly. I hope each of you will remain committed also. Or if this newsletter is your introduction to this “hope inspired, community driven” effort, please join us as friends of Neighbor Up. You will make a difference!

With joy and gratitude,

*Lynn*

Lynn Brockwell-Carey



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FRIDAY, MAY 10TH  
SUNTREE COUNTRY CLUB

300 Country Club Dr. Melbourne, FL  
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

*Invites to follow  
for sponsorship opportunities, please reach out to  
Andrea Sasson, [development@neighborupbrevard.org](mailto:development@neighborupbrevard.org)*

