

THERESA, THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTRODUCTION,
AND FOR ALL THE WORK YOU ARE DOING TO HELP
THE HOMELESS POPULATION HERE IN OUR
COMMUNITY.

MAYOR REGALADO...

COMMISSIONER SARNOFF...

DR. AHR...

DEAR FRIENDS...

IT'S MY PLEASURE TO JOIN YOU TO LAUNCH THE
CAMILLUS HOUSE MAT PROGRAM...

AS WE TAKE YET ANOTHER STEP TOWARD HELPING
TO "END HOMELESSNESS NOW" IN MIAMI-DADE
COUNTY.

THERE IS AN OLD PROVERB THAT SAYS IT'S
BETTER TO LIGHT ONE SMALL CANDLE THAN TO
COMPLAIN ABOUT THE DARKNESS.

SO IMAGINE WHAT CAN HAPPEN WHEN SEVERAL
CANDLES COME TOGETHER TO LIGHT THE WAY,
AND THAT'S WHY WE ARE HERE.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY HAS BEEN A LEADER IN PROVIDING SERVICES AND RELIEF IN THE EFFORT TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS IN OUR COMMUNITY.

ONE SUCH EFFORT DATES BACK TO THE EARLY 1990S WHEN VOTERS IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY APPROVED A ONE-PERCENT FOOD AND BEVERAGE TAX THAT IS DEDICATED TO HELPING THE HOMELESS POPULATION.

I THINK WE ARE ONE OF THE FEW COMMUNITIES IN THIS COUNTRY WITH SUCH A TAX.

WE ALSO HAVE SEVERAL ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING CAMILLUS HOUSE, END HOMELESSNESS NOW, AND OTHERS, THAT TOGETHER WITH OUR OWN HOMELESS TRUST, PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE CONTINUUM OF CARE FOR THOSE WHO ARE HOMELESS.

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THE HOMELESS, WE USUALLY REFER TO THEM AS STATISTICS, IN THE ABSTRACT.

BUT IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THE HOMELESS ARE PEOPLE TOO, THEY'RE JUST WITHOUT HOMES.

IT'S A DIVERSE POPULATION WITH DIVERSE NEEDS.

THIS IS WHY WE NEED DIFFERENT APPROACHES, BECAUSE THE CAUSES AND REASONS FOR HOMELESSNESS ARE VARIED, AND THE SOLUTIONS NEED TO BE VARIED AS WELL.

IN 2007, WHEN DR. AHR OPENED THE PARKING LOT TO CAMILLUS HOUSE...

HE OPENED THIS HOUSE TO THE HOMELESS POPULATION THAT WAS OUTSIDE AND ASKED THEM TO COME ON IN.

HE OFFERED THEM A PLACE TO SLEEP THAT WAS NOT OUT ON THE STREET, HE GAVE THEM FOOD, CASE MANAGEMENT, AND GAVE THEM CARE...

AND TODAY, WE LAUNCH THE MAT PROGRAM, WHICH IS JUST ANOTHER ONE OF THE MANY WAYS WE CAN ALL HELP...

IT'S ANOTHER WAY TO OPEN THIS HOUSE SO THAT THOSE OUTSIDE CAN COME ON IN.

WE HAVE ALREADY MADE SIGNIFICANT REDUCTIONS IN THE NUMBER OF PERSONS WHO ARE STREET HOMELESS IN DOWNTOWN MIAMI BY OVER 25%.

BUT AGAIN, THESE ARE MORE THAN JUST NUMBERS, THEY ARE REAL PEOPLE WITH REAL STORIES.

WE HAVE KEITH COOPER HERE WITH US.

KEITH WAS ONCE HOMELESS FOR TEN YEARS I BELIEVE...

AND HE WAS ABLE TO GET HELP BECAUSE CAMILLUS HOUSE OPENED ITS DOORS TO HIM.

KEITH NOW COMES HERE REGULARLY TO HELP RUN THE SHOWER PROGRAM, AND CONTINUES TO GIVE BACK AS A VOLUNTEER.

I'M TOLD HE TAKES 2 BUSES TO GET HERE.

KEITH SAYS HE REALLY CAN'T SAY THANK YOU...

HE SHOWS HIS APPRECIATION BY DOING WHAT HE'S DOING, BY HELPING OTHERS.

BECAUSE SOMEONE GAVE KEITH A HAND, HE NOW EXTENDS HIS HAND TO HELP OTHERS.

DR. AHR ALSO SHARED THE STORY OF THOMAS BARTLETT, WHO AFTER COMPLETING HIS RECOVERY THROUGH CAMILLUS HOUSE IS NOW LIVING AT THE MATT TALBOT HOUSE WHERE HE'S NEVER BEEN LATE WITH HIS RENT PAYMENTS.

THOMAS IS ALSO GIVING BACK BY VOLUNTEERING AND HELPING HIS PEERS IN RECOVERY.

THE BEST PART IS THAT WHILE THOMAS REALLY WANTED TO BE HERE WITH US TODAY, HE CAN'T...

BECAUSE HE'S AT HIS JOB, WORKING!

KEITH AND THOMAS ARE JUST TWO OF THE MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE COME OFF THE STREETS, BEEN HELPED, AND ARE NOW ABLE TO HELP OTHERS.

THEY BOTH REMIND US OF WHY WE ARE HERE TO SERVE...

AND WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT TO ALWAYS DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO SERVE AND HELP THE HOMELESS, HELPING THEM ACHIEVE THE DIGNITY THAT ALL PEOPLE DESERVE.

LET ME FINISH BY THANKING THERESA SARNOFF ONCE AGAIN FOR HER WORK WITH "END HOMELESSNESS NOW..."

MAYOR REGALADO, COMMISSIONER SARNOFF, DR. AHR, THANK YOU FOR WELCOMING ME AS WE LAUNCH ANOTHER WAY TO OPEN CAMILLUS HOUSE TO THE HOMELESS POPULATION...

AND I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH ALL OF YOU TOWARD THE DAY WHEN WE CAN END CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS!

