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CHAPMAN PARTNERSHIP, HOPE SOUTH FLORIDA

Helping the homeless get back on track

BY CRYSTAL CHEW
Special to the Miami Herald

Desmond Meade had a drug problem. And when his mother died of a stroke in 1996, he soon found himself living on the streets of Miami.

"To be homeless it kind of dehumanizes you and impacts you psychologically," said Meade, 48. "There's this divide to want better for yourself, but I didn't have the ability to get better until I sought treatment."

By his late 20s, Meade

began receiving treatment through Chapman Partnership, a nonprofit organization that provides services such as housing, healthcare and job placement for Miami's homeless community. Since 1995, Chapman has helped more than 100,000 people, including 20,000 children. Its campus-like setting houses 5,000 people and provides more than 875,000 meals annually.

Organizations like Chapman and HOPE South Florida, a Fort Lauderdale-based nonprofit that helps families in immediate crisis, have helped give homeless people a second chance.

While going through the

drug treatment program at Chapman, Meade attended Miami Dade College and graduated with his associate's degree in 2010. He then enrolled at Florida International University and graduated last fall.

Today he is leading efforts to restore voting rights for formerly convicted felons in Florida. Felons and ex-felons lose their right to vote in Florida, Iowa and Kentucky.

Meade credits his success to Chapman.

"Because of the role that Chapman Partnership played in my life, I am able to do things now that impact the lives of other peo-



Chapman Partnership, a nonprofit, holds a culinary arts training class at its Homestead location.

ple," Meade said.

Chapman Partnership has a 64 percent success rate of integrating homeless people into society.

"A lot of people are just one paycheck, disaster or tragedy away from being on the streets," Meade said. "Nobody grows up thinking they want to be homeless."

Nicole Howson agrees. After completing a program with Women in Distress, a

Broward shelter for domestic abuse victims, and finding the courage to leave an abusive relationship, Howson found herself with nowhere to go. She had to send her 2-year-old daughter to Georgia to stay with relatives while she tried to save money for an apartment.

"That was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do," said Howson, 25,

Getting involved

Chapman Partnership: 1550 N. Miami Ave. Miami, 305-329-3000, www.chapmanpartnership.org.

HOPE South Florida: 5110 N Federal Hwy #102, Fort Lauderdale, 954-566-2311, www.hopesouthflorida.org.

who is a brand ambassador for a promotional company.

Howson was relieved when she received a call from HOPE South Florida. On any given day, HOPE South Florida provides housing to about 100 households. Last year, HOPE provided 31,000 meals and served 150 single mothers.

Through HOPE, Howson got an apartment, and after two months was reunited with her daughter. She now plans to enroll in school to study journalism.

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