

For Immediate Release

**Previous Youth Counselors Unite:**

***Form New Nonprofit Organization to Serve Ocean and Monmouth County***

Toms River, New Jersey is home to a new nonprofit organization – Choose love. Celebrate life. A Foundation for Youth and Families, Inc. CLCL Foundation was founded by five previous Ocean’s Harbor House shelter Residential Counselors and one volunteer. Together they bring a collective experience of over 57-years’ experience with youth ages 10-19 and families in crisis, plus years of education, volunteer work, and lived experience. In recognition of the community’s needs, six Board of Directors have formed an agency grounded in transparency, integrity, and service.

Per Ocean County Youth Services Commission presentation with DCP&P on February 2, 2024, minor youth are sitting in hospitals, detention centers, in mixed populations at a Newark shelter, with state-wide alerts for resource parents unsuccessful in finding adolescents with behavioral or emotional issues proper placement, in their own county. There are only 19 available beds in the ENTIRE STATE OF NJ for youth needing clinical support services. DCP&P and CMOs have no where to place these kids, except with hotels or landlords accept state money and vouchers. It has been 188 days since you have had access to emergency shelter and safe harbor throughout Ocean and Monmouth Counties.

CLCL Foundation seeks to restore access to youth sheltering services in Ocean and Monmouth County and expand preventative support options for youth and their families. The housing program will be therapeutic, actively treat or prevent family crisis, and restore cohesion using family empowerment methods. CLCL Foundation’s design will be evidence-based, trauma-informed, actively antiracist, culturally competent, and inclusive to all youth and family types. By using individualized therapeutic services and offering interactive groups, CLCL seeks to bolster each client’s strengths and help them on their path to self-improvement. This type of program allows for homeless, runaway, or unwelcomed youth to access safe refuge while implementing a prevention program to reduce runaway and homeless youth by encouraging mental, emotional, social, and behavioral health. Leading with love and focusing on the positive outcomes possible, this agency will uplift struggling youth and their families to support them as they build their own foundation. Other pledges include providing a running banking register online, so donators know when their money was received and how it was spent – there will never be a doubt as to how donation funds are utilized. CLCL Foundation also pledges to ensure any eligible person in need receives services, if requested. Any rejections will be reviewed independently to confirm ineligibility and assess unmet needs within the community.

In a sweet twist of fate, the Board Treasurer, Lisa Scala, was the Residential Counselor on duty when Ms. deSousa ran away on December 3, 2001, staying hours after her shift ended at midnight to complete the intake. Then, twelve years later, Ms. deSousa started working at the same program and Ms. Scala became her supervisor. Now friends, Ms. deSousa recognized the previous shelter could not be restored, and joined by Ms. Scala, recruited other professionals to establish a new organization to address youth housing needs in Ocean and Monmouth County. The previous relationship between these 5 former coworkers and volunteer contributes to CLCL Foundation’s quick incorporation, solid structure, and budding presence in the community. CLCL Foundation hopes to join established partnerships, work with groups, and join existing volunteers because even at our best, we are only PART of the solution. Right now, that part is very much needed.

CLCL Foundation’s committed members are working to restore and expand services, turning Helplessness into Power!

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