

Heart for Winter Haven 2025 Year In Review



The Beatty Beat

BRAD BEATTY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This has been a banner year for collaboration in our city as we work to end child homelessness! Our partnerships with the City of Winter Haven and Polk County remain strong. We undertook a new initiative in partnership with the Polk County School Board and Winter Haven High School with a program to serve homeless students and their families. We continue to serve the Women's Care Center of Bartow with ongoing counseling and support, and have added serving Positively U, The Mission of Winter Haven, Women's Resource Center, and the Neighborhood Service Center with regular counseling for their clientele. The Center for Well-Being has provided Mental Health First Aid certification classes for the Boys' and Girls' Club, United Way of Central Florida, and several other local organizations.

We have exponentially increased the number of volunteers in our programs and created many more pathways for connecting these individuals with our community. Likewise, we have strong relationships with local foundations like Baycare, Advent Health, Givewell, SouthState Bank, Citizens Bank and Trust, Truist Bank Foundation, and more.

Though these relationships are incredible, none is more important to us than our relationship with **YOU!** We are honored to partner with you and are so thankful for the trust you have placed in us. As this new year approaches, we want you to know that we are committed to engaging all people of faith and good will in our community, to see our city become the best version of itself and ensure that every child in every family has the chance to know the goodness of God's kingdom being manifest in our home town of Winter Haven. ❤️



Financial Literacy / Job Readiness

TABITHA KEITH, DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS

This has been Heart for Winter Haven's most impactful program year yet! Our neighbors showed courage and commitment as they completed Job Readiness and Financial Literacy courses. Our first summer financial literacy camp, a beautiful vision brought to life by Bee Gallison, gave teens a strong foundation of confidence and practical skills. Through partnerships with SouthState Bank, Southeastern University, and Chase Bank, participants were equipped with tools to build stability, grow their savings, and learn how to make their money work for them.



This year's growth was supported by a devoted team of volunteers whose consistent presence shaped every class. We especially want to honor Dale and Misty McCracken, Pascale Derenoncourt, Ken Steckkert, Jorge and Tori Salazar, Bunny Reeves, Darlene Jagger, Willie Anthony, Joy Kruppa, Carroll Bennett, Jordan Palzer, Jean Caggiano, Sharon Wrice, Cedric Cox, Myriam Martinez, Jana Schrock, Brad Dantzler, Kirk Varnadore, Rose Pagan, Candice Brown, and Isolda Antonio for their faithful service.

I am also deeply grateful for our staff. Brian Flores, Bree Serpenti, and Lisa Albury keep our programs running with compassion and consistency. They lift our students, our volunteers, and many days, they lift me. Their presence makes this work possible.

As we look toward 2026, we are praying for more facilitators, more volunteers, and more churches willing to host classes so that opportunity continues to grow across our community. May God be glorified in every life changed, every step forward, and every door He opens in the year ahead. ❤️

- **108** program graduates
- **18** teens in our first financial literacy camp
- **35** matched savings accounts totaling \$11,000
- **5** Chase Bank workshops with **45** attendees
- **25** learners enrolled in SEU's Faithful Financial Living course



Elevate Learning Lab

TABITHA KEITH, DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS

This year brought meaningful growth within Elevate, shaped by strong partnerships and new opportunities for our community to learn and heal together. Our collaboration with Polk State College launched a free digital literacy course taught by PSU professors, giving neighbors valuable skills for today's digital world. We also introduced a Freedom Group for those in recovery and a weekly support group for neighbors living with mobility challenges, offering spaces of encouragement, connection, and shared strength.

Elevate continued to serve as a gathering place for our community. We were honored to host the Garden Club of Winter Haven, biweekly Person of Jesus studies, and meetings for organizations like Better Together, the Housing Partnership of Winter Haven, and Rising Together Inc. Their presence added life and purpose to our space throughout the year.

We were also grateful to partner with Lift Alliance to offer a Medical Billing and Coding course, opening new pathways for meaningful work. Five students received scholarships, and seven graduates completed the program prepared for next steps in the healthcare field.

Our partners make Elevate a vibrant, welcoming, equipping place. Together, we are strengthening neighbors, building confidence, and sending people into our community with renewed purpose. ❤️

Community Kitchen **BRAD BEATTY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Heart for Winter Haven, in collaboration with Living Word of Faith Community Outreach Center, is seeking to expand its food pantry services by developing a community kitchen! This initiative will provide hot meals to low-income families in NE Winter Haven, addressing a critical gap—especially on Sundays when no known hot meal services are available. Additionally, the kitchen will serve as a hub for distributing food commodities to families in need. Thanks to grants from the Duckwall Foundation, Advent Health Foundation and the HUD Unsheltered Challenge Grant, we have funds to rehab the kitchen and purchase needed food and supplies. Look for a grand opening and volunteer opportunities in the near future! ❤️

Community Kitchen cont.



Client Care Management

BEE GALLISON, DIRECTOR OF CARE

Throughout 2025, the Care Team has continued to live out our mission of providing hope, stability, and opportunity for families throughout Winter Haven. ❤️

- **186 care management sessions** were conducted, providing families with personalized guidance and access to essential community resources.
- **13 families** successfully transitioned from homelessness to stable housing.
- **28 at-risk families** remained in their homes and achieved stability through proactive support.
- **7 hotel vouchers** offered temporary shelter while long-term housing solutions were secured.
- **4 families** received utility assistance, preventing service disconnection and housing disruption.

Our two pilot programs have been especially impactful this year:

- The **CHSI Program** completed its first year, providing rental vouchers that make high rental rates affordable for participating families. This initiative not only stabilizes housing but also supports families in increasing income and building financial independence before they complete the program.
- The **Caring Beyond the Classroom** pilot, launched at Winter Haven High School in August, helps identify homeless or at-risk students and delivers on-site support services. The program works directly with students and their families to secure and maintain stable housing, ensuring children can focus on learning and growth.

Mental Health

KIMBERLY SMILEY, DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR WELL-BEING

This year, it has been our privilege to walk with individuals and families—providing compassionate mental health care that nurtures healing, wholeness, and renewal. Through counseling, wellness programs, and community partnerships, we aim to foster hope and restoration in relationships—with self, family, and God. Each story of growth reminds us why we do this work: to create spaces where hearts are mended, faith is strengthened, and lives are transformed.



We are grateful for the dedication of our clinical interns—**Aaron Nicholas, Craig Harrell, Johnice Saunders, and Laura Downes**. Each year, we are honored to provide supervision and hands-on training for aspiring clinicians pursuing degrees in Marriage and Family Therapy, Clinical Social Work, and Mental Health Counseling. We also celebrate **Bunny Reeves**, one of our valued Center for Well-Being volunteers. As a certified Life Coach and Mental Health Coach, Bunny shares her gifts through our Elevate classes and by offering individual coaching sessions to clients, impacting many lives. Together, we look forward to serving our community in 2026! ❤️

- **1,183 Counseling Sessions**
- **16 Life Coaching Sessions**
- **49 Mental Health Workshops/Classes**
- **4 Mental Health First Aid Trainings**

As One! Vision Banquet

JENNIFER COWAN, CHAMPION RELATIONSHIPS

Tuesday, November 11th, brought the coldest temperature on record in 40 years for Winter Haven... but it was a HOT time at our annual AS ONE! Vision Banquet! All sectors of our city (families, businesses, churches, nonprofits and city leaders) gathered to make a difference in the lives of local families and children, including those experiencing homelessness.

Our special thanks to our MC, Richard McAdams, City Manager T. Michael Stavres, The Suarez Family, and all the child actors from a local elementary school who shared the story of homelessness through the eyes of the most vulnerable among us... children.

If you missed the event, we are grateful to our friends at Heartland Church who make it possible to share the full night's excitement via the QR code. Also, if you would like to help us reach our fundraising goal, please visit heart4wh.org/banquet today! ❤️



A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS!

2025 HEARTS IN BLOOM SPRING EVENT

Presented by Thornhill Rathbun Wealth Management

Salt Strong Redeemer Winter Haven Scott & Jennifer Thornton See Jesus Ministry
Venue 650 Higgenbotham Auctioneers

2025 GOLF TOURNAMENT

Presented by SouthState Bank, with Post-Event by Alan Ulch and The Extra Closet

A Praying Life Wealth MD Saddle Creek Logistics Services Scott & Jennifer Thornton
ADM / Florida Chemical Haven Worship Center RIG Roofing Chevrolet Center
Pinnacle Sales Group Redeemer Winter Haven Dunson Harvesting Inc. Covering Force Sales WPC
Veritas Press Harrell Adjusting Services Trinity Presbyterian Church Culvers Winter Haven
Campbell Rice Filmmaker JSM Services Inc.

2025 AS ONE! VISION BANQUET

Presented by Chevrolet Center Title Sponsor, SouthState Bank

Thayer Family Foundation Redeemer Winter Haven In Memory, Bethany Avery Rutledge
Harrell Adjusting Services RIG Roofing Haven Worship Center AdventHealth
And all our incredible Table Sponsors!

AND FOR THE GENEROSITY OF

SouthState Bank City of Winter Haven United Way of Central Florida Polk State Collab Lab
BayCare Polk County Government AdventHealth Foundation Redeemer Winter Haven
Grady & Leslie Martin Homer & Annette Thompson Legacy Spirit Lake Community Church
Scott and Jennifer Thornton RIG Roofing An Anonymous Friend

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