

HOMEtown News

The Official Newsletter of the
House of Mercy and Encouragement

Fall 2021



From the Director



I have a special place to pray. I call it my prayer chair. That is the place where I meet Jesus every morning. The routine goes something like this. With eyes half open, I stumble out of bed somewhere around 6:15 am, push the button on my coffee pot, get out the half and half, and the can of whipped cream, and I make myself a yummy cup of coffee. The fragrance of the freshly brewed coffee serves to awaken my senses a bit, then I curl up in my prayer chair and get ready for my meeting with Jesus. I am glad he doesn't mind meeting me in my pajamas with messed up hair and cup of coffee in hand. These are the most intimate times I spend with Jesus. I thank him for meeting me, tell him my concerns, and call to mind all the children and families who come to the House of Mercy and Encouragement for help. I pray for guidance on their behalf as well as mine.

I have a favorite author, Henri Nouwen, who was a priest and prolific writer and speaker. I identify with much of his writings. His writings are simple yet so profound. Part of my routine is to read from "You are the Beloved: Daily Meditations for Spiritual Living." One particular reading resonated deeply with me, and I hope it does with you as well:

"You have been wounded in many ways. The more you open yourself to being healed, the more you will discover how deep your wounds are. The great challenge is living your wounds through instead of thinking them through. It is better to cry than to worry, better to feel your wounds deeply than to understand them, better to let them enter into your silence than to talk about them. The choice you face constantly is whether you are taking your hurts to your head or to your heart. In your head you can analyze them, find their causes and consequences, and coin words to speak and write about them. But no final healing is likely to come from that source. You need to let your wounds go down to your heart. Then you can live through them and discover that they will not destroy you. Your heart is greater than your wounds."

Whatever the cause of our wounds – loneliness, grief, isolation, broken relationships, mental health issues, or disappointment in how our life is going – it is better to live our lives with as much gratitude as we can while we carry our wounds. The ultimate truth lies in knowing that God, the fountain of unconditional love, is with us. He is with us to **help us** carry **our** cross.

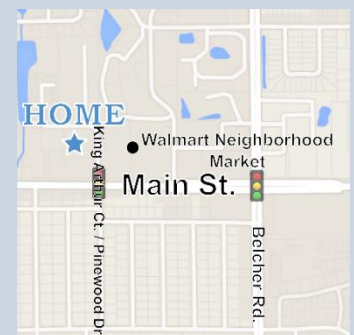
In His Peace,

Dolores

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2030 Main St.
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THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

There would be no House Of Mercy and Encouragement without the love, prayers, generosity, and support from our community. The pandemic has been particularly challenging for all of us. For those of us at HOME who minister to others, we suddenly had to learn a new way of work. We trained for telehealth, updated the HIPAA regulations and our security system, packaged books and art materials for distribution to the children to use during their telehealth sessions with their therapists, replaced very old carpeted floors with easy to clean laminate floors for easy sanitation, purchased sneeze guards for protection, purchased PPE, continued scholarships for those in need, and so much more.

Your contribution has made a big difference! Please accept our humble appreciation and prayers.

God bless all of you!

- Family and friends who have generously donated from your heart!
- Pinellas Community Foundation who has helped tremendously with the facilitation and funds of the CARES Non-profit Partnership Fund, and Faith Mission Grant. Besides the funds, the staff provided expert guidance with professionalism, great kindness, and patience! HOME loves all of you!
- Kiwanis Club of Dunedin and surrounding Kiwanis Clubs for their donation of funds and overwhelming in-kind gifts of copy paper and paper goods, hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray, office and art supplies, and so much more. What a wonderful surprise! Thank you for your generosity and remembering HOME in such challenging times.
- SouthState Bank and Achieva Credit Union for their unexpected donations!
- Riley Education Foundation for scholarships to be able to tutor children in need.
- Derek Teele Foundation for scholarships for counseling children in need.
- Franciscan Allegany \$2,000 grant which would not have been possible without the help of Sr. Cathy Cahill, one of our very talented and loving board members! We all appreciate each board member for their support, encouragement, and expertise throughout the years!
- City of Dunedin: for recognizing the importance of mental health and supporting our cause with a grant. A special thank you to Mayor Julie Bujalski, the city commissioners, and city financial manager and team.



Did You Know?

The House of Mercy and Encouragement has been able to increase scholarships to children and families for quality mental health because of your generosity! We have gone from **17% (whole year of 2020)** to **31% of our client care (1st half of this year 2021)**. We are so deeply grateful for all of you who have contributed to our scholarship fund and in helping to keep our doors open. We would not be able to continue this very important work without your support.

God bless each and every one of you!

Special Recognitions

On October 8th, Dolores was presented with an award in recognition of her selfless devotion to the youth of our community by the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce at their annual awards dinner. Thank you to the Chamber for honoring Dolores (and HOME) with this special award!



Thanks to all of you – our friends, clients, Board members, and staff – we have been awarded Top-Rated status again for 2021 on Great Nonprofits!

Looking Ahead

Coffee with the Counselor is back!

Thanks to Fr. Gary Dowsey, one of our fabulous board members, we are able to resume our community educational series. Last month, we explored how COVID-19 has affected us physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Deacon Scott Huang from All Saints Catholic Church joined us and the feedback was outstanding! You may want to consider joining us.

The next Coffee with the Counselor will be held at the DuBois Center at Our Lady of Lourdes in Dunedin on November 15th at 6:30 pm. Just email our very talented Outreach Coordinator Stacy Dennison at stacy.dennison@houseofmercy-fl.org to reserve a spot. The topic will be "Holiday Expectations vs Reality: Handling Our Emotions". It will focus on how fragile our emotions are during the holidays. From children being overly excited to those who are grieving and lonely, emotions run high during the holidays. The result may be anger, disappointment, sadness, anxiety, depression, or any other number of emotions. Is Christmas really as joyous as everyone portrays it to be? Come and find out as you increase your knowledge on how closely linked faith, spirituality, and emotions are during this time of year.

Letter Campaign and Appreciation Receptions!

We will be starting our letter campaign in just a few short weeks. The pandemic is not over and we are still being careful and respectful of children who are yet to be vaccinated, unvaccinated, and those with compromised immune systems. We are very hopeful that next year we can resume our fundraising events. Our letter fundraising campaign will run from October through December. In January, we will invite those who have participated to attend a dessert tasting reception and a few talented children from the community will perform for us. Attendance will be limited and RSVP will be required. A second reception will be held at the Holiday Inn Express in Downtown Dunedin in February. Watch for coming details.

"Smile" At Us This Holiday Season!



Do you know that you can help HOME this holiday season, and every time you make a purchase on Amazon, just by shopping? Just go to amazon.smile.com and select "House of Mercy & Encouragement" as your charitable organization and Amazon will donate 0.5% of each purchase you make to HOME!

Does This Sound Familiar?

Do you know a child with challenging behavior? It could be your own child, grandchild, niece, nephew, or child in the neighborhood? The following is an excerpt from a free publication from the Child Mind Institute. CMI is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders. Go to childmind.org and look for [Complete Guide to Managing Behavior Problems](#). It contains lots of valuable information.

Why Do Some Kids Struggle With Problem Behavior?

When children have frequent emotional outbursts, it can be a sign that they haven't yet developed the skills they need to cope with feelings like frustration, anxiety, and anger. Handling big emotions in a healthy, mature way requires a variety of skills, including:

- Impulse control
- Emotional self-regulation
- Problem solving
- Delaying gratification
- Negotiating
- Communicating wishes and needs to adults
- Knowing what's appropriate or expected in a given situation

Other children may seem to struggle more with boundaries and following rules. They may be defiant or ignore instructions or try to talk their way out of things that aren't optional. You may notice patterns of behavior that seem to crop up at certain times of the day (like bedtime), during certain tasks (like during homework), or with certain people. You also might notice that your child acts out particularly when she is at home but not when she is at school, or vice versa. Tantrums and other kinds of acting out are often a normal and even healthy part of childhood. They are a sign that a child is becoming more independent — indications that a child is testing boundaries, developing skills and opinions, and exploring the world around them. But when a child is acting out a lot, it can strain the parent-child relationship, creating regular frustration and resentment that isn't healthy in the family. Whether your child is in the early stages of learning about self-regulation and boundaries, or if your family has been struggling and you are looking for help, this guide is designed to explain more about how kids learn to manage their behavior, what parents can do to aid in the process, and how to get more support if you need it.

For more information, go to: <https://childmind.org/guide/parents-guide-to-problem-behavior>.

Do you know someone who needs help?

Help us spread the word of the vital work we do at HOME for children and families who are impacted by mental, emotional, behavioral, or educational challenges. Tell your family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, church members, and everyone you meet about HOME. We will do our best to help provide the services they need or help them navigate the system to find the support they are looking for.

Need Help??

Currently a Provider for:

Aetna • BayCare • Cigna • Humana
 Sunshine Health • Tricare • Wellcare (CMS and Staywell)

If you don't see your insurance, please contact us. We also offer a sliding fee scale and scholarships. Please call for more details.

Our vision is to compassionately serve as a resource for those children and families who are affected by mental health, learning, emotional, or behavioral issues. We are a faith-based provider who believes in the God given dignity of every child and family. All families are treated with respect and kindness.

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HOME is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization dedicated to helping children and families.

play therapy, counseling, tutoring
 help for children and families



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