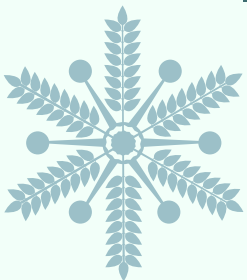


AMANDA FOUND THE REAL
JOY OF CHRISTMAS!



Because Of You!



CHRISTMAS 2020

www.houseofhopega.org

The Real Joy of Christmas!

The real joy of Christmas is about the hope that was born in a manger so long ago.

In that manger, in Bethlehem, God sent us the wonderful gift - Jesus - born of a virgin and given in love.

That gift gives us hope. Hope that we are not doomed to live in the consequences of our wrong choices.

That hope plays out nowhere more than in the changed lives of the ladies who walk through our doors.

They come to us without hope and through God's grace, and your help, their lives are forever changed.

Ladies like Amanda Cross who came to us needing that hope. Her story leaves me thanking God and you! Without hope and your gifts, where would Amanda be?

I think about Crystal LaHood and my heart overflows with Christmas hope. Her heart for the ladies we minister to gives us the courage to do even more.

Another story that floods my heart with Christmas gratitude is that of Rico Tucker. She came to the South Georgia House of Hope to assist in seeing others lives changed and in the process received what she gave away!

And what about your faithfulness in 2020? Who knew that such a virus would affect our lives like it has? But, because of your continued faithfulness, lives continue to be changed!

That gives me real Christmas joy!

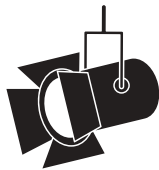


Sharon Wagner | President & CEO

In 2005, having experienced the devastation and effects of alcoholism, addiction and abuse personally and in their own family, Rick and Sharon Wagner began to help others to find hope and freedom. In a bold move that, at the time, just felt like the right thing to do, the Wagners moved out of their home and into a hotel in order to give five women in recovery their home. They gave the first financial donations, Teen Challenge donated the curriculum and House of Hope was born!

Donor Spotlight

Crystal LaHood



Crystal Lahood had only vaguely known of the South Georgia House of Hope and their community mission until she was invited to lunch by a friend to hear their vision.

“It was a God-ordained moment! I heard the heartbeat of the ministry, and I immediately knew I wanted to become part of what they were doing.”

What truly grabbed her heart

was the plan for the Village of Hope, the recovery facility for women and their children.

“Addiction has touched my family. I know firsthand how someone’s addiction affects the whole family unit.”

Crystal almost began her support of House of Hope by spearheading a community awareness dinner to share the message.

She even joined the governing board and became a regular donor. “It is exponentially rewarding to plant financial seed in a community where you live and see those seeds grow!”

Ultimately, Crystal’s heart is

for the restoration of the family. “When you rehabilitate an individual, you impact the whole family. I like to walk beside House of Hope because they are forward-thinking. The plans for Village of Hope, where women faced with addiction crisis can bring their children, is key for me.”



About
Crystal
LaHood

Crystal and John, her husband of twenty-five years, reside in Valdosta. Together they have four adult children and three grandchildren.

Feature Story

Amanda Found The Real Joy Of Christmas!

You Helped Her Find It!



"The day I entered the House of Hope, I was a girl who needed love. I was a girl who had grown used to performance-based acceptance. I was a girl that acted out to get attention."

Upon entering the program, "what stood out to me is the type of genuine God-inspired love they showed each of us that walked into the home."

Amanda arrived at House of Hope with a need for unconditional love and a list of problems. She'd had several failed attempts with rehab, a criminal record, and a toxic relationship involving drug addiction.

"When my dad brought me, he looked Sharon - House of Hope's founder - in the eye and said, 'If she messes up, don't call me - call the police and have them come get her.' He'd had enough.

"Thankfully, they knew what to do." They showed love and taught Amanda that she had worth to both God and them. "House of Hope was the last resort for my dad, but looking back, I know it was God's divine plan for me. I knew after a few weeks that I was right where God wanted me."

"My bad choices led me to participate in an armed robbery and aggravated assault, leading to my arrest."

Potentially facing 20 years in prison, Amanda prayed, asking God to spare her from prison.

Potentially
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Amanda
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"I saw the hand of God - I was the only one of four people charged with the crime that did not go to prison. I turned down three plea deals involving prison, and miraculously, I was given a fourth option, a court-order to complete a program." Failure to do so would result in prison time.

"House of Hope directors Rick and Sharon and their staff have a unique way of infusing the recovery process with love. But, I rebelled, lost privileges, and received consequences while also experiencing love and support separate from my choices. My heart began to soften; I took two steps forward and three steps back. The process of recovery is messy, and every time I failed, the staff were there with a 'we' approach; 'we are here with you, and we will not give up on you.'"

For the first time in her life, Amanda didn't feel alone. "I learned that mistakes are part of life, but it's how they are handled that determines our success."

I was given
my life back
through
House of
Hope

Amanda - continued

When she made progress, the House of Hope staff were cheering Amanda on. They mirrored the Father's love for her. "I watched their unconditional display of the Father's love and began to understand that same unconditional love for me."

Once Amanda surrendered the compulsion to perform for love, she was able to take ownership of her choices and quit blaming others. "It was a game-changer for me to accept that I was worthy of love because of what He had done for me. That four-letter word - love - marks my time at House of Hope. It's simple, but it made all the difference."

Completing House of Hope, Amanda got a job, then went to college, graduating with a sociology degree. Falling in love with her middle school sweetheart, she was married in 2011.

"Sharon and Rick are still in my life as mentors. They offer support and encouragement to continue thriving in my new identity as a beloved Child of God.

Sharon married us, which meant the world to me.

When facing overwhelming challenges, Amanda thinks back on the love she was shown at House of Hope. She speaks to the anxiety and says, "Amanda, you could be in jail right now, or not even be alive!

You were spared!"

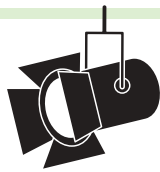
"I was given my life back through House of Hope and the marked love they showed me during my recovery. As a result of their ministry, I am a happily married, stay at home mom to two beautiful little boys.

House of Hope allowed me to experience the love of the Father, which resulted in the chance to live free from addiction. I believe that no matter the challenges that may come, I am loved, and I can do all things through Christ, Who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:8)

Amanda resides in Bonaire, Georgia, with her husband Kevin and their two sons, Oliver and Barrett.

Volunteer Spotlight

Rico Tucker



"My journey with the South Georgia House of Hope began when I was in the Valdosta Junior Service League (VJSL) provisional class. The House of Hope was one of the stops on the Community Caravan to introduce new league classes to the community's needs.

I'll never forget when we pulled up and stopped at the House of Hope.

The director came out and shared, followed by a girl who told her testimony. I was stunned. I couldn't have imagined the depth of work they did there, right here in my community! I couldn't shake the powerful impact of this mission. I knew the minute we pulled out of the driveway that I wanted to do more with the House of Hope.

Rico remembers how House of Hope was admired by many of the Junior League women. It wasn't until I visited myself that I got it."

"We planned and prepared a wonderful Christmas at the Converse Dalton Farrell house downtown for all of the ladies. To see their faces light up, filled with grateful tears of joy - we cried too, it had such an impact on me."

The following year, while serving as the VJSL project manager for House of Hope, Rico acted as the liaison between the League and the home, coordinating work projects, assisting with needs, and helping wherever possible.

While program manager, she learned that when you serve, you start with the goal of changing others' lives, but mysteriously, change begins to happen to you.

"Lives are restored in that house. When these women graduate, they walk away with a lifelong

transformation."

"That year of service, working closely with the home is etched on my heart. The ladies became family. We shared meals, laughs, prayers and tears, and a whole lot of love. It isn't easy to put into words what the House of Hope means to me.

I challenge everyone capable of serving to spend time there. When you listen to the stories and hear how Jesus is working on their behalf, you will walk away transformed."

About Rico Tucker



Rico Tucker is a Middle School assistant principal in Valdosta. She has two children, 9 and 16.