

New Rady Residence helps keep homeless families together in San Diego

By Pamela Davis—

Twenty-six years old and living on the street with her two baby boys, Ronisha was depressed and exhausted, but she kept a brave face for her babies. For a year, they had been going from homeless shelter to homeless shelter, having a bed for the night but never sure what tomorrow would bring.

She finally ended up at The Salvation Army's Door of Hope in San Diego, California. "God led me here without me even knowing how," she said through tears.

"Being homeless is hard. I was really beaten down when I came here. But the staff [at the Door of Hope] made me feel safe and encouraged me to move my life forward."

The Door of Hope has helped women in crisis, especially those with children, since 1931. San Diego has the fourth largest population of people experiencing homelessness in the U.S.—it is estimated that nearly 5,000 people live on the streets. Many of them are women with children and entire families.

Experiencing homelessness tears families apart mentally and physically. There are often places women and children can go to get off the street, but when a family tries to stay together, the father often cannot live in the same facility.

The new Rady Residence on the Door of Hope campus will change that. It will give 32 families experiencing homelessness a safe place to live—together.

The new 37,900-square-foot, 4-story building boasts 32 residential units with between 1-3 bedrooms each, along with a Housing Services wing complete with an activity room, playroom, offices, a food pantry and clothing closet.

Homelessness is complicated, and it takes more than a bed to change a life. That's where The Salvation Army's programming comes in. Families will receive holistic treatment that will address the issues that took them to the streets and learn new skills to set them up for success.



And Ronisha is one of the success stories. It took some time, but today she is working full time and living in her own two bedroom apartment. She says her boys' personalities and behavior have changed drastically.

"My youngest was very shy and withdrawn when we first came to the Door of Hope," she said. "He is now more open and outgoing. The staff made us feel safe."

Now, with the opening of the Rady Residence, more families can experience the hope of a better future. The expanded facility is made possible by a historic gift from philanthropists Ernest and Evelyn Rady.

"We have great confidence in this organization, so we are happy to put our resources in their hands, and we look forward to a successful conclusion," said Ernest Rady. "I'm really proud of what we're doing."



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