

## Salvation Army supports women fighting addiction with new Guam facility

Inside the family room at The Salvation Army Guma Famaolo'an Lighthouse Recovery Center (LRC) in Tiyan, Guam, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays are mom visit days. That's when women who are in residential treatment see their children who are in the care of Child Protective Services (CPS).

"It doesn't matter what phase they're in, we want them to have contact with their children sooner rather than later," said The Salvation Army Lighthouse Recovery Centers Executive Director Valerie Reyes. "We have a family room with toys and a TV so the moms don't have to leave treatment. And CPS has been so gracious, dropping them here."



Reyes estimates some 40 percent of participants at the LRC are mothers. Many of them have older children, who visit at later phases. If the kids are in CPS custody with the goal of reunification, Reyes said they encourage having the moms see the kids sooner rather than later to grant some peace of mind and help them stay committed to the program.

"It's hard for the ladies," she said. "There's an element of concern that comes up."

Across Guam, a U.S. territory in the western Pacific Ocean with a population nearing 170,000, women make up 37 percent of substance abusers, compared to men's 26 percent, according to [data](#) from Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center.

For years, The Salvation Army has operated [Guma Lalahi Lighthouse Recovery Center](#) for men. After Reyes and Program Coordinator Lourdes Hongyee observed an increasing number of women seeking treatment, they got to talking. If a number of women were getting into outpatient treatment, what about residential?

Thus began a multi-year journey involving multiple applications for funding, [a global pandemic](#) and subsequent construction delays. The result? A \$3 million facility designed to meet the needs of women fighting addiction in Guam, which opened to its first participants Jan. 27.

"Women in need now have a safe, nurturing place to reclaim their lives, guided by compassionate professionals who will walk alongside them every step of the way," Hongyee told attendees [at a](#)

[ribbon-cutting ceremony](#) held Feb. 14.

“This facility will change thousands of lives, repair countless relationships and lay uncharted places for many people who struggle with drugs and alcohol.”

*Valerie Reyes, The Salvation Army Lighthouse Recovery Centers Executive Director*

The event was attended by a number of local dignitaries, including Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero, who joined the community in showing support.

“It takes the whole island of Guam to fight addiction,” [Leon Guerrero said at the event](#). “It is not one person’s responsibility; it is all of our responsibility to treat not just our women, but our men, our children and even our uncle.”

According to statistics reported in [Pacific Daily News](#), more than 10 percent of Guam adults use illicit drugs other than marijuana, with crystal methamphetamine accounting for the largest number of drug-related sentences.

“We [serve the people most in need](#), and that part of the community is really in need of help,” said Guam Corps Officer Major Eric Tumale. “The number of people who are drug dependent is very high.”

The Women’s LRC has American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) level one and level two treatment along with residential withdrawal management. For women who seek residential treatment, the program can range from 30 to 180 days with the ability to extend up to three months.

The program is currently at capacity, with 15 beds full and two detox beds. Reyes said they need more beds and more help with longer-term housing. A goal? To identify a grant that would completely fund up to 12 months of post-treatment housing assistance.

“That’s the dream,” she said.

Until then, support from the community has helped meet a range of needs, including the LRC’s constant demand for personal hygiene products and undergarments.

While Reyes and Hongyee agree the process has been a “labor of love,” they know it’s making a difference.

“This facility will change thousands of lives, repair countless relationships and lay uncharted places for many people who struggle with drugs and alcohol,” Reyes said.

#### **Do Good:**

- See how [The Salvation Army supports rehabilitation](#).