



EMBRACE BECAUSE YOU MATTER

Monthly Newsletter

Discover the power of community

Celebration not only holds the special treasures we've come to know, but more importantly, it's filled with world changers who pour their time and energy into lifting lives from the rubble of hopelessness. Though quaint and visually stunning, our community's residents are well aware of the challenges both within Celebration and right outside our front door along the 192 corridor. Two worlds collide just outside the happiest place on earth, and there's a beautiful magic that's happening where those worlds converge. Just down the road from the beautiful entrance of our community, mothers retrieved water from a water hose behind the now condemned Star Motel, families dealt with lack of electricity during hot summers, and children witnessed the violence of dangerous gangs who infiltrated the area.

However, a Celebration resident who once faced harsh circumstances and is familiar with the challenges of single motherhood, decided to take action to bring hope to the families suffering under these conditions. It all began when she, Bettina, saw several homeless people on the side of the road and she was moved with compassion. She packed up a few sandwiches and instead of just leaving the food with them, she began conversation and took the time to hear their stories. Since Bettina had once faced similar challenges, she could see their humanity and desired to hear the dream in their hearts. That compassion led her to the Star Motel where over seventy children were living in horrible, dangerous conditions. She heard the desperation of mothers and fathers who wanted a way out.

How could a single, hard-working mother in Celebration do anything to fix such a problem? Her first goal was to feed the hungry. Bettina began packing up small sack lunches for the families at the Star Motel. One thing led to another, from one hotel to the next, in search of those who needed help. After finishing long days at work, Bettina would spend her evenings feeding people, and finding clothing and school supplies for the children. The demand grew to the point where the help of friends was required. Volunteers began to come, and eventually, Embrace of Celebration was formed with the goal of embracing and offering support to Celebration residents and those along the 192 corridor. Embrace now prepares and delivers 200 meals three times per week! My husband and I participated in one of the outreaches and we were shocked by the task at hand and impressed with the impact. We witnessed little children running to Bettina the second she arrived. We watched tears stream down the cheeks of grateful parents. We saw the smiles of children as they received bicycles, clothing, school supplies, and dolls. Many families have been relocated to better hotels where they are safe; a place from which they can work jobs and focus on education that will help them move into their own homes. Success stories are emerging as dreams are realized. Kindness and compassion is all it takes to build something bigger than what we imagined.

The generosity of many groups has multiplied as Second Harvest, Celebration High School, Upper Crust Pizza, Backlot Apartments, A+ Home Rentals, Celebration Town Hall, the Rotary Club, Celebration Foundation, Community Presbyterian and more have offered their support through special events and donations. Town Hall opened their doors to Embrace of Celebration from the start, allowing them to host meetings that brought residents together to hear their vision of supporting one another. Community Presbyterian opens their kitchen every Saturday from 11:30-12:30 where volunteers pack lunches and load cars for deliveries. It's truly a beautiful experience when kindness and compassion come together with willing hands to offer hope to those who live just outside the place where dreams come true. You are the ones who make it happen! Thank you to every volunteer and contributor for your sacrifice. You are so loved and appreciated.

Written by Traci Vanderbush
Member of Embrace of Celebration