

ZONTA MEMBERS ATTEND SWFAS RIBBON CUTTING

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The brand new, two-story women's halfway house on the Fort Myers campus of Southwest Florida Addiction Services was officially dedicated on June 17, and members of the Zonta Club of Sanibel-Captiva were there to help celebrate.

The building, said to be the largest halfway house for women in Lee County, replaces the original 1950s structure which was torn down last November. Built at a cost of \$600,000, of which \$541,000 came from federal and state housing grants with SWFAS raising the balance, the energy-efficient structure will house up to 16 women in 8 twin-bed rooms. The house also has four bathrooms, a common area with dining facilities and comfortable couches, a small kitchen and a learning center with two computers. On each floor is a screened porch with outdoor furniture.

SWFAS executive director Kevin Lewis, addressing the gathering, said that substance abuse in Florida costs every man, woman and child \$334 annually. Of this amount, 97 cents of every dollar goes to pay for problems created by untreated mental illness. Lewis recognized the organizations whose support had made the building possible, including the State Housing Initiatives Partnership, Homeless Housing Assistance Grants, the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, and several local non-profits including St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church on Sanibel, Bat Yam Temple of the Isles and the Zonta Club.

Zonta has enjoyed a long-term relationship with SWFAS and provided a grant of \$11,300 towards the purchase of handsome, sturdy new furniture for the bedrooms, including beds, dressers, night tables, mattresses and linens. Until now, the women's rooms were furnished with hand-me-downs, many of which were falling apart. Previous Zonta grants had funded the computer learning center with computers, desks and other furniture including book shelves and a DVD player for educational films.

Rosemary Boisvert, managing director of the Transitional Living Center, commented: "All of our women in the halfway house have tremendous need for support, guidance, counseling, and extensive case management. Most have domestic violence or sexual trauma issues and all of them require this level of support. The women will typically stay here for 4-6 months, during which time they will receive intensive treatment and develop the necessary life skills for a return to sobriety and self-sufficiency." Boisvert added that it was her dream to provide a home-like atmosphere that would raise the women's self-esteem and enhance their process of recovery.

Zonta Board member Ruth Woodham, who spoke on behalf of the club, said: "Our many projects with the women of SWFAS have reinforced our mission of fellowship, support for work skills and the building of self-esteem to provide a healthier life in a world free of addiction."

The Zonta Club of Sanibel/Captiva is a service organization of professional women working together to provide hands-on assistance, advocacy and funds to strengthen women's lives on the islands, in Lee County and around the world through Zonta International. For information, visit www.zontasancap.com.



Ribbon cutting ceremony at the new SWFAS Transitional Living Women's Halfway House.



Members of the Zonta Club of Sanibel-Captiva in the Zonta Learning Center in the new Women's Halfway House.