

Foundations Donate \$100,000 to Boca Helping Hands Job Initiative

BOCA RATON — For most people, Boca Helping Hands means a hot meal or a pantry bag of groceries. For others, BHH means a backpack filled with food for the weekend for children.

Still others associate BHH with limited financial assistance to pay rent or utility bills. However, its stated mission is to break the cycle of dependence.

A recent \$100,000 grant from The Jim Moran Foundation, along with support from The Salah Foundation and The Hagen Family Foundation, will allow BHH to take a major step forward in empowering clients to become self-sufficient.

The new Job Readiness “Catering Program” will serve carefully screened and selected clients who will earn a small stipend while gaining skills and experience in the food service industry.

At the conclusion of the three-month program, the clients will be guided in their search for employment with the many restaurants and country clubs in our area, many of whom are continuously hiring.

“Our founder, Jim Moran, believed everyone deserved the chance to be successful,” said Melanie Burgess, executive director, The Jim Moran Foundation. “For those who are hungry and hurting, the Boca Helping Hands’ Job Readiness Program will offer a pathway to success through hands-on training, stipends, and connections to job opportunities.”

In January, the first class of 12 clients will begin their journey to gainful employment. During Phase 1, participants will learn life and social skills. The 12-hours of classroom instruction will be taught at BHH by faculty from Palm Beach State College.

During Phase 2, also held at BHH’s Remillard Family Resource Center by Palm Beach State College faculty, skills

specific to the restaurant industry will be taught and mastered.

Finally, in Phase 3, the 12 participants will gain hands-on experience as they work in the BHH Catering Department. At the conclusion of Phase 3, Boca Helping Hands will provide contacts to area restaurants and caterers, thus opening the door for the participants to gain job interviews.

This program is designed for those who truly want to break the cycle of dependence and obtain employment. BHH will provide the training, the experience and the opportunity. After that, it’s up to the client to build a new life.

“This new program embodies the American dream,” said BHH Executive Director James S. Gavrilos. “The generosity of The Jim Moran Foundation, along with the Salah Foundation and the Hagen Family Foundation is a ‘hand up’...not a ‘hand out.’ The clients must take accountability and responsibility for their own lives. We at Boca Helping Hands can only provide the springboard. The clients themselves must have the courage to dive!”

Boca Helping Hands serves the economically challenged, culturally diverse population of South Florida. Founded in 1998 by a group of local volunteers in response to the growing challenge of hunger and poverty in the community, BHH provides food, limited financial assistance and job-training to the unemployed and underemployed.

Focusing on the “whole person,” the various programs of BHH are integrated to meet the needs of individuals, children and families, with the goal of breaking the cycle of dependence. To learn more about BHH visit www.bocahelpinghands.org