



Adell Erozer

Executive Director of Turning Points since 2004, Adell oversees 20 staff and 120 volunteers. Their walk-in Open Door Resource Center sees 150-200 clients a day who use computers to apply for jobs, access email, receive help with food stamps and transportation and more.

Their mission statement says it all: "Providing, facilitating and coordinating services to the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless in Manatee County." With a myriad of programs, the organization provides services in its 20,000 square foot One Stop Center and an adjoining building that is filled with donated clothing.

In 2009 the \$1.2 million building addition and the building next door were paid off with by a combination of public, private and foundations funds.

And it all seems to be working just fine...





If you had no place to live, where would you take a shower, receive medical and dental care, have your hair cut, wash your clothes, receive your mail, or eat a hot meal? While it may be difficult

to picture yourself in such a dire situation, hundreds of homeless or at risk of becoming homeless individuals and families face these problems every day. These people receive services from the caring staff at Turning Points (formerly the Manatee County Homeless Coalition) under the leadership of Adell Erozer, Executive Director since 2004.

When asked about the cause of homelessness or near homelessness, Adell has a one-word answer—housing. She says, “The lack of affordable and accessible housing in the area is the major reason people become homeless. Some clients—referred to as the working poor—have jobs, but do not make a living wage. Other reasons include unexpected expenses, loss of a job, mental illness, illiteracy, and current or past experiences such as divorce and domestic violence.”

Turning Points mission statement tells its story: Providing, facilitating and coordinating services to the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless in Manatee County. With a myriad of programs, the organization provides services in the 20,000 square foot Bill Galvano One Stop Center in Bradenton and an adjoining building that is filled with donated clothing and also houses a bicycle refurbishing shop. In 2009 the \$1.2 million building addition and the building next door were paid off with about one-third from public funds, one-third from private funds, and one-third from foundations. In 2004 the staff consisted of Adell, a case manager, Daily Bread staff, and one part-time employee. Today there are 20 staff persons and 120 volunteers.

The walk-in Open Door Resource Center sees between 150 and 200 clients a day who use computers to apply for jobs and access email, receive assistance with applying for a Florida ID card or requesting birth certificates, establish an address at Turning Points, and receive help with food stamps and transportation. The clients may use showers, have a haircut from a volunteer barber, drop off one bag of laundry per week, and choose donated clothes, shoes, and bicycles. The in-house medical clinic staffed with volunteer physicians and nurses serves homeless and low-income people without health insurance on a walk-in or appointment basis in the eight examination rooms. Dentists and hygienists work in the dental clinic that requires appointments. Veterans receive help with needs such as jobs, housing, childcare, and transportation. Our Daily Bread—that is co-located at Turning Points, but is not operated by the organization—provides daily hot meals. People without a place to live are referred to another agency.

Alexander (Sandy) Kirkpatrick, Chair of the Board of Directors of Turning Points, says, “Adell’s effectiveness as Turning Points Executive Director begins with her passion for our mission which is strong even after ten years at her post. She is determined and persistent in pursuit of our goals. She is a skillful multitasker probably because in the agency’s early days she had to do everything. She is decisive, which is important. Because of the clarity of her vision and the depth of her institutional knowledge, she is the go-to person for all of us. Her exceptional grant writing skills are essential to an organization that has nearly no sources of recurring income. Without Adell it is questionable whether there

would be a Turning Points.”

Adell’s compassion, honesty, and transparency are apparent. She espouses the Golden Rule with employees and clients. The challenges she faces are financial resources, staffing the right person in the right job, finding effective Board members, multi-tasking, and a desire to do everything well. She writes grants, manages the staff and services, coordinates Board work, and, until she recently hired a financial person, was the bookkeeper. When asked about frustrations, she says, “My frustration comes from dealing with all the necessary paperwork and the time-consuming tasks that don’t relate directly to my position. People would be surprised to know how much work there is to do and how many different things I deal with every day. But the reward is seeing someone whose assistance at Turning Points made a huge difference in his or her life. Our partnerships with LECOM, Goodwill, Our Daily Bread, Centerstone, Florida Clinical Research, Salvation Army, and HOPE Family Services are essential to the work we do.”

Adell’s background is the opposite of what you might expect of a nonprofit executive. Following years of solo travel to India, Indonesia, China, Tibet, Turkey, and Italy, Adell married and eventually moved to Bradenton from Barbados. After six years as Executive Director of Planned Parenthood in Walla Walla, Washington, Adell decided to become acquainted with her much older sisters who were missionaries and spent time with her sisters in India and Indonesia. Her next stop was Bali where she met a Swiss woman who wanted to visit China. While in China, Adell’s passport, airline ticket, and money was stolen.

Adell then traveled to Tibet where she unfortunately was at a market on the anniversary of the Chinese rule of Tibet when shots rang out between the Chinese and the Tibetans. Needless to say fear gripped Adell until a group from Taiwan hired a bus and she spent seven days traveling to Nepal. Fast forward to Italy where she bunked with nuns—and had a curfew. She saw an ad for a family planning specialist, stopped in to make an appointment and met with Savas Erozer who, despite informing Adell that she was not in the top 10 for the job, asked her to crew with him on his 42-foot sailboat to Turkey, his homeland.

The two-week trip included a life-and-death storm and a broken nose, but also a proposal from Savas. (They celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary this past December.) They lived in Italy for six years where Savas was with the Food and Agriculture Organization, a program of the United Nations, before a job transfer took them to Barbados.

Adell has a Master’s degree in Applied Behavioral Science with Concentration in Organizational Development and Management Systems from Whitworth College, Spokane, Washington, and a Bachelor’s degree in Health Education/Community Health from Central Washington University, Ellensburg, Washington. She and Savas have a 23-year old son Luca who was born in Italy and a 19-year old daughter Alisha who was born in Barbados. Adell has two stepsons who reside in Istanbul.

With constant discussions in both Sarasota and Manatee counties about how to address the homeless, both communities should be grateful that an organization like Turning Points, with Adell as leader, is quietly and effectively helping those who are caught in the web of this complex issue. 🍷

STORY: Carol Darling

IMAGES: Evelyn England