

**From:** [Maureen Dunleavy](#)  
**To:** [Zach Summerlin](#)  
**Subject:** Mental Health Housing in the Florida Keys  
**Date:** Friday, July 7, 2023 12:02:56 PM  
**Attachments:** [We sent you safe versions of your files.msg](#)  
[GCC - The Heron of the Florida Keys Booklet.pdf](#)

---

Mimecast Attachment Protection has deemed this file to be safe, but always exercise caution when opening files.

---

Mr. Sumerlin

I have had the wonderful pleasure of visiting FHFC in Tallahassee. Guidance/Care Center has The Heron program which is an Assisted Living Facility (ALF8523) with limited mental health license in Marathon, Florida. That facility desperately has to be rebuilt as the building is deteriorating and not up to current code. Luckily we have been doing fundraising and HUD will be funding the rebuild as a Community Project in FY24 and granting \$1.5 million. Governor DeSantis has including our ALF as a special project for FY24 at \$1.75 million. We are well on our way! Unfortunately we have not been able to utilize FHFC funds because it is shared living space and not large enough for the special needs independent housing for the 3 apartment expansion. As you know we are in a severe housing shortage for many people including those with behavioral health conditions. It's a crisis situation. I am requesting that The Florida Housing Finance Corporation include the need for Assisted Living Mental Health Housing in you STATE PLAN to be submitted to the Governor by the end of the year. The Heron through the Guidance/Care Center is the ONLY facility of its kind. Without it, our residents would be far away from families. In addition, our residents cannot live independent without the supports an ALF provides and would therefore end up in an institution like the state hospital, homeless or in jail. For these reasons please include this program as one of the greatest needs in the state.

I have also included our brochure if it is helpful to better understand how Guidance/Care Center and our program The Heron are critical to this community

Thank you for your time and consideration

**Maureen Dunleavy, LMHC, Regional Vice President**

Guidance/Care Center, Inc.

1205 Fourth Street

Key West, FL 33040-3707

Email: [maureen.dunleavy@westcare.com](mailto:maureen.dunleavy@westcare.com)

Office: (305) 434-7660 ext. 31221 / Fax: (305) 292-6723 / Cell: (305) 896-5964

*GCC is Celebrating 50 years of serving the Florida Keys*



[www.westcare.com](http://www.westcare.com)

*Uplifting the Human Spirit*

-- CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and are intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to which they are addressed. This communication may contain material protected by HIPAA legislation (45 CFR, Parts 160 & 164) or by 42 CFR Part 2. If you are not the intended recipient, be advised that you have received this email in error and that any use, dissemination, forwarding, printing

or copying of this email is strictly prohibited. If you have received this email in error, please notify the sender by reply email and destroy all copies of the original message.



**GUIDANCE/  
CARE CENTER**  
by **WESTCARE**

*The Heron*  
**OF THE FLORIDA KEYS**





## PROJECT SUMMARY

Approaching its 34th year, The Heron offers permanent housing and supportive services to Monroe County adults with chronic and persistent mental illness in a comfortable, homelike setting. We are the only state-licensed Assisted Living Facility (ALF) in Monroe County with a Limited Mental Health License regulated by Florida's Agency for Healthcare Administration. Additional oversight is provided by the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Health, and the Department of Elder Affairs' Ombudsman Program. Currently, The Heron provides housing to 14 adults. While we do occasionally receive referrals from outside of Monroe County, the majority of our residents and their families have roots here in the Florida Keys.

To address the need for a new, safe, compliant, and COVID-friendly facility for our residents and their families, we are launching a \$7 million capital campaign in two phases:

### PHASE 1 Increased Assisted Living Facility Capacity - *Rebuild the facility to the licensed capacity of 16 beds*

**Isolation Rooms**  
2 isolation rooms with  
bathrooms to align with  
COVID-19 protocols

**Assisted Living  
Employee Housing**  
2 rooms for staff to provide  
overnight supervision

**Commercial Kitchen**  
Large-scale meal service  
and development of food  
service program instruction

**Upgrade to new codes**  
A more sophisticated fire  
sprinkler system and ADA  
compliance

### PHASE 2 Independent Housing / Employee Housing - *3 apartments for mixed-use housing*

## Expansion would **MEET THE NEED**

Rebuilding The Heron and expanding housing opportunities will help meet a critical need. We are a one-of-a-kind facility that has identified long-term solutions to support individuals overwhelmed with mental health and substance use issues in our local Florida Keys community.

#### WHAT WE KNOW

1

**Our facility exclusively services low-income adults with chronic mental illness.** The Heron addresses issues of mental illness and substance abuse on a variety of fronts through our residential program and linkage to ancillary services.

2

**Social determinants of health need to be addressed to meet an individual's personal goals.** Our holistic approach recognizes building a system of care based on individual needs.

3

**The Heron is a home.** Individuals can move through culturally competent, wraparound services to have the best chance of leading a community-based life with positive outcomes.



## Residential Program

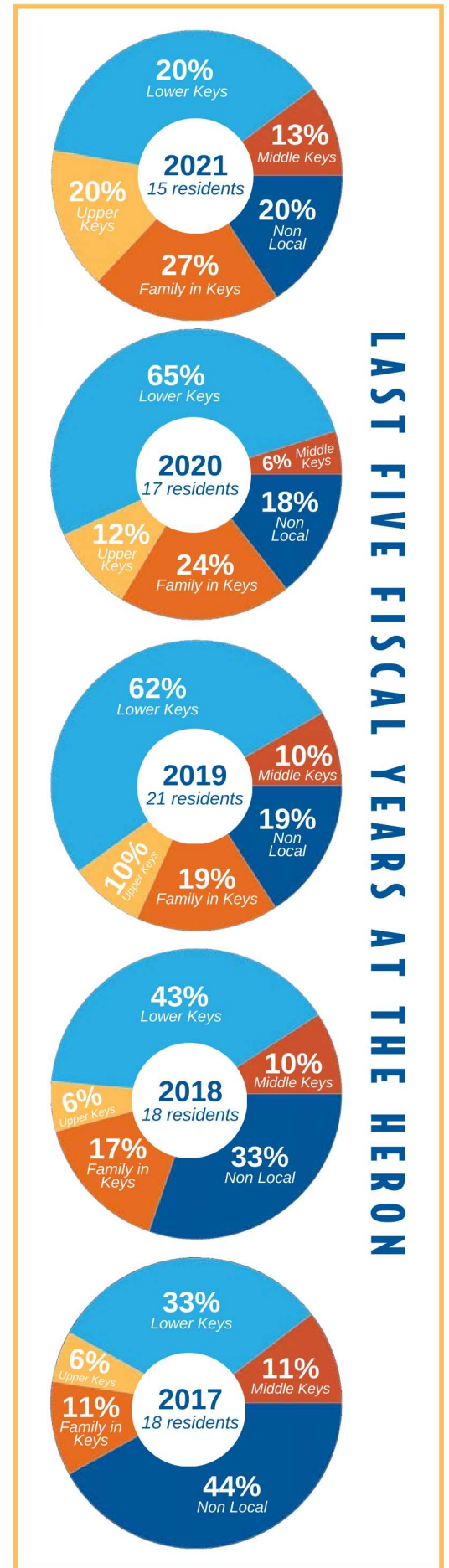
Heron residents share a semi-private room and 24-hour access to support staff. A wide variety of services allow them to reach their maximum potential:

- Medication supervision
- Meal preparation
- Assistance with activities of daily living such as shopping, personal care and laundry
- Coordination of medical and behavioral health services
- Coordination of access to education and employment
- Linkage to legal services
- Coordination of transportation to all ancillary services
- Coordination of access to social and religious opportunities
- Coordination of access to benefits
- Assistance with money management

## Ancillary Services Provided

Residents have direct access to additional services provided by the Guidance/Care Center, Inc.

- **Personal Growth Center** - psychosocial rehabilitation in a clubhouse model setting
- **Case Management** - collaborates with residents and ALF staff to coordinate all services
- **Wellness Clinic** - access to primary care and integrated with behavioral health services
- **Medication Management** - psychiatrist's evaluation of the need for medication, ongoing medical monitoring, and support
- **Counseling** - counselors help identify goals and potential solutions to problems
- **Transportation** - resident transportation to medical appointments



# Uplifting the Human Spirit

It's what we do in the Florida Keys

Every Guidance/Care Center, Inc. program is part of a continuum of person-centered, trauma-informed care that is recognized for clinical excellence, coordinated access and collaborative innovation.



## Our Mission

Guidance/Care Center empowers everyone with whom we come into contact to engage in a process of healing, growth, and change benefiting themselves, their families, co-workers, and communities.



## Who We Are

We are a behavioral health and human services non-profit committed to delivering high-quality and cost-effective services that empower people to transform their lives.

### OUR SERVICE DOMAINS

Mental Health & Wellness

Treatment & Rehabilitation

Criminal Justice

Veteran Services

Homeless Services

Education & Prevention

## Sustainability

The Heron participates in local and regional committees and work groups. Our goal is to meet with local social services to regularly coordinate the delivery of services, resources, outreach and client care. Our collaborations include:

**Monroe County Homeless Services Continuum of Care (CoC)**

**Substance Abuse/Mental Health Council**  
Created by the Department of Children and Families (DCF)

**South Florida State Hospital**  
Arranging housing upon release from treatment facilities

**Monroe County Detention Center**  
A G/CC Forensic Case Manager is on site for referrals upon release

## Our Impacts

### SUCCESS STORIES FROM RESIDENTS OF THE HERON IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I woke up in jail not knowing how I got there. I'm bipolar and I was having a manic episode. Prior to jail, I was living in my red Pontiac Sunfire. After jail, I was permitted to move into The Heron. Thank God! In school, I earned straight A's, I was captain of the basketball team and the Olympic festival team. Then it hit me on my 25th birthday. I stayed in bed until 4:30 p.m. - my first episode of depression. I'm now 56 and have suffered for 30 years with treatment-resistant, severe clinical suicidal depression and mania. At The Heron, I was finally prescribed the correct combination of medication. Hallelujah! This was an answer to many prayers especially from my parents, who have been married for 62 years, and my six siblings. I am no longer depressed or manic. The staff at The Heron work diligently to help me. They are incredible, professional, caring, and kind. The staff here cook all of our meals, book doctor's appointments, refill our prescriptions, and take us on fun outings - amongst other things. I absolutely love living at The Heron. I went from homeless to The Heron and feel so blessed."

"I love The Heron. I consider it to be my home. The people are nice and the staff go out of their way to please everyone. The food is good plus I feel grateful to God for giving me a roof over my head. It's close to family. I'm happy that it does not snow and we have lots of sunshine!"

## Let's talk **PARTNERSHIP**

**It takes a village to create a community.** Join our efforts to bring The Heron renovation and expansion to life by emailing Maureen Dunleavy, Regional Vice President at: [maureen.dunleavy@westcare.com](mailto:maureen.dunleavy@westcare.com).