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‘Holding Out for

SHELLY STAYER LEADS THE CHARGE TO BUILD A SHELTER IN IMMOKALEE FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS.

A Naples superpower in fund-raising, Shelly Stayer chairs dozens of luncheons and galas, but an event for human trafficking stands out in her mind.

Stayer, a businesswoman, inventor and philanthropist, was seated next to her fellow keynote speaker, a human trafficking survivor, when she noticed an unusual tattoo on the girl's shoulder. It wasn't a butterfly or a crescent moon or a lotus flower. The young woman had a barcode stamped onto her body.

It was a permanent reminder of her escape from human sex trafficking, a horrific world in which she was bought and sold daily.

Stayer decided to use the image of a teenager in profile with a barcode tattooed on her right shoulder in her media campaign to raise money for an emergency shelter in Immokalee. Stayer provided the lead gift of \$3 million for the facility that will bear her name. The 32-bed, 21,000-square-foot Shelly Stayer Shelter will provide specialized therapeutic care for human trafficking and domestic violence survivors.

“Once you speak to a human trafficking victim, you're pretty troubled. It's a very dark, disturbing world,” says Stayer. “This can happen to anybody's daughter or granddaughter, and it is happening in Naples.”

To combat the brutal crime of human trafficking, Stayer is using her dual superpowers of passion and persuasion to build the facility for some of the world's most vulnerable victims.

HELPING THE VULNERABLE

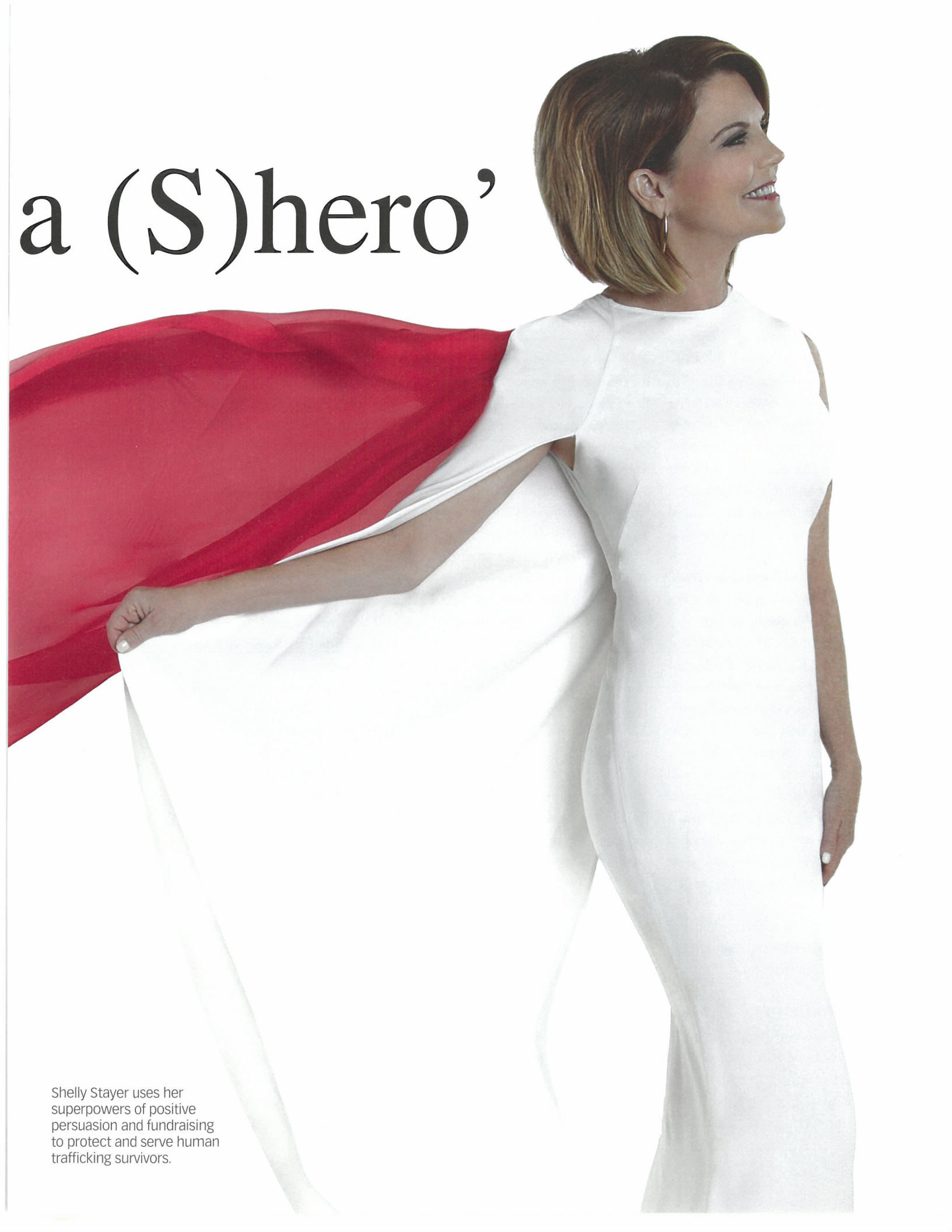
From the helm of Johnsonville, the family's Wisconsin-based sausage business, Ralph and Shelly Stayer have cast a wide net of support for the arts and education. The Stayer name graces facilities at the University of Notre Dame and Boston College, and the couple built four Boys & Girls Clubs. They support juvenile diabetes and cancer research, own an equine addiction recovery ranch for women, and Shelly Stayer serves on various boards including Artis—Naples and the Golisano Children's Museum of Naples.

Yet, it is the plight of exploited children that has always been near and dear to Stayer because



STORY BY KAREN HANLON :: HAIR BY METAMORPHOSIS BEAUTY STUDIO
BY SANDRA C :: MAKEUP BY ISABELLE HORVATH OF LAFEMME PERFUMERY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROLAND SCARPA :: ROLANDSCARPA.MYPORTFOLIO.COM

a (S)hero'

A woman with short brown hair, wearing a white, long-sleeved, form-fitting dress and a red cape, is shown in profile from the waist up. She is smiling and looking towards the right. The background is plain white.

Shelly Stayer uses her superpowers of positive persuasion and fundraising to protect and serve human trafficking survivors.



the perpetrators prey on the weaknesses of their victims. Growing up in a small rural town in Wisconsin, Stayer remembers when trick or treating was canceled, and she was forbidden to ride her bike due to the unusually high rate of abductions. The faces on the missing children posters haunted her, and she suspected that some were being trafficked.

When high-profile cases materialized in the national news in the early 2000s, Stayer began researching the topic.

"I found out that human trafficking is the second highest organized crime in the world," Stayer says, noting its alliance with drugs and arms trafficking.

To understand how this crime happens, she explains, there is a susceptible victim coupled with an exceptionally psychopathic, goal-oriented criminal. That pairing makes it hard to rescue the victims, who often return to their alternate world where drug and behavior addictions are the norm.

Only with long-term care and multiple sets of services and resources is it possible to exit that life.

SUPER STRENGTH

With her blond hair and a voice like actress Melanie Griffith's (with a Midwest accent), Stayer is often the sought-after face and outspoken voice for high profile, high dollar

fundraising in Naples. She has a flair for enlivening an event and for mobilizing support for a cause.

Take the time she helped arrange for Andrea Bocelli to perform at the American Cancer Society Bucket List Bash or when she made a personal commitment to raise \$1 million in one evening for The Shelter for Abused Women & Children while serving on The Shelter's Board of Trustees.

"When I sign on to chair an event, I set a lofty goal for myself," Stayer says. "Then I dig in and go to work."

"Shelly chaired the Mending Broken Hearts Luncheon in 2012 and launched the very first Gentle'men Against Domestic Violence Tailgate in conjunction with Johnsonville," says The Shelter's CEO, Linda Oberhaus. "This men's only event was an instant hit and has become the go-to event for men in Naples. Needless to say, Shelly met her goal."

LASER VISION

Shelly Stayer is scheduled to replace her husband as chair of the Johnsonville board later this year. The family business was started in 1945 and is the largest seller of sausage in the United States and 40 countries.

"I've spent 15 years preparing for this role," Stayer says. "I am the queen of practicality. When there is a problem, I ask, 'How do we fix it? What is

it going to take? What is it going to cost?' Let's get it done."

That ability to zero in on solutions is the hallmark of her career. She developed new products, such as the Sizzling Sausage Grill, for a convenient indoor grill. Moreover, she's partnered with existing businesses, such as Grace and Shelly's Cupcakes, that need assistance with marketing, public relations and sales. She considers business to be both career and hobby and refers to herself as a serial entrepreneur.

With increased job responsibilities at Johnsonville, Stayer is not concerned that business matters will usurp her fundraising time.

"I will be raising money forever. The building has my name on it," Stayer says. "There are enough hours in the day for sausage and shelters. I can do both."

And she has help.

ARSENAL OF WEAPONRY

Before a victim can be healed, she must be rescued, and that is where law enforcement plays a critical role.

"Our sheriff's department and our police here in Naples are so amazing," Stayer says.

The Collier County Sheriff's Office started the first federally-funded human trafficking task force in Florida in 2005. Between 2014 and 2017, the Human Trafficking

Fundraising continues for the construction of the Shelly Stayer Shelter in Immokalee for survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence.

CREDIT: COURTESY OF THE SHELTER FOR ABUSED WOMEN & CHILDREN



Unit saw 98 investigations into allegations of human trafficking, resulting in 20 arrests.

Detective Sgt. Wade Williams, who supervises the CCSO Exploitation Unit, says the victims have suffered some of the most severe trauma he has ever seen.

“Everything bad that can happen to a person, has happened to them,” says Williams.

His department uses a victim-centered approach.

“We prioritize the protection and restoration of the victim over prosecution of the trafficker,” Williams says. “The protection of human life is more important than putting someone in jail.”

“[The survivors] need this residential long-term kind of restructuring and rewiring of their lives. It is important to address all of the issues

ranging from drug addictions to trauma in order to stabilize them.”

Stable witnesses are more likely to show up for court to bring suspected traffickers to justice.

“If the victims disappear, relapse into drugs, become uncooperative or they die, we are going to lose the case,” Williams says, and the traffickers, often repeat violent criminals, will be free to recruit more victims.

COMBAT SKILL AND STRATEGY

Stayer attributes the first step in Collier County’s ability to help trafficking victims to law enforcement.

Her combat strategy then focuses on educating, influencing and inspiring people to help her provide long-term recovery opportunities.

“Now it is my turn,” Stayer says as she rallies her friends whose causes

she has promoted, endorsed and supported over the years. The generosity has been overwhelming.

“I have to tell you, people are very willing to help. As soon as the ad came out, friends said, ‘we’d like to have a fundraiser.’ Even in Starbucks, three people a morning are saying to me, ‘we want to help!’”

Her response?

“I keep it real. I say, ‘I’m looking for donations!’” Stayer says.

“When we moved to Naples, we did not change. I’ve never changed my accent. We don’t pretend to be things we are not,” Stayer says, revealing that this local superhero has no alter ego. “I am who I am: a Midwestern girl just trying to keep it real; just trying to help the survivors from this mean, wicked world that is called human trafficking.” ❄️

RISE Campaign: Respond, Inspire, Support, Empower

The Shelter for Abused Women & Children served 14 unduplicated victims of human trafficking from July 2016 through December 2017. For the fiscal year ending June 2018, the Shelter served 10 victims.

Long-term therapeutic care is required to return victims of this unspeakable crime to a life of normalcy. The Shelly Stayer Shelter will treat human trafficking victims in one wing. Domestic violence survivors, who require entirely different kinds of services, will heal while gaining empowerment in another wing.

The expected cost to build and endow the facility is \$18.1

million, and the RISE Campaign is \$3.6 million shy of the percentage needed to begin construction. Approximately \$9.5 million was raised as of press time with several naming opportunities still available.

Support of the Shelly Stayer Shelter can be made through The Shelter, NaplesShelter.org/Immokalee. Donations may be designated specifically for the “Immokalee Shelter.”

For human trafficking information, resources, prevention, education and enforcement, contact the Collier County Sheriff’s Office Human Trafficking Unit at 239-252-0060.