

PARADISE COAST

CITY LIFESTYLE™

OUR LADIES ISSUE

CELEBRATING LOCAL FEMALE
FOUNDERS, BUSINESS LEADERS,
AND PHILANTHROPISTS.

MOVING FORWARD
WITH FORTITUDE

MAY 2025
CITYLIFESTYLE.COM



LINDA MEAK: PHILANTHROPIC ADVOCATE

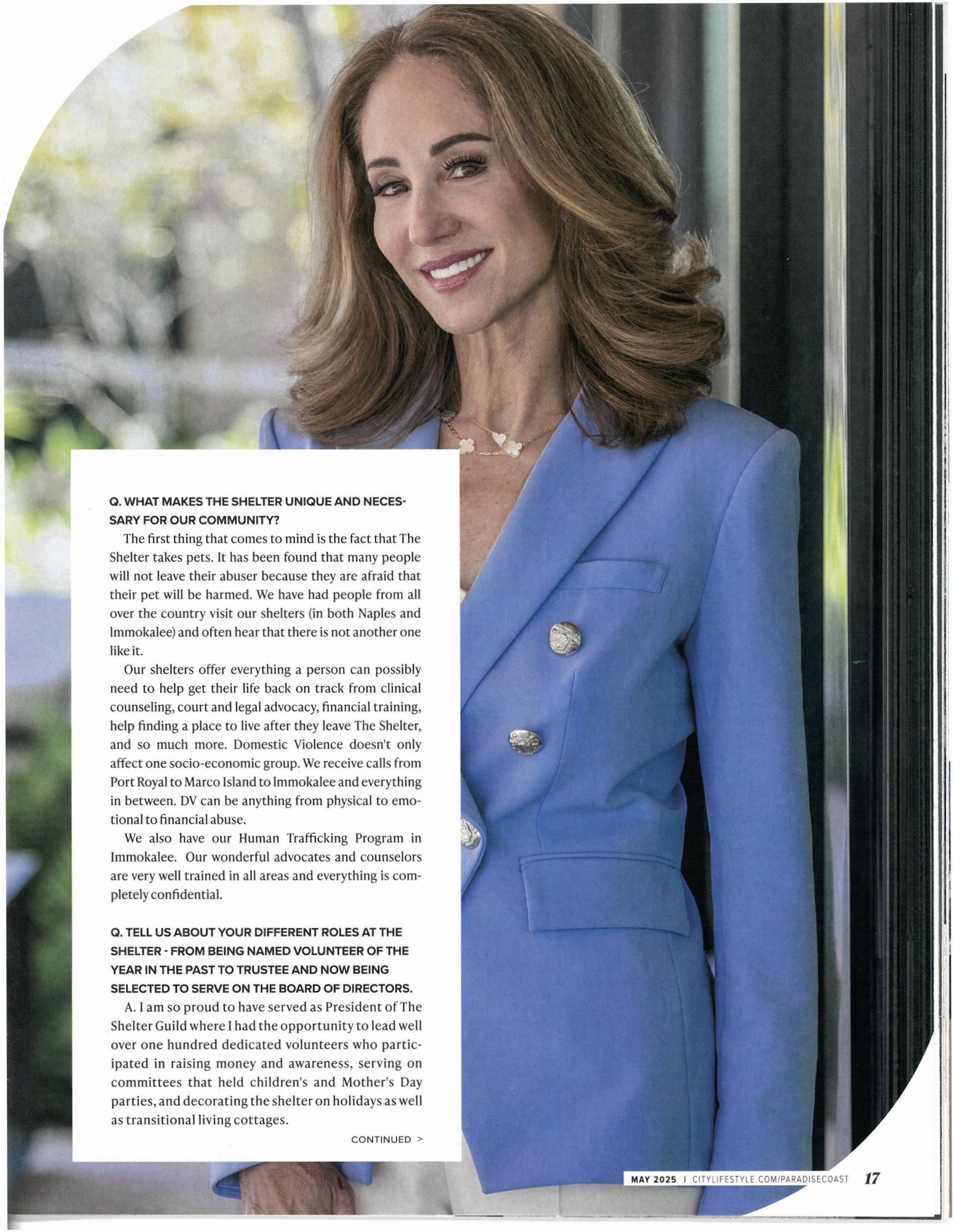
Q. WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO GET INVOLVED IN THE NON-PROFIT SPACE, AND WHY THE SHELTER, SPECIFICALLY?

A. After buying a home and spending the first few years discovering Naples and enjoying all that it has to offer, I felt the need to give back to this special community. I met the lovely wife of a man that was in my golf and tennis groups, and asked her how she likes to spend her free time since we never saw her at our sporting activities. She told me that she devoted much of her time to a nonprofit called The Shelter for Abused Women and Children. She invited me to a new member event to learn more, I jumped at the opportunity.

There, we had the opportunity to learn from CEO Linda Oberhaus about all of the different committees of the Shelter Guild (the volunteer arm). I also had someone close to me who was at that time in an abusive relationship, so that drew me in even more. I could not understand why she "just did not leave". I came to learn that it actually takes an average of 7 times for a person going back and forth to finally have the courage, strength, knowledge and empowerment to leave their abuser.

Giving Back to Our Community

ARTICLE BY JENN WIDEBERG | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAMANTHA BLOOM



Q. WHAT MAKES THE SHELTER UNIQUE AND NECESSARY FOR OUR COMMUNITY?

The first thing that comes to mind is the fact that The Shelter takes pets. It has been found that many people will not leave their abuser because they are afraid that their pet will be harmed. We have had people from all over the country visit our shelters (in both Naples and Immokalee) and often hear that there is not another one like it.

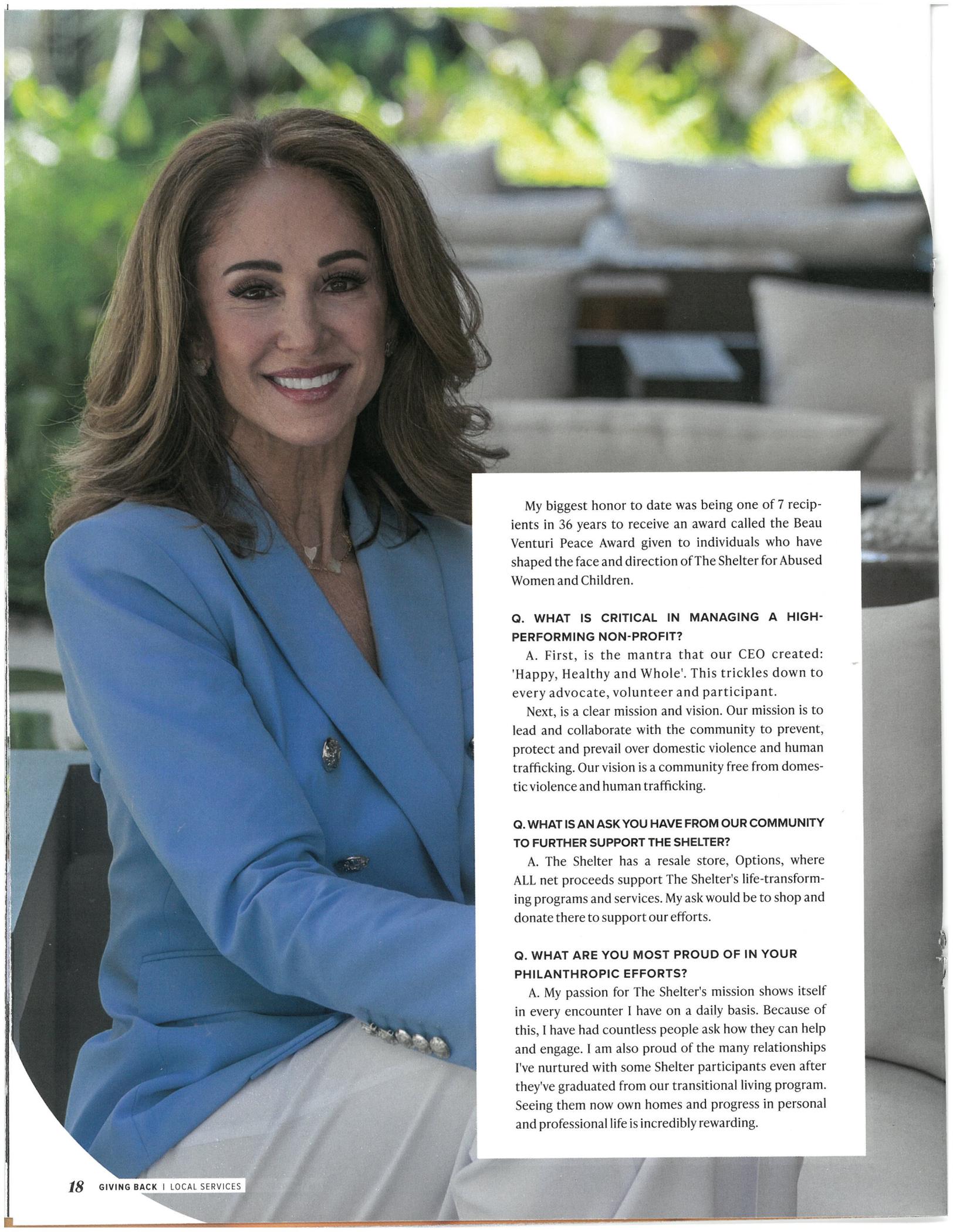
Our shelters offer everything a person can possibly need to help get their life back on track from clinical counseling, court and legal advocacy, financial training, help finding a place to live after they leave The Shelter, and so much more. Domestic Violence doesn't only affect one socio-economic group. We receive calls from Port Royal to Marco Island to Immokalee and everything in between. DV can be anything from physical to emotional to financial abuse.

We also have our Human Trafficking Program in Immokalee. Our wonderful advocates and counselors are very well trained in all areas and everything is completely confidential.

Q. TELL US ABOUT YOUR DIFFERENT ROLES AT THE SHELTER - FROM BEING NAMED VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR IN THE PAST TO TRUSTEE AND NOW BEING SELECTED TO SERVE ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

A. I am so proud to have served as President of The Shelter Guild where I had the opportunity to lead well over one hundred dedicated volunteers who participated in raising money and awareness, serving on committees that held children's and Mother's Day parties, and decorating the shelter on holidays as well as transitional living cottages.

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My biggest honor to date was being one of 7 recipients in 36 years to receive an award called the Beau Venturi Peace Award given to individuals who have shaped the face and direction of The Shelter for Abused Women and Children.

Q. WHAT IS CRITICAL IN MANAGING A HIGH-PERFORMING NON-PROFIT?

A. First, is the mantra that our CEO created: 'Happy, Healthy and Whole'. This trickles down to every advocate, volunteer and participant.

Next, is a clear mission and vision. Our mission is to lead and collaborate with the community to prevent, protect and prevail over domestic violence and human trafficking. Our vision is a community free from domestic violence and human trafficking.

Q. WHAT IS AN ASK YOU HAVE FROM OUR COMMUNITY TO FURTHER SUPPORT THE SHELTER?

A. The Shelter has a resale store, Options, where ALL net proceeds support The Shelter's life-transforming programs and services. My ask would be to shop and donate there to support our efforts.

Q. WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF IN YOUR PHILANTHROPIC EFFORTS?

A. My passion for The Shelter's mission shows itself in every encounter I have on a daily basis. Because of this, I have had countless people ask how they can help and engage. I am also proud of the many relationships I've nurtured with some Shelter participants even after they've graduated from our transitional living program. Seeing them now own homes and progress in personal and professional life is incredibly rewarding.