



News Release

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Charis House at Ministry Village at Olive Celebrates 15 Years of Life-Changing Ministry

In 2022, Charis House at Ministry Village at Olive celebrates 15 years of life-changing transformations for women recovering from drug and alcohol addictions. In Greek, the word charis means “grace, kindness, and life.” The goal of the Charis House is to see lives change, hope restored, and families reconciled through the power of Jesus Christ.

The Charis House is a three-phase faith-based recovery program in an intimate, home environment that is clean and safe. Residents attend daily classes with a Christ-centered curriculum, as well as weekly meetings at The Most Excellent Way substance abuse support group. The ladies take classes in anger management, relapse prevention, and power over addiction, in addition to parenting classes provided by CDAC Behavioral Healthcare. The Gospel of Jesus is poured into the ladies on a daily basis, in the belief that as they deepen their relationships with God, they will move further away from their lives of addiction.

Since opening in April 2007, more than 230 women have come through the program, some completing all 3 phases, but all being blessed by the program and encouraged by the teachers and staff who lead it.

Women who enter the Charis House commit to a minimum of one year for Phase I of the program. They live under strict guidelines and are held to high standards of conduct and behavior as they work through their substance abuse addictions as well as the traumas and emotional issues of the lifestyles that led them to the Charis House. After a minimum of one year of Christ-centered counseling and Bible-based classes on life skill development -- all while being monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by a House Manager -- the women are reevaluated. If they have met the standards of the Charis House and shown growth and stability, they are invited to go into Phase II of the program.

During Phase II, the women enjoy a bit more freedom from the strict regimen they followed during Phase I, but many things stay consistent. They must still attend church classes and Most Excellent Way meetings each week, but they can enroll in school, and pursue jobs. Many women earn their GEDs or begin college classes when they enter Phase II. They are still part of the Charis House family, eating meals together with the Phase I ladies, continuing counseling with the Charis House therapist, and living without

transportation. Since Phase II women are not permitted to have a cell phone or their own vehicle, a House Manager or Charis House volunteer must drive each woman to school or work. Phase II typically lasts around one year.

The Esther House serves as Phase III of the Charis House ministry. Women who have completed Phase II and meet the criteria for Phase III live in a home located on the Ministry Village campus. They pay rent on a sliding scale based on their income. They are permitted to have transportation, which they must provide, and can have cell phones, computers, and televisions – all things they have lived without during Phase I and II of the program. “This is an opportunity for the women to live on their own and become financially stable, while still having the accountability and support of the Charis House,” explains Vanessa Bettis, Director of Women’s Recovery Ministries. They must attend weekly church service, be an active participant in a connection group, attend weekly Most Excellent Way meetings, and stay involved with their Charis House mentors. They have strict guidelines in place for visitors and guests, and are required to comply with random drug testing and house checks. They also have more privileges and the opportunity to gain more independence – grocery shopping, keeping the house clean, paying utilities – all things that will be required of them when they are out in “the real world” on their own. But most importantly, The Esther House provides the ladies with a safety net – a place for them to practice living on their own but still have the accountability and resources of the Charis House nearby if they begin to falter.

"The 15-year anniversary of Ministry Village is a wonderful milestone, but we meet people every day who still desperately need help," says Drayton Smith, Executive Director of Ministry Village at Olive. "We are tremendously grateful for the support we have received from all of our donors and volunteers throughout these 15 years, and the opportunities we have had to grow our recovery program from one phase to three, supporting women as they gain freedom from addiction and learn to live independently again. Watching God transform the lives of these women who have suffered through addiction and all the hardships an addictive lifestyle brings, is a blessing every day. We are thankful that we can continue to share God’s love with each of them, and those who come after them."

The cost to house and care for one woman for one year at the Charis House is more than \$15,000; however, no one is turned away for inability to pay. Every dollar makes a difference in changing a life. To make a donation to Charis House, visit <https://ministryvillage.org/donate/>

To learn more about the Charis House at Ministry Village, visit <https://ministryvillage.org/charis-house-details/>.

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Ministry Village at Olive, Inc. (MVO) was founded in Pensacola in 2008. The mission of Ministry Village at Olive is to put the words of Jesus into action throughout our community – “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40, NIV) For more information about **Ministry Village at Olive, Inc.** and its work in the community, follow them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/MinistryVillage, on Twitter [@MinistryVillage](https://twitter.com/MinistryVillage), visit their website, MinistryVillage.org, or call (850) 473-4466.