

Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and strength



February 2026

My Journey to the Women's Refuge

In 1997, how could I have possibly guessed, in my wildest imagination, the Women's Refuge and I would someday cross paths? Both our stories began in Vero Beach that very same year. Women's Refuge opened its doors in Vero Beach in 1997 and I, a single mom, moved here in 1997.

In hindsight, I really could have used all the amazing resources the Women's Refuge has to offer. I was a bit of a mess, as my life in New York literally fell apart. I usually tell people I lived in the "land of excess" – I had a big corporate job, commuted from the suburbs of Westchester into Manhattan, and experienced traveling for business both domestically and abroad. And then it ended.

Looking back, the Women's Refuge definitely would have been a blessing for me! A place to reconnect with God, a place to remember who God says I am – and not how the world defined me. But apparently our paths weren't meant to cross for awhile. In fact, over the next 23 years I raised my children, worked at the local college, found a great church family and lived less than two miles away from this amazing place called the Women's Refuge.

It wasn't until after COVID, sometime in 2021 when I heard of the Women's Refuge. I was part of a small group of women who had been trained to lead a somewhat unique Bible study and there came a time in 2022 when the Women's Refuge invited us to share this particular study with three of their residents.



*Denise Schmeer
Biblical Counselor*

The first time I drove onto the property I noticed the change in the atmosphere – it was palatable. That expression, "you could cut it with a knife" – that was it. You could feel it, sense it: **God was in this place!** It was beyond remarkable. So I led the Bible study and was subsequently offered the opportunity to go through the Women's Refuge Biblical Counseling Course, written by founder, Donna Robart, and now have recently joined their staff as a Biblical counselor.

And so here we are – me and the Women's Refuge finally together 28 years later. What a blessing!

Message from the Executive Director



*Diane A. Ludwig
Executive Director*

There are moments in life when pain and loss seem insurmountable, leaving us searching for hope and restoration. Many have journeyed to the Women's Refuge, a place of healing, a sanctuary that offers more than shelter—it offers renewal. Our compassionate counselors and staff guide and support hurting souls to confront and address lifelong wounds and destructive patterns through God's Word.

With counseling, faith, and godly encouragement of others who have walked similar paths, healing is not a destination but a journey of rediscovering purpose and peace. Slowly, transformation happens, darkness gives way to light, the peace of God replaces despair. Here, brokenness can be transformed into hope and every story of healing has the power to inspire others. As we journey towards our heavenly home, we can carry the lessons of patience, grace, and the unwavering belief that healing is possible for all who seek it through Christ.



Renewal Weekend

God is our Refuge and Strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Ps. 46:1

February 5-7, 2026

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Conquering Codependency Weekend

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

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TESTIMONIAL

Ebony B., Resident
Nov. 30-Dec. 20, 2025

I was here. The support, encouragement and pure love I received is nothing short of incredible. I learned so many things, but my foundation is now solid in the Lord. The counselors, house manager, volunteers and Executive Director taught me that it's not about IF the storms in life come, it's when they do, I must have the proper

Before I came to the Woman's Refuge, I was confused, scared, emotional, hopeless and at the end of my rope. The moment I stepped inside, I felt a sense of peace. That only continued to grow stronger over the last few weeks that

tools to navigate them. With their help, I've learned how to forgive, control my anger, disappointment, fear and even negative thoughts, along with many other emotions, all with the word of God.

It's hard to sum up this experience in just a few sentences because being here had a profound impact on my life, and on my family's life. We are all completely changed because of what I have experienced at the Women's Refuge. My children, as well as my husband and everyone who knows me gets a new Ebony - one firmly rooted in Jesus Christ. I see hope in my marriage, when before, I saw none. With the counseling and tools I received, my husband, who refused any help for 8 months, agreed to a couples session. During the session, I was almost in tears, watching him really engage, listen and learn

from Lanie. This was an answered prayer. He was very impressed by her Bible knowledge, so much so, that he agreed to see her on his own. He has NEVER agreed to individual counseling.

CJ helped me realize that a lot of anger comes from abuse I endured as a child, even pointing out abusive patterns I didn't know were hurtful. Kathy Kaspar listened to me empathetically and I could feel her warmth, and love for God every time we spoke. She was the first one to show me compassion in a long time - before I even arrived. Every single woman I met or spoke with, I will continue to have fond memories of. Being at the Women's Refuge was truly a life altering experience. I pray I can continue receiving knowledge and help from here. God bless you all.

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