



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priority: HIGH

The Shelter Reopens its Doors after Three Years

Port-of-Spain --- In keeping with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services' drive to support the most vulnerable in their most critical time of need, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services earlier today, attended the re-opening of The Shelter, a safe house for victims of domestic violence. Witnessing the reopening alongside Minister Cox were John Scott Hamilton, the Chairman of The Shelter, Sharon Harford, the Chair of the Fundraising Committee and other specially-invited guests.

Aimed at providing a safe and secure refuge for survivors of abuse and their children, The Shelter offers temporary housing and counselling services to their clients as part of their rehabilitation. Some of the services offered include medical care, therapeutic counselling, skill set training, legal support and school placement for the children of residents.

On behalf of the Ministry, Minister Cox took the opportunity to commend the organization stating "Today's re-opening is a demonstration of the determination of this organization to continue its much-needed support of vulnerable women and children in Trinidad and Tobago. Engendering and supporting healthy functional families is among one of the core areas of priority at the Ministry and as such, through our National Family Services Division, outreach services are provided to families to assist individuals, groups, single parents and couples through counselling, advice, advocacy and referrals." Minister further drew reference to data from the National Domestic Violence Registry showing that assault by beating, verbal abuse, malicious damage and breach of protection orders are by far the most worrying offences associated with domestic violence. "These have increased by over 30 percent in some cases as a result of COVID-19. For example, assault by beating doubled in 2021; from 450 reported cases in 2019 to 865 in 2020 and was already close to 865 in March 2021" she highlighted.

As she addressed the audience, Minister Cox also noted that the Ministry's NGO Unit is capably resourced and most willing to collaborate to provide support and to ensure effective and efficient delivery of services provided by NGOs, FBOs and CSOs. She further added "As the Government continues on its path to recovery, while simultaneously developing a culture of resilience; the need for social and transitional and emergency housing has been placed as top priority towards improving the living standards and quality of lives of our citizenry. The MSDFS recognises the need for victims of such violence to advance to independent living. Therefore, we can be assured that this facility will be put to good use."

Speaking also, Chairman of The Shelter, Mr. John Scott Hamilton indicated that the organization looks forward to advocating for justice for survivors and will continue to provide holistic healing for the residents. “The building can now comfortably house 21 residents and consists of bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms, a counselling room, a tv/play room, living/dining room, kitchen, library, an area for art therapy and a computer centre and an outdoor play area for the children” he said. He also expressed his sincere gratitude to the Ministry and other benefactors of The Shelter.

The Ministry remains committed to developing partnerships in an effort to ensure that the most vulnerable are not left behind.

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For more information:

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On behalf of the Ministry, Minister Cox took the opportunity to commend the Chairman of the Organization, The Shelter



Chairman, Mr Hamilton gives Minister Cox a tour of The Shelter



Chairman, Mr Hamilton explains the purpose of each room to Minister Cox and NGO Coordinator, Cindy Heeralal