CONSTANCE COLLINS

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Moved by the sight of a homeless woman bathing in the fountain of what would be her last commercial development, Constance Collins concluded a 20-year, highly successful, for profit, commercial real estate, finance and business career in 2004 to found the Lotus House Women's Shelter in Miami, Florida.

Ms. Collins shepherded Lotus House from its humble beginnings serving 34 women nightly to today's model, state-of-the-art, comprehensive homeless services facilities, known as Lotus Village. Designed to be universally accessible, child friendly and serve high special needs women, youth and children, Lotus Village includes an in-take sanctuary, model children's wellness center, early childhood education and care center, evidence based child and family therapies, access to health and mental health care, an employment and education center, professional culinary center, healing hands salon, arts and activities lab, hydroponic farm, neighborhood health clinic, and currently under construction, a brand new, model neighborhood children's resource center at Lotus Village to provide deeper educational and therapeutic supports, diverse programming and greater access to health, legal and social services and community resources for the children, youth and families sheltered by Lotus House and its surrounding community.

Lotus House is now the largest women's homeless shelter in the nation, sheltering over 525 women, youth and children nightly, offering trauma-informed, wrap-around supportive services and enriched resources to help them heal, reclaim their lives and build the foundation for safer, brighter futures. Since inception, Lotus House has sheltered over 11,000 women and children and counting, with more than 85% exiting successfully from the shelter system. Ms. Collins attributes Lotus House success to use of trauma-informed, evidence-based, best practices, the hard work, love, compassion and passion of the expert Lotus House team, and the power of community coming together to save and change lives.

Those same principles for success explain the power of the National Women's Shelter Network, an initiative Ms. Collins spearheaded at Lotus House in the midst of the pandemic, to connect and join forces with women's shelters and safe haven programs from across the country. With domestic violence on the rise and women's shelters standing at the intersection of gender based violence and

homelessness, the imperative was clear. Women's shelters and safe haven programs across the country needed to come together in shared learning and community to advance best practices, elevate the voices of those with lived experience, and establish a powerful new voice for more resources to end and prevent homelessness for vulnerable women and children nationwide and the shelters that serve them. Over 20,000 miles on the road later, having personally visited nearly 100 shelters in communities large and small all across the nation, Ms. Collins now leads the National Women's Shelter Network which includes over 330 shelters, and growing. The successful inaugural conference of the NWSN in September 2023 in Miami, Florida convened more than 220 leaders from shelters across the nation and other experts in related fields to share information, innovation, best practices and cutting edge research. The NWSN is now a force on a national level, working with Federal officials to highlight critical gaps and needs and advance public policy initiatives to uplift women and children in need to end and prevent homelessness.

A dedicated volunteer, Ms. Collins is President and Executive Director of the National Women's Shelter Network leading the movement to end and prevent homelessness for the most vulnerable women and children in our country and the shelters that serve them. She continues to serve as President of the Lotus House Women's Shelter and its extended family of charitable organizations, recognizing the importance of remaining close to the ground in her service work. After nearly 20 years as a full time volunteer, she remains more committed than ever in her mission to end and prevent homelessness in our country. Her advocacy is deeply rooted in and informed by direct service to women and children in need, creating trauma-informed, evidence-based solutions that address the gender-specific needs of women, youth and children experiencing homelessness.

Ms. Collins helped author and served as the co-principal investigator in one of the largest service driven research projects ever conducted in the United States to understand more deeply the developmental progress, mental health and wellbeing, and trauma histories of sheltered children, as well as effective therapeutic interventions to heal, support and strengthen children and mother-child relationships impacted by trauma. She has conducted and guided research and intensive real world experience in a wide range of fields intersecting with homelessness: root causes of homelessness and the impacts of gender-based violence; gaps and needs analyses of gender-based violence and victim's support systems; collective impact models to elevate and amplify the impact of shelters and community providers; designing trauma-informed shelter environments, operations and programming; HIV and health care services in good samaritan clinics; LGBTQIA+ sensitive services; utilization of new market tax credit and complex financing to build shelter capacity and neighborhood centers; elevating and advancing persons with lived experiences in operations, programming and management; and building organizational infrastructure and capacity, fundraising and financing to support and advance nonprofit mission and impact.

Her education includes a Bachelor of Arts degree from Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut and a Juris Doctorate degree from University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado, in addition to Foundations in Contemplative and Palliative Care from the New York Zen Center for Contemplative Care. She has co-authored and received many awards for her work over the past 20 years on behalf of Lotus House. Ms. Collins is licensed to practice law in the State of Florida and the District of Columbia. For more information, please contact us.