

# NEWS RELEASE



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## Sanctuary for Sex-Trafficked Girls Receives \$350,000 Gift from Lazydays RV Employees

NEW PORT RICHEY, FLA. (Nov. 16, 2017) – Bridging Freedom, a new sanctuary in Tampa Bay area for survivors of child sex trafficking, today announced it has received a major gift of \$350,000 from the Lazydays Employee Foundation. The money will be put toward the construction of a four bedroom “gateway home,” which will be named Lazydays House. Lazydays is the second home sponsor for the complex, and Lazydays House will serve as the intake home for girls rescued from sex trafficking.

“This exceptionally generous gift pays for one of the most important components of Bridging Freedom’s therapeutic campus,” said Board Chairman and Pasco County Sheriff Corporal Alan Wilkett. “The gateway home will be the first step in a long transitioning process that will help restore the stolen childhoods to these young survivors.”

Speaking on behalf of the employees of Lazydays RV, headquartered near Tampa, Joe Myers, the foundation’s President, said the gift reflects the employees’ wish to help the neediest of children in our community, for whom they have raised more than \$1 million. “This is a contribution from Lazydays’ employees and our supporters to one of the most vulnerable parts of our community,” said Myers. “We are thrilled to be able to do something that will change lives for the better.”

Construction of infrastructure at the campus site began in 2016, and construction of the foundation for an eight-bedroom residential home funded by Sykes Enterprises began earlier this month. Construction of the Lazydays House is expected to begin in December. Five more homes are planned for the campus, and Bridging Freedom is seeking sponsors for those buildings.

Bridging Freedom’s mission is to combat sex-trafficking of minors by bringing restoration to those rescued and to help prevent new victims by helping to increase awareness and understanding of these horrendous crimes. A therapeutic safe home campus is vital to provide long-term, comprehensive care to these victims in a secure environment.

### **About Child Sex-Trafficking**

Sex-trafficking of minors is a form of human trafficking whereby a person under the age of 18 is forced to engage in a commercial sex act. Child sex-trafficking is a horrific crime that robs the innocence of its

victims and causes significant physical, mental and emotional trauma. In the United States each year, approximately 300,000 children – at the average age of 12 – are prostituted against their will, forced to provide sexual acts for up to 15 buyers a night. The average life span of a trafficked child has been reported to be only 7 years, due to the abuse and physical trauma they suffer.

Florida ranks third in the country – behind California and Texas – in the number of tips reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. The Tampa Bay area’s tourism, adult entertainment, and international seaport and airport industries create a lucrative and highly accessible environment for sex-traffickers.

Minor victims of sex-trafficking are typically kidnapped or have run away from home. Florida has approximately 30,000-40,000 teenage runaways and throwaways each year, some being abused by a family member or forced out of their homes. In the Tampa Bay area, 75 percent of trafficked children are runaways.

One out of three runaway teens will be lured by a sex-trafficker and forced to prostitute themselves within 48 hours of being on their own, according to the National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Throwaway Children (NISMAART-2).

#### **About Lazydays R.V. Center Inc.**

Lazydays RV®, founded in 1976, is an iconic brand in the RV industry. It operates the world’s largest recreational vehicle dealership, based on 126 acres outside Tampa, FL. Lazydays also has dealerships located in Tucson, AZ and Loveland, Denver and Longmont, CO. Lazydays RV has the largest selection of RV brands in the nation featuring more than 2,500 new and pre-owned RVs, over 300 service bays and two on-site campgrounds with over 700 RV campsites. Lazydays RV Accessories & More stores offer thousands of accessories and hard-to-find parts at all of our locations.

Lazydays also has RV rental fleets in Florida, Arizona and Colorado.

Lazydays RV has built its reputation on providing an outstanding customer experience with exceptional service and product expertise. More than a half-million RVers and their families visit Lazydays every year, making it their “home away from home.” Lazydays has been recognized as a “Top 50 RV Dealer” by RV Business and as one of Tampa Bay’s “Top Work Places.” The Lazydays Employee Foundation, supported by payroll contributions from more than 65% of Lazydays’ employees, has contributed more than \$1.7 million to make many historic changes for at-risk children in the Tampa Bay, Tucson and Colorado communities.

For most people, Lazydays RV isn't just the beginning of their journey; it's very much a part of their ride. To learn more,

visit [www.lazydays.com](http://www.lazydays.com).

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