

Response from Hope Villages of America About Recent Committee Resignation

Clearwater, FL – Hope Villages of America has recently had a volunteer committee resign from their support for our organization. Our position is that this was a response to internally questioning the behaviors of many of those volunteers. While we appreciate our volunteers, we have to protect the sanctity of our staff and constituents. Unfortunately, there have been multiple reports about the unpaid volunteer committee mistreating our staff, including personal verbal assaults body shaming female employees.

At Hope Villages, we love each and every one of our volunteers and supporters. It is not uncommon that as organizations grow, there can be growing pains. HVA has grown in the past years from 25 volunteers to 85. While this is a growth that results in helping more people in the community, it has left some of the long-time volunteers upset that their roles in the organization have changed.

Statement from Kirk Ray Smith, President & CEO of Hope Villages of America:

“What could have been a private matter has now been made public, and the reality of the situation that occurred has been distorted in the public eye. What is being said about me is not accurate. This is a case of these volunteers acting out and then their feelings being hurt when this was brought to light. Now those people have gone to the media to tarnish my character. This situation began within recent weeks a group of volunteers were emotionally abusive to HVA staff members. As the leader of the organization, when I addressed the repeated unacceptable behavior, including but not limited to body shaming female employees, they chose to go to the media as victims. These individuals have gone so low as to create threats to me emotionally and physically via a website and social media, truly harassing me personally and professionally. I have been forced to contact the NAACP and law enforcement to help stop these harmful attacks. As the CEO of HVA I will continue to focus on our mission of helping those in the Tampa Bay Area facing serious issues such as hunger, homelessness, and abuse.”

– **Kirk Ray Smith, President and CEO of Hope Villages of America**

Statement from the Hope Villages of America Board of Directors:

“We stand behind our CEO and Executive Management team and are evaluating the actions that have taken place. This will likely result in enhanced policies that protect staff and volunteers at HVA. Through Hope Villages of America, we are committed to promoting, protecting, and doing no harm to the organization. We provide hope restoration with dignity to those in need through innovative programs and services. Our organization focuses on helping those in the Tampa Bay Area who are facing hunger, homelessness, and abuse and that is what we will continue to do for decades to come.” – **Hope Villages of America Board of Directors**

About Hope Villages of America: *Established in 1967, HVA is a registered 501(c)(3) organization that addresses hunger, housing, and abuse in our community. This mission is advanced through three distinct but integrated divisions: Food Distribution & Basic Needs, Housing Stability Services, and Abuse Services. These divisions operate in more than 60,000 square feet of service space and serve more than 150,000 individuals who rely on them annually. For more information, visit hopevillagesofamerica.org or call 727-584-3528.*

