

## New apartment helps vets get back on their feet

*Barbara Carey Shuler Manor offers affordable housing to vets, elderly*

**By Kaila Heard**

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If Gwendolyn Cutler-Isom had to describe her one-bedroom apartment in one word it would be “great.”

“I love everything about this place!” she said.

Since April, the 54-year old Army veteran has been living in the recently-opened Barbara Carey-Shuler Manor in Liberty City.

The \$30 million apartment building is one of the newest completed projects by the non-profit organization, Carrfour Supportive Housing, which is dedicated to providing permanent housing and support services to former homeless residents of Miami-Dade County. In addition to providing affordable housing, the apartment building has also been outfitted with a fitness center, library, computer lab and children’s play

area.

Barbara Carey-Shuler Manor also houses one of only two office locations for the Operation Sacred Trust (OST) initiative. The local program was launched last year by a group of non-profit organizations including PAIRS Foundation, Carrfour Supportive Housing, Neighborhood Housing Services of South

Florida and Citrus Health Network to help very low income veterans and their families combat homelessness. The program offers case management, outreach and assists veterans in obtaining their VA and public benefits.

“Carrfour offers a wide range of supportive services for our residents,” said Cedric Halyard,



U.S. Army veteran Gwendolyn Cutler-Isom enjoys everything about her new apartment at the recently-opened Barbara Carey-Shuler Manor.

the veterans outreach director for OST program. “The most popular are the PAIRS resiliency workshops that help veterans build strong bonds with each other, reconnect with family, learn to communicate, understand their emotions and prob-

lem-solve.”

According to Halyard, who is also a veteran that was once homeless, “While affordable housing is an important foundation, helping our veterans have easy access to other support [services] is vital to their

long-term success.”

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Even with all of the effective supportive services nearby, many of the veteran residents are most pleased by the program’s staff members, says Floyd Glenn Merryman. Merryman, 58, had been homeless for nearly a year-and-a-half before moving into his apartment at the manor in February.

“I felt like I was the lowest person in the world when I was homeless,” he recalled. “But here they care about you and they even check on you every few weeks just to make sure that you’re alright.”

Halyard agrees that there is a feeling of camaraderie among the building’s residents and staff.

“It’s a common bond with all of us, regardless of the color of our skin or if we were homeless, that’s there because we were willing and able to put our life on the line when our country needed us,” he said.



A former homeless veteran, Cedric Halyard, now serves as the veteran outreach director for Operation Sacred Trust, a program dedicated to helping vets find housing and reintegrate into society.