

Leading written by CANDICE C. MUTSCHLER photography by FORREST MACDONALD By Example

TWO LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Imagine what could be accomplished if everyone had a charitable spirit, perhaps taking their cue from the Junior League of Sarasota – an organization of women committed to promoting volunteerism, developing the potential of women and improving the community through projects that lay the foundation for lasting change. One such project was the interior renovation of the Audubon House, a 16-unit downtown Sarasota apartment building that houses individuals with severe and persistent mental illness.

Brian Payne, Director of Coastal Behavioral Healthcare's Audubon Program, explains how the effort began. "A couple of years ago, we partnered with the Junior League to redo one



From left: Robin Roach (Junior League), Dr. Christine Cauffield (President & CEO of Coastal Behavioral Healthcare, Inc.), Leslie Joy Busler (Junior League), DeeDee Rice (Junior League President), and Brian Payne (Director of Audubon Program).

Clean and bright, the refurbished interiors provide a cheerful living environment.



apartment. That was the beginning of a unique collaboration made possible by the William G. Selby and Marie Selby Foundation, which recently provided a \$151,350 grant to fund the renovation of the remaining apartments."

Through the Audubon Program, some of Sarasota's most vulnerable citizens find housing. It's not a free ride, however. Residents (and there is a waiting list) sign a lease and are responsible for paying the rent. "People who live their entire lives with severe mental illness exist on very fixed incomes, so to be able to live in an affordable, nice apartment is genuinely appreciated,"

shares Brian. The Audubon Program is just one aspect of the organization's integrated system of care in mental health, substance abuse, criminal justice, prevention and intervention services.

THE RENOVATION

The project – led by Junior League volunteer Leslie Joy Busler, design consultant and owner of LJB Designs, and co-chair volunteer Robin Roach of Northwestern Mutual Financial Network – began with a flurry of activity in mid-December 2003. The goal: to renovate, furnish and make each apartment ready for new tenants.

Eight months later, every Audubon apartment had been completely refurbished, furnished and stocked with living necessities.

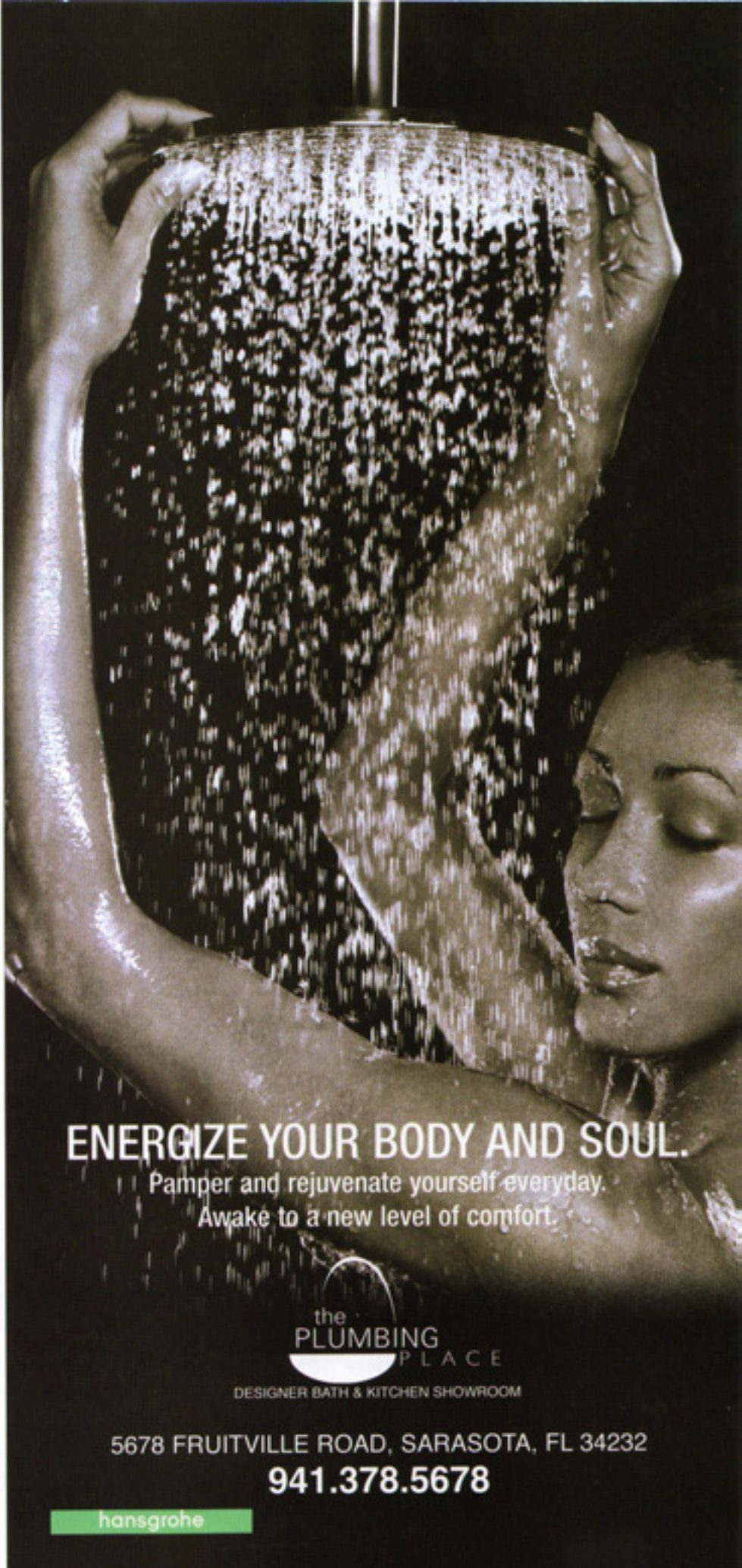
"The renovation focused on function and practicality," explains Leslie. "The apartments were in poor condition; they were basically gutted and made over from floor to ceiling." Old carpeting was ripped out and tile flooring installed. The walls were retextured to cover blemishes and painted a clean white. New moldings and baseboards completed the fresh look. Next, kitchen cabinets and countertops were replaced with simple units, creating a dramatic improvement in both appearance and functionality. Old refrigerators and stoves were hauled away, making room for safe, working appliances. In the bathroom, workers installed new shower and tub enclosures, sinks, counters and, where needed, new toilets.

The Junior League then went to work on decorating and stocking the interiors with necessary supplies, including pots and pans, linens, cleaning supplies – everything a home needs.

PRAISE THE CHARITABLE SPIRIT

Because a majority of the grant money went toward renovations, the Junior League relied on donations for furniture and household items. The "Sustainers" (people who've "retired" from the League) donated many items as well as money. "Our goal was to provide as much as possible so that those moving in with minimal possessions didn't have to buy anything," Leslie says.

Through the efforts of dozens of people and a generous grant from William and Marie Selby Foundation, the Audubon House not only has a new look but also provides a clean, safe environment in which residents can live comfortably despite the challenges they face. The charitable spirit – bringing new life to a special community – has left its mark on Sarasota once again. ■



ENERGIZE YOUR BODY AND SOUL.

Pamper and rejuvenate yourself everyday.
Awake to a new level of comfort.

the
PLUMBING
PLACE

DESIGNER BATH & KITCHEN SHOWROOM

5678 FRUITVILLE ROAD, SARASOTA, FL 34232

941.378.5678

hansgrohe