



NEWS RELEASE
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EscaRosa Coalition on the Homeless launches rebrand, officially becomes Opening Doors Northwest Florida

PENSACOLA, FL (May 3, 2018) – After more than 30 years of working to prevent and eliminate homelessness in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties, EscaRosa Coalition on the Homeless (ECOH) has launched a major rebrand initiative to reintroduce itself to the public and highlight the organization’s new, centralized multi-organization system—called “Coordinated Entry”—that is changing the way homelessness is addressed here.

Opening Doors Northwest Florida is the new name for the 501(C)3, and the rebrand isn’t just a logo tweak, but a new name, messaging and website to reflect the organization’s designation by the state of Florida as the lead agency in a new “continuum of care” system that unites partner organizations to attack homelessness on a local level. The multi-pronged system was designed to ensure that those experiencing a housing crisis are quickly identified, assessed, referred and connected to housing and assistance based on their individual needs.

John Johnson, ECOH executive director for the past seven years, introduced the idea for a brand update. “We are not the same organization that was founded 30 years ago,” he said. “Since the late 1980’s EscaRosa Coalition on the Homeless has helped more than 78,000 people—men, women, senior citizens, children, veterans—saving and changing lives, while also saving taxpayer dollars. In 2017 we took an honest look at our brand and asked if we had the necessary tools to successfully tell our story. Our new name reflects the mission we live every day of opening doors ... to reach, respond and restore those who are homeless and at-risk of becoming homeless.”

The rebranding process started with an informal survey, with representatives for the organization surveying members of the community, talking to donors, the board, management and community stakeholders to gather impressions and beliefs held about the organization. “The results showed that many in the community had limited knowledge of the scope of our work,” said Johnson. “We had 30 years of brand equity but there were some gaps between our own goals and the recognition and perceptions that others had of us. It was clear that we needed to provide clearer definition.”

But finding a name wasn’t as simple as it sounded. Ownership of website domains, trademarks, registered inactive organization names—all tried to derail the naming efforts. “Eventually a list of potential names was generated and vetted, allowing the board and staff to discuss them to see how they aligned with our values and what we stand for,” said Serene Keiek, marketing director.

Keiek and Johnson also held in-office meetings with staff and board members, recalling there were some emotional reactions to the name change. “The team made it very clear that any name change must clearly communicate our core values and not be a change just for the sake of change,” said Keiek.

As part of the rebrand, Opening Doors also launched a new website, openingdoorsnwfl.org, a hub of information for those seeking help as well as those who want to help. A digital *Street Survival Guide* gives immediate click-to-call access to resources and services for those in a housing crisis. Donations to cover the cost of specific items, such as a copy of a birth certificate or a hotel voucher for a family in crisis, are easy to make on the site.

Johnson is pleased with the new brand, although he knows this is just the beginning. “Our new name defines us, but it’s not the end of the story. We are opening doors because everyone deserves a safe place to sleep at night.”

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ABOUT OPENING DOORS NORTHWEST FLORIDA

Opening Doors Northwest Florida is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ending homelessness in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. Our philosophy is to give hand ups and not handouts. We work to permanently change the lives of those who are living, or close to living, without a home because everyone deserves a safe place to sleep at night. For more information, visit openingdoorsnwfl.org.

