

## **The Blessing of Partnership**

As Felicia Young planned her ministry's Fourth Annual Diamonds and Pearls Gala, she was searching for struggling single mothers that she could bless through the event. When she turned to Gulf Coast Community Services Association for recommendations of women to mentor, she was introduced to Gracewood.

"Many years ago, the Lord delivered me from alcohol, drugs and adultery," said Ms. Young, Founder of Felicia Young Ministries. "My own personal testimony motivates me to reach out to struggling women who have suffered abuse and various other crises," said Ms. Young, and mother of Tennessee Titan quarterback, Vince Young.

Ms. Young, the mother of professional quarterback, University of Texas icon and Houston native Vince Young, began her relationship with the mothers of Gracewood by sitting down and sharing her testimony and hearing the testimony of a few of the moms who currently call Gracewood home.

"Gracewood is already a vision of what I think a transitional program should look like: a true home, which allows these women to make true changes in their lives," said Ms. Young.

After getting to know the women of Gracewood, Ms. Young realized that one of the greatest ways she could bless the mothers of Gracewood was with attire the women could wear both to interviews and to their jobs.

Ms. Young not only collected donations to help Gracewood moms in the long term, but also treated the women with an opportunity to dress up and receive make-overs for the gala itself.

"I am blessed by the many components that make up Gracewood. I have been incredibly impressed by the staff, counseling, Bible studies and mothers who make up the ministry," said Ms. Young. "I have every intention of including Gracewood moms in future events, and hope to continue developing relationships there."

NFL mothers, players and dignitaries attended the event, donating clothes and jewelry and sharing testimonies to encourage and empower struggling women across Houston.

"Our moms had an amazing time at the event," said Debbie Rippstein, Executive Director of Gracewood. "We are so thankful for our partnerships with both Felicia Young Ministries and Gulf Coast Community Services Association. Together, we can continue to pull resources to make a difference in the lives of single mothers and children in the Houston area."

Gulf Coast Community Services Association exists to strengthen the educational, social, and economic well-being of children and families as they move toward independence and self-sufficiency. The organization has partnered with Gracewood over the past year,

making courses on financial literacy, first time home buying, savings programs, career readiness, professional development and entrepreneurship available to the ladies of Gracewood.

Gulf Coast Community Services Association has not only offered Gracewood a wide array of resources, but has also served as an imperative connection, creating valuable partnerships between Gracewood and organizations such as Felicia Young Ministries.