

Gracewood to sell southwest Houston campus after floods

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HOUSTON—Gracewood, a [Children at Heart Ministries](#) residential program for single mothers and children, will sell its southwest Houston campus that flooded Memorial Day weekend.

“Gracewood’s mission is to rescue and restore single mothers and their children by providing home, hope and healing,” said Gracewood Executive Director Debbie Rippstein. “It became very clear during the recent flood that we cannot ensure home, hope and healing at the Wanda Lane campus.”



Workers moved outdoors what was left of the possessions of single mothers and their children after a flood swamped the Gracewood campus in southwest

Houston. (PHOTO/Debbie MacKellar)The [Memorial Day weekend flood](#) displaced seven families who lost nearly all their possessions.

“While all the families that were affected have been relocated and gracious donors helped replace all of the belongings that were lost, Gracewood has been unable to find a safe and cost-effective solution for returning to the campus,” said Todd Roberson, president and chief executive officer of Children at Heart Ministries.

Trustees of Texas Baptist Children’s Home Services approved the decision to place the Gracewood property on the market, following a recommendation from the Gracewood board of trustees. Texas Baptist Children’s Home Services, a property-holding corporation within Children at Heart Ministries, owns the Houston property and provides it to Gracewood at no cost.

“The proceeds from the sale will be held for future investment in other Gracewood facilities serving Houston’s families who are homeless or at risk of being homeless,” Roberson said.

“While we are sad for the folks at Gracewood to leave this location, we are confident that this is the right move for future protection of those served there.”

Second flood since 2001

The Wanda Lane Gracewood campus is located a few hundred feet from Brays Bayou in Houston. The Memorial Day flood marked the second time the campus has flooded since it opened in 2001.

“Based on our history and the likelihood of future flooding, we could not return clients to this location without making major physical changes to the campus,” Rippstein said.

Although trustees explored multiple options, including elevating structures several feet, they could not find a cost-efficient solution the board believed would provide future clients a safe environment, she noted.

“We are all very sad to leave the peaceful, park-like setting that has been a refuge in the storms of life to so many single mothers and children who have experienced a fresh start in life there,” Rippstein said. “But we are confident this the right move for future protection of those we serve.”

Acquired new property in Spring Branch

Last year, the board voted to acquire 2.5 acres adjacent to Gracewood’s Elmview campus in Spring Branch, she noted.

“We have been praying about how we may best utilize this new property to expand and enrich the services Gracewood provides to single mothers and their children,” she said. “Our development of the new property is even more urgent now that the Wanda Lane campus has been lost.

“We are actively seeking input from many Gracewood stakeholders regarding the development of the new property in Spring Branch. And we look forward to clarifying our plans and sharing them with our donors and other friends.”

Based on reporting by Susan Walker from Children at Heart Ministries.