

## **The Lead Lady: A Journey of Service**

Once upon a time, in Hillsborough County, Florida, there lived a woman named Cynthia Keeton. Her story began in 1993 when she joined the Florida Department of Health as the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Coordinator. It was a time when lead poisoning among children was a pressing concern, especially in homes built before 1978 when lead paint was banned in the United States.

Cynthia was a pioneer in her field, being the first in her county to design a comprehensive Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. Her dedication to helping families with lead-exposed children earned her the affectionate nickname, "The Lead Lady." She tirelessly worked to identify lead hazards in homes and childcare centers, training others on how to spot the dangers lurking in peeling and chipping paint, both indoors and outdoors.

Her efforts didn't go unnoticed. The Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) recognized Cynthia's contributions and awarded a CDC grant on asthma, leading to the establishment of the Tampa Bay Asthma Coalition (TBAC). Through TBAC, Cynthia continued to support parents of asthmatic children, expanding her reach beyond lead poisoning prevention.

After 26.5 years of service, Cynthia retired from the Florida Department of Health on April 30, 2020. But retirement didn't mean slowing down for Cynthia. No, it was just the beginning of a new chapter in her life—a chapter dedicated to serving others as a missionary.

Nowadays, Cynthia lives her dream as a Servant Leader, channeling her passion for helping others into meaningful action. Whether it's cleaning, providing food, or being a chauffeur for the elderly, Cynthia's heart knows no bounds when it comes to serving those in need.

Her journey of service reached new heights in July 2021 when she embarked on a mission trip to Belize. Alongside fellow volunteers from Sent To Serve, Cynthia traveled to four villages, assessing healthcare needs for women and children and providing essential education. Sent To Serve, aptly named, allowed Cynthia and her team to utilize their skills and talents as instruments of compassion and grace.

But Cynthia's greatest service was yet to come. Inspired by her experiences in Belize, she set her sights on a monumental goal: building a Health Clinic in Belize to provide sustainable healthcare for those in need. Through Sent To Serve (Zimm), Cynthia continues to seek funding and support for her ambitious project, knowing that it will be her legacy of love and service to the world.

And so, Cynthia Keeton's story continues—a tale of dedication, compassion, and unwavering commitment to making the world a better place, one act of service at a time.