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**January 26, 2022 - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**Lawrence, MA**

## **Lazarus House Ministries Promotes Lawrencian, Carmen H. Vega, to Executive Director**

Lawrence faith-based organization, Lazarus House Ministries, appoints Carmen Vega to Executive Director.

Vega says she is a Lawrencian through and through and is not unfamiliar with the struggles the Guests of Lazarus House face on a daily basis. She was raised in this community, attending Middle and High School in Lawrence, and after earning a Bachelor's degree from Mount Washington College, a Master's in Education from Cambridge College and getting her LMHC licensure, she settled in her beloved Lawrence with her husband and children. Vega reflects, *"We are all only one life event away from homelessness or food insecurity. We don't judge. We welcome, we love, and we support."*

Rick Crowley, Board President said, *"We are thrilled that Carmen, who has been serving most recently as Program Director of Capernaum Place, has accepted the call to continue her service and leadership at Lazarus House Ministries as Executive Director. Her most recent thoughtful response and action plan to navigate the Covid Crisis at the Shelter and within the Ministry showed her ability to quickly address and adapt as things were rapidly changing – always with our Guests at the forefront. We are confident that Carmen's professional and personal experiences and prayerful passion for serving people facing poverty, homelessness and food insecurity will serve the Ministry well as we live out the vision the Lazarus House founders set in motion in 1983 - to welcome all in the name of God and treat each person we encounter with dignity and respect."*

Vega shares of her childhood, *"I was raised in the Hancock Housing Projects in Lawrence. My family, friends, and neighbors all struggled with the issues we see in a typical urban city - some of the same hardships that the families we serve at Lazarus House are working hard to overcome. Raised by a single mom that lost her job due to lack of reliable childcare, I was brought up to be a woman of my word. My mom taught me that my word was worth more than money because people could then trust me and rely on me. I think my lived experience has provided a solid foundation to serve families and individuals struggling with food insecurity, poverty, and homelessness with compassion."*

It's just natural for Carmen to give back to the community she loves and has been doing so for many years. She is an Associate Pastor at MAJES Worship Center in Lawrence and has been leading the worship team for over a decade. She has also worked in the Lawrence Public School System and still works at Family services of the Merrimack valley as a Licensed Mental Health Counselor working with young moms and dads.

Almarie Silverman, Director of Advocacy, says *"Carmen came to us in 2018 with a wealth of human services and social work experience. She has been invaluable to the advocacy team and we are here to support her in this new role, leading the Ministry with heart, faith, and experience. She worked in the corrections system and ran a young parent program. Carmen understands the intricacies of navigating government services for our Guests. Carmen comes to us with a "knowing" that is profound. From her personal history, to proven work ethic and compassion and understanding our Guests, and extensive human services experience, Carmen has carved a niche for this role that I believe no one else could fill."*

Ms. Vega was an integral part of the strategic planning team that developed the 3-year plan she will carry out in her new role. She brings an exceptional commitment to the Guests served by Lazarus House, a deep abiding faith, and passion for meeting Guests' critical needs. Carmen says, *"I am thrilled and ready to take on this challenge. I look forward to working with the Board, our dedicated team of Directors, and the staff team I already love and trust to carry out the Strategic Plan, and continue to meet our Guests' changing needs now and in the future. Let me paraphrase Philippians 4:13 and say 'We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us'."* Vega's background in the human services field and deep understanding of our Guests sets the stage for her to lead and align the staff to Lazarus House' Mission, Vision and Values on a daily basis.

Carmen Vega can be reached for comment at

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***Lazarus House Services:*** *Our aim is to provide what is needed most by families and individuals facing material poverty, homelessness, and food insecurity in the areas of Shelter, Clothing, Food, Advocacy and Community Resources. These core Ministries work simultaneously to provide emergency care, family enrichment, holistic programming, hope for a good future, and life skills to gain independence and sustain self-sufficiency. The people we serve are our Guests – cherished, beloved, and treated with the utmost in respect, dignity, and care. We believe that every Guest deserves the chance to thrive.*

***Lazarus House Mission:*** *To honor God in our work by serving every person we encounter with dignity and respect. We offer community, food, shelter, clothing, and advocacy services with an open and non-judgmental heart.*