

His Good and Perfect Plan, by Sonya Tyler, Director of Operations

We are so blessed at Interfaith, in so many ways. Being able to be the hands and feet of Jesus, through the support of our community, is a blessing to every staff member, our volunteers, and especially our clients. We always enjoy taking a look back at God's grace and blessings from the previous year, so we can marvel at His goodness, and pure and perfect plans.

Food drives were more plentiful this year – thanks to many churches and businesses that joined the “Bring the Harvest Home All Year Long” campaign, signing up for a week or month out of the year to provide food and hygiene for Interfaith. These groups of people showed up at the perfect time, with just what we needed to meet the need. We could spend countless pages listing the wonderful donors that helped to fill the gaps this year.

Our volunteers this year continued to amaze us with their time and talents that they unselfishly share with us. At the end of 2016, we had a total of 267 volunteers throughout all our ministry areas. These dedicated angels make it possible to provide the help that our clients need. We literally could not operate without them. Volunteer Groups such as Church of Hope's 3G Sunday, the First Baptist Villages, Meadowbrook and Oak Crest Baptist provided special one-day events from spring cleaning to food sorting, that were amazing blessings!

Our facilities received extra special blessings in 2016. For the first time ever, we had a staff member assigned to keeping all of our facilities' maintenance running smoothly. Steve Clem dedicated his time to doing everything from plumbing repairs, changing air and light filters, to lawn care and so much more. Additionally, we had two weekly volunteers (Dave and Constantine) that helped with projects, and between 8 properties/ministries, there's always plenty to do. Late in the year, after moving Steve's talents to the Warehouse full time, we hired Billy DeLong to continue the work. We are so blessed to have the resources and experience that these gentlemen offer.



Our shelter continues to bless so many without home or hope. The individuals and families that come to our door without any place to lay their head, are provided for in such an amazing way. Shelter staff members love on and pray with these folks to encourage and strength them, while providing training and tools such as budgeting and GED classes to change their lives for the better. Statistically, we were able to track our success rate in our shelter for the first time, and 37% were successfully housed after the 3 month program; 31% only needed us for emergency housing (staying less than two weeks) and the remaining we were unable to help for various reasons, including disciplinary action. Our new GED program had 10 enrollees with 5 successfully completed exams and a new recovery meeting group onsite was created for residents.

Our new grant program provided over \$98,300 of funding to expand our emergency medication provided to clients without insurance, adding much needed diabetic supplies and psychotropic medications. Emergency room visits were diverted by 90% of clients enrolled in this program.

Our Thrift Store worked towards replacing the storage barn that was burned to the ground last year. Meetings with architects, engineers and construction companies have provided plans for our new Warehouse Building for the store. Ground breaking started in November and we hope it will be complete in March 2017.

Story continued on Page 2

From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley



As we venture into a new year I always wonder what it will hold. How can I be used to serve God better this year? Whose life might I touch? Who will God put in my path to help me grow? More than anything I want my life this year to matter. After all, what other reason is there for having one? And then I'm reminded of a conversation I had recently with a new friend. She is a 70+ year old ball of energy that operates a Thrift Store with a pro-life mission in the west end of the county. She does this using volunteers for 100% of her workforce. Having a Thrift Store as part of Interfaith, I know how challenging this must be and I was just in awe of her. We shared our woes about days when everything goes wrong and we are trying to keep all of the balls in the air. It was nice to have someone who understood my hectic world. And then she told me about one particularly busy day she had experienced. When she finally got home at the end of that long and chaotic day she whispered to God, "thank you for helping *me* get through this day." And then she heard that still small voice of God whisper back to her, "thank *you* for helping me get through this day." (now let that sink in a minute) We truly are His hands and feet if we will allow ourselves to be. So, that's my resolution this year; to just be His hands, feet, mouthpiece, or whatever He needs me to be, to accomplish His plan. At the end of the day, He's the one in charge of it all anyway and I'm just His volunteer. I wish you all an extra special 2017 and pray that you find your "volunteer" position in His master plan.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

News from the Foundation

The Interfaith Foundation Legacies of Love event is scheduled for February 14th at the Ocala Hilton. We are looking for table sponsors for \$500 (table of 8) and event sponsors at \$2,500. Proceeds this year

will benefit Interfaith's Center for Life. For more information about helping sponsor or attending, please contact Karla at 352-209-7045 or Karla@iesmarion.org.



Karla

His Good and Perfect Plan, continued...

Our backpack program, Food 4 Kids, ended the 2015-2016 school year with a total of 1,700 children, in 34 schools in Marion County, which provided a total of 220,016 meals. Fall of 2016 has kicked off and is providing for the great need for these elementary aged students and their siblings.

Our biggest blessing by far was God providing a building for a free medical clinic. The Center of Life's grand opening in August expressed our joy to the community that the once Womens Center would become a building of healing and hope. Hope Clinic, our partner that provides primary medical care in the free clinic, has been a blessing to so many in our community already. We are excited about plans for free dental, eye and mental health clinics to join the Center for Life family, expected to start in early 2017.

We've met clients in such great need, with stories of heart-break and a sense of hopelessness. But at Interfaith they were blessed not only by basic needs such as groceries or medication, but also by a kind word, a sympathetic ear, and even a prayer to provide hope for tomorrow.

And as always, it would not be possible without the support of this great community. Our donors are the lifeblood of our ministries. Each dollar that's donated, every can of beans that arrives at the Warehouse, helps to complete a story of compassion and love. It fulfills God's will for us to serve His people and help those that are in need. Thank you to everyone that made 2016 such an amazing year – and we all look forward to what God has in store for 2017.

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11

Special Gifts

In MEMORY of:

Kathleen Gamble

By: Bonnie Jean & Clifford Miller, Jr

E L Foster

By: Barbara and Vic Musleh

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Michael and Diane Finn

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Mr & Mrs Wayne Davis

Mr & Mrs David Witter

Mr & Mrs John Duggan

Mr & Mrs John Woelfel

Mr & Mrs Harold Schinman

By: Tim and Lou Petty

Would you like to honor a loved one? The individual honored or their family will receive a letter of acknowledgement. Contact Kayla at 629-8868x202 or kayla.grimsley@iesmarion.org for more information.

Lunches Packed with Love by Jessica Rodriguez

The week of Thanksgiving was very busy, as we were serving over 100 people per day in our intake office. On a Tuesday morning, we received 50 handmade bags from the first and second grade class at Grace Christian School. Each had a thanksgiving theme on the outside, and on the inside was a turkey and cheese sandwich, snacks, a water bottle and MOST importantly a scripture verse. We were all so touched and moved by their kindness, thoughtfulness and willingness to share the gospel with those in need. As we passed out the lunches to our clients, they were so happy and appreciative – I even got some pictures! We are so thankful to the teachers and Grace Christian School first and second grade class for thinking of those in need this holiday season.

Our Thanks Goes To...

A huge thank you to our County Commissioners for caring about those in need and helping food pantries in Marion County



with the annual Bring the Harvest food drive! Interfaith received nearly 3,000 pounds of food!

Special thanks to all the businesses that stepped up in November and December to provide food and hygiene drives and especially turkeys for our clients. Here is a short list the many awesome donors: Marion County Tax Collector's Office, American Panel, Martin Marietta, Marion Landing, Southpoint Church, Ocala Eye, Legacy School, East Marion, 1st Quality Title, Walmart (Shores), and Mojo's Grill.

Interfaith wants to say a big thank you to Ocala Dermatology and Skin Cancer Center for a generous \$5,000 gift of support. They are faithful partners and support our efforts every year.



Shout out to Forest High ROTC for over 4,000 pounds of food collected!! These kids know how to get things done! (pictured above)

Twilight Cruisers collected \$10,000 worth of toys and presented us with a gift of \$4,520 to help us with our mission. Special thanks to Steve Hawter and his team for putting on another successful car show at Don Garlits Museum of Drag Racing! (Steve & Karla pictured right).



Special shout out to East Marion Elementary for their awesome food drive of 5,115 items from the students and faculty! Special thanks to Principal Rusty Corley and Guidance Counselor Janice Ray.

Church of God of Prophecy blessed Interfaith's clients with Christmas cards with restaurant gift cards in them. What a blessing!



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Check out our website at
www.IESmarion.org



MISSION STATEMENT

Interfaith Emergency Services is a community of faith called by God to offer emergency assistance without judgment to all persons in Marion County.

End of Year Blessings in our Shelter, by Rebekah Miller, Resident Manager

The end of the year gets very busy for the shelter. With the cold weather, comes a greater need. All of us are thankful for everything God has done. The residents and I reflected at Thanksgiving on all that we had to be thankful for, and we were super blessed with dinner providers that brought turkey and all the fixings for the dinner.

Some of the girls were able to go home and spend time with their families and loved ones. This was a real treat for many and filled their hearts with joy. I also had many playdates with the resident’s children - playing games and working off some of the sugar they received for the holidays.

As Christmas approached, we were busy putting up trees, making decorations and baking cookies, and singing Christmas carols. Everyone shared moments in their lives that they remember during the Christmas holidays. Nothing is sweeter than the joy of seeing the faces of the children on Christmas morning. Living in a shelter is tough, but it doesn’t mean that Santa cant find good little boys and girls and supply toys and treats for them. My heart was full with the celebration we had for the birth of our Savior. Thank you to everyone throughout the year that give financially or in kind donations to our shelter – you are helping to change lives for the better. God bless you!



*Want to support a great cause? Have a passion to help kids, feed the hungry, or provide for medical needs?
Look no further than Interfaith. There are lots of ways you can make a big impact in your community.
To find out more, call Kayla Grimsley at 352-629-8868 x202.*