

To Change Someone's Story, by Sonya Tyler, Director of Operations

Where do you go when it's raining? It seems a silly question, but for most of us – the answer is easy. Whether we're outside working in the yard, or taking the dog for a walk, when it starts raining - we go inside. What if you didn't have an "inside" to go to? What if you didn't have a shelter away from the weather? Lately, we've had torrential rains, to the point where all of us were begging for it to stop (as much as we needed the rain). But think about not having a home or safe place to be when a storm hits.

I found George, pictured right, this morning when I arrived at Interfaith. I love that he was resourceful enough to find a piece of tarp that would keep him somewhat dry. We brought George inside today to get him food, but we really couldn't help with the one thing that he desperately needed – a permanent roof over his head.

George is waiting. Like so many of our homeless friends, George is waiting for a solution. Sometimes life can be so overwhelming that you don't even know where to start to try and fix things. And at Interfaith, we understand and realize it's all about one step at a time.

Thanks to our partnership with the Marion County Tax Collector's office, we were able to help him get an Identification Card. Now at least he can get more services in the community. However, George needs so much more. We could tell by talking to him that George most likely needs to see a mental health counselor, so that he can get healthier and more stable. After a referral to the Center for Life for those services, our staff can hopefully continue his momentum to receive housing. Perhaps one day, George can have a place of his own. How cool would it be, if a year from now, George is sitting at his kitchen table, looking outside at the rain, instead of being in it.

In George's story, God led him to Interfaith so that he could start his journey to a better life. We don't have a perfect plan for his life, but God certainly does. God used Interfaith to step in and be His hands and feet, so that George could have a new life. We are honored to be a part of that journey.

Can God use you on someone's journey? There are so many ways to help:

- Volunteering in one of our ministries allows you to meet the next George (or maybe a Susan, that's a single mom that just needs some groceries, or a Tom, that just needs someone to pray for him).
- Donations like food, hygiene or for this time or year... raincoats, umbrellas and ponchos, are such a blessings to those without.
- Financially, your support of Interfaith, provides for those ID cards, and the resources at the Center for Life, and so many other important services that are needed to change someone's story. Whether you can donate \$5 or \$500, each dollar can transform someone's life.

Will you consider giving today? Donations can be mailed to Interfaith Emergency Services, PO Box 992, Ocala FL 34478, dropped off at 450 NW 2nd Street, or you can give securely online at www.IESmarion.org.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The Thrift Store is having a Christmas in July sale all month! Stop in and get some awesome deals while they last. Also, on July 14th, Santa will be stopping by (during his summer vacation) to say hello! He'll be available for pictures and all sorts of surprises! Stay connected on our Thrift Store Facebook page for more details.

From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley



I often get asked about the homeless and “how did they get that way?” I really get a kick out of it when I hear people say “they want to live that way.” Well, I am no expert on homelessness. I encounter them regularly but I just see them as people. And what do I learn from treating them as regular ole people?

I learn that *Timothy* is 19 years old and grew up in foster care. He ran away when he was 17 and has been living, or rather surviving, on the streets ever since. I doubt very seriously as a child Timothy chose to be abused or neglected or whatever the case was that landed him in foster care. He had no choice in that matter. I doubt very seriously he would have chosen to end up as a young adult with no real life skills and no family support whatsoever. I’ll bet that he prayed as a child to be adopted by a wonderful family that would allow him to grow up like a “normal kid.” No...I’m pretty sure he didn’t choose this path. His life circumstances were just different from most.

And then there is *Carl*. He’s such a sweet gentle soul, but completely lost in the delusions that fill his mind due to his mental illness. I’m sure someone would hire him because he’s willing to work. He even came to me asking how he could start a non-profit to help all the homeless people. And then he got arrested for making a false report when he called the police to report a murder that never happened. Of course he was so confused when he couldn’t answer the questions the police asked him because he was sure he saw something. Thank God for Judge McCune and the mental health court. He may get some help that he desperately needs through that program.

And then there’s a sweet little woman I know as *Kelly*. She is quiet, timid and kind. She stays to herself but is very friendly if spoken to. I’ve wondered so many times why she is homeless. She doesn’t smoke, drink or do drugs. She’s nice and conducts herself appropriately. One day in casual conversation, I asked her about her birthday. To my surprise she knew the month but not the day. At that moment I realized that she doesn’t have the intellectual capacity that most are blessed with. Of course you can’t tell that by looking at her, so I can see why people would assume she likes being homeless. She’s learned to compensate amazingly well.

I’m sometimes filled with awe of these friends God has blessed me with that have coping and survival skills beyond anything I can imagine. They don’t complain about their circumstances. They don’t beg for help, but receive it graciously if offered. But I am certain of one thing - I don’t believe any of them would choose their circumstances, although they have learned how to accept them. Sometimes I wish I had that coping skill myself. I’d be much more content if I could accept the things I am powerless to change. But if I did have the power to change one thing, it would be how we as a country take care of our mentally ill and intellectually challenged. So when you see someone who lives without appropriate housing, please don’t be quick to judge. There may be more to the story that you can’t see with the human eye.

But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” 1 Samuel 16:7

When Love Goes Further than you Think, by Koya Harris, Intake Manager

Meet my friend Rachel. Homeless, without income and insurance, having a chronic illness, Rachel was introduced to us by her neighbor. She receives many services such as prescription assistance and medical treatment at the Center for Life and food from our Pantry. She also attends our smoking cessation classes and Christian Counseling,

When interviewing her today, Rachel started to cry. I asked her why and she stated “because I feel so loved here. You guys make me not ever want to leave.” Rachel once lost her faith and didn’t want anything to do with God, but through Interfaith, her faith has been strengthened. When asked what keeps her coming back she stated, “What other place can you go to get prayer, bible study, and help for your physical needs too? I found God here.”

If you ever wonder how far your donation (love) goes, here’s your example. You, our donors keep us in business every week to impact lives daily. We appreciate you!



Rachel and Koya

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. Romans 13:8

Special Gifts

In MEMORY of:

Bill Cronen

By: Eileen Cronen

Keith Bradshaw

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Victor "Bart" Lewis

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David Albright

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Mervin Williams

Emily Gawlik

By: Roger and Marilyn Laible

In HONOR of:

Law Enforcement & First Responders

By: Lois Dannels

Katia Simmons 50th Birthday

By: Karen Kuperberg

Bill Cronen, Jr

By: Eileen Cronen

A Special Gift

Give a gift to someone special - an honorary or memorial donation in their name to Interfaith! The person honored (or their family) will receive a letter of acknowledgement.

Please contact Kayla for more info at 629-8868 x202 or by email Kayla@IESmarion.org. Mail donations to PO Box 992, Ocala, FL 34478.

If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as noonday.

Isaiah 58:10

Many Thanks to...

Special thanks to these beautiful young people and their awesome leaders from St John Lutheran's Church who planted and mulched at our duplex today. What an incredible blessing for the ladies who live there. Way to go! (Group pictured on right).



Thanks to the recent food drives we received from Marion Landing (258 pounds), Trinity Baptist Church (596 pounds), AAA (32 pounds), College of Central Florida (501 pounds), First Baptist Church Ocala (314 pounds) and Countryside Presbyterian (340 pounds).

Housing Crisis Creates Barrier

Many individuals do not put much thought into where we will sleep on a nightly basis or where our next meal will come from. Often, we take for granted the luxuries of "home." We cherish our comfy beds and relax in the air conditioning during the hot Florida summer months. For many Marion County families, these luxuries are non-existent. A hot car, under a tree, or an abandoned building may take the place of adequate housing. A loss of a job, a lapse in sobriety, or a life altering decision may have led to their downfall and despair.

Interfaith serves the community by offering a safe place for families at our shelter. A Case Manager assists these individuals and families by providing resources and tools needed to succeed while becoming independent again. Individuals participate in parenting, bible study, budgeting, AA/NA, counseling, life skills and GED classes which are provided by many of our awesome and dedicated volunteers. Once they have completed the program, they begin the next chapter of their lives which entails housing.

Currently, the rental housing situation in Marion County is suffering. Due to the housing crisis, there are very few affordable rentals in the area and the situation isn't getting any easier. The number of low income families is on the rise due to increases in the cost of living as well as other barriers such as criminal history or substance abuse issues.

Since January we have been able to house more than 9 families, all because landlords took a chance and gave these deserving families an opportunity to start over. We are looking for landlords that are willing to help give more families this amazing opportunity. If you are a landlord or know someone who is renting a place please call me at (352) 629-8868 x 205.

by Sam Maynard, Shelter Case Manager

Benefit for 8 Year Old Ayden at Thrift Store

Ayden Morgan is a bright 8 year old boy with a rare brain cancer called Pilocytic Astrocytoma. He has been undergoing treatments since he was 3. His cancer is inoperable and in a dangerous location that has caused him to go blind. Ayden will never be cancer free and will undergo treatment for his life span. If you have been blessed to meet Ayden, you know that he is an incredible, delightful young man with a beautiful spirit that can light up a room with his words. Even though he can't see with his eyes, he sees with his heart and sees the true side of people from the inside out. His mother, Tiffany, knows best that it's how you perceive life and that anything can be accomplished through love.

How can you help this family? Interfaith Thrift Store will be holding a bake sale for Ayden on Saturday, July 21 from 10-2. Please stop in and check it out! All proceeds will go directly to Ayden and Tiffany for treatment and travel expenses.

Please contact Shannon at 352-351-3541 if you have any questions or would like to volunteer to help this extraordinary young man.



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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.

Food Drives Needed, by Volunteer Kathy Dunston

We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to our local post offices and the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) for their hard work in the Stamp Out Hunger National Food drive that was held on May 12th. The largest food drive in the nation, usually supplies several months' worth of food that Interfaith shares with many food pantries throughout the county.

As a volunteer in Interfaith's Warehouse, I see the needs every week and the families that we help. Everyone is sincerely grateful for the blessings from our postal partners and the community! After speaking with Steve Clem, Warehouse Manager, we learned that the total food collected was significantly lower this year at 53,445 pounds (last year's total was 113,243 pounds). Steve told us, "With school out for the summer, the need for food will only increase, and chances are, this food supply will be very low by the end of July."

Did you know that according to USA Today, one in seven Americans rely on food pantries and meal service programs to feed themselves and their families? Most of our clients are considering the 'working poor' and rely on Interfaith to help get them through the rough times. So although we have food at the moment, we need to be looking ahead to food drives – both large and small! And at the current time, we are extremely low on toilet paper and hygiene products. The need is great.

If you can help with a food drive – please contact Steve at Steve@IESmarion.org or call (352) 629-8868 x212.

Volunteers Needed

Thank you to all of our snow bird volunteers that spent their winter with us. We hope you enjoy your summer!

Since many of our volunteers leave during the summer months, we have lots of holes to fill in our schedules. We are in need in each and every department, from our Food Pantry, to our Intake Dept and our Shelter. Our Thrift Store is going through a transition and needs many hands to organize, sort and price donations. Interfaith is a great place for God to use your gifts and talents. If you have been meaning to become a volunteer somewhere please let now be the time and Interfaith be the place, we need you!

Contact me at 352-629-8868 x210,
Tina.Reid@IESmarion.org or online at
www.IESmarion.org. **Tina**