

Stronger Together, by Michelle Collier, Shelter Manager

No one gets out of a crisis alone. We are beyond grateful for all of our community partners. This picture shows so much success!

Arlene and Tina: Arlene found herself in a situation where due to her choices she was in a dark place and unable to keep her apartment. She started out with our partners at His House for Her. There they were able to help Arlene work through some of her challenges. Tina was also a resident at His House for Her. She worked their program successfully and was ready to graduate. The shelter team attended both girls' graduation and that night we brought Tina and Arlene into the shelter to help them on the road to becoming housed again. We reached out to Shepherd's Lighthouse and they were able to help secure an apartment for Arlene. Today Arlene is working and housed. Tina was able to get her benefits and a job and is now stably housed.

Arion found herself homeless with three little boys under the age of three years old. This young mother was determined to do what was right for her children and herself. She reached out to Better Together (they help foster kids while moms work on their challenges to end her homelessness). Unfortunately, Arion's kids have some special needs that could not be met and they reached out to Interfaith for shelter. Luckily Arion has been able to get the help she needs for her kids, became employed and moved into her own place at the end of last year.

Jessica is a single mother of three and due to circumstances beyond her control she needed help with housing. She started our shelter program to rebuild her life for her children. She has attended our discipleship class on Saturday evenings, Praying Princesses, and she put the hard work in. Today Jessica is working full time, the children are thriving, and she is housed.

All of these ladies capitalized on the opportunities presented to them by attending and graduating the United Way Marion County Strong Families Program. This 15-week program helps solidify all the things they are working on while in shelter and due to their dedication and will to succeed, all four of these ladies received perfect attendance.

All of these ladies received prayer, mental health counseling and guidance from the shelter team and case managers while staying at the shelter and following our program. We are thankful and blessed to be part of a community that cares and helps others by partnering together.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25

Update from Karla

For those who read my article back in February about the young man we helped, there is a happy update! This young man reconnected with his mother who had overcome an addiction and is 6 years sober, owns her own business and desperately wanted to reconnect with her son. She came down to Florida to meet him for the first time since he was a young child and it was like a scene from a Hallmark movie! The young man has returned to his home state where he has a home, a job, a car, and a bright future as he plans to enroll in a college he's had his heart set on. We couldn't have hoped for a better outcome. God definitely heard our prayers on his behalf.



The ladies at Strong Families Graduation: Arion, Jessica, Michelle, Tina, Yanique, and Arlene

From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley-Greenway



What a year we are having! We've already had 3 major fund-raising events and are gearing up for 2 more! I want to offer a special thank you to those who sponsored and/or attended our Legacies of Love in February, The Brick City Beer & Wine Festival in March and the Interfaith High Tea in April. We were also blessed to receive donations from the annual Tax Collector's Car Show and the On Top of the World, Pro-Am Golf tournament. We are so blessed by all of the kindness and support from our community. But wait....there's more! We are getting ready for the annual Letter Carriers' Food Drive! Every year, the Saturday before Mother's Day, the mail carriers in our county collect food left by mailboxes and pass it on to local pantries! This donation of food is critical to keeping our shelves stocked for the summer months. If you're new to the area, look for a plastic donation bag in your mailbox the week before the event. On that **Saturday morning, May 11th**, just put a few cans or boxes of food in the bag and put it in, on or at the base of your mailbox and it will be picked up and sent to a local pantry. Interfaith LOVES our local letter carriers! They work so extra hard this one day a year to help our local families in need. If you leave some food, you might want to leave a little thank you note for the letter carrier as well. With everyone in the county pitching in a little....we end up with a lot!



A brand new event is coming this year in June. Dress to the Nines is a fashion show with local celebrity models sporting clothes from our Interfaith Thrift Store. You will be impressed to see the high fashion that is available in our store. Our Thrift Store funds our prescription medication assistance ministry and our Center for Life where people can get help with health related needs including medication, counseling, medical exams and dental services. The proceeds from this event will also support this area of our ministry. **The event is June 13th at 6:00pm** and tickets can be purchased at the Reilly Arts Center.



While events are a lot of fun and a great way for us to share our story of how we help people, I never take for granted the churches, individuals and businesses that send us a donation just because they believe in our mission and care about those we serve. Whether you make a gift quietly online or via a check in the mail, you are our life's blood and the reason we can give hope to the hopeless. It is my constant prayer that God blesses all of our donors in a special way.

Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed. Proverbs 19:17

Perseverance Pays Off in a Big Way, by Andrea Jordan, Social Services Manager

As Social Services Manager, few things bring me more joy than hearing about the success of my clients. Now and then, a client specifically requests to speak with me to share their story of how they've improved their life. James is one such client. James was in a difficult place when he came to Interfaith for food services in December 2023. He had recently separated from his wife and was homeless and hungry. His government phone was giving him trouble and he was having difficulty setting it up. Although he was understandably frustrated, we provided him with a phone in our office and helped him get it set up. We also provided him with food, reading glasses, a blanket, an ID, and a few bus tokens to help him get around, along with a refer to Salvation Army, the only men's shelter in Ocala. I didn't know the rest of his struggles until he recently came back to thank me in person for helping him and he shared what had transpired since I saw him in December.

As a veteran, James reached out to the VA for housing but had to walk to Gainesville for his prescriptions. He felt overwhelmed during these long walks and said he even considered jumping in front of traffic. Despite the challenges, James never gave up on his goal of establishing himself in Marion County. He stayed at the Salvation Army and in motels for a few days at a time, but it was only for a total of 8-10 days out of the 50 he was homeless. Thanks to the VA hearing about his long treks to Gainesville on foot, James was put up in the Ritz as soon as a room opened up on February 6.



James happily shows off his key to his new place

He couldn't be more grateful for the assistance he received from Interfaith and the people who helped him along the way. To show his appreciation, he went back to the Seminole Feed store and left a good review of the employee who gave him a ride at one point. He also wrote a thank-you letter to the nurse at the Gainesville hospital where he sought help. James found me at Interfaith to personally thank us for the help he received. We talked for a while, and he shared his journey from being homeless to finally having a place to call home. His story is a testament to the power of resilience and the importance of helping those in need.

Special Gifts

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Honor Someone Special

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 at 629-8868 x202 or Kayla.Hess@IESmarion.org. Mail donations to PO Box 992, Ocala, FL 34478.

In HONOR of:

Wes Wheeler
By: Theodore & Margaret Houck
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Ocala Marion County Honor Guard
By: Bruce Hutchinson

Ledefa Kayano
By: Church of Hope

Dylan DeSantis 16th Birthday
By: Andy & Louann DeSantis

Special Thanks to...

Special thanks for these large donations (in pounds): Cross Pointe church: 217; First Assembly of God church: 782; Ocala West United Methodist church: 179; American Panel: 91; Live Oak Stud: 272; West Marion Moose Lodge #2356: 1,094; Silver Springs Shores Moose Lodge: 246; and Paradise Ministries: 42 cases oatmeal

We are also grateful to Patty Yancy for her generous donation of medical supplies. We couldn't serve the community without partners like you! (pictured right)



Power of Prayer at Food 4 Kids, by Teesha Garcia, Manager

The gift of prayer is a way that God has given us to talk to Him and thank Him for His faithfulness, love, forgiveness, and a myriad of hopes and dreams we pray align with His will. Our team at Food 4 Kids prays to God for the smallest of requests such as the rain holding off so our drivers don't get wet as they faithfully load their cars to deliver the food bags to finding a great sale on one of our food items so we can save money on our budget and feed as many children as possible. Sometimes the prayers are much bigger like asking Him to heal a sick volunteer or their family member or showing us a way forward when we simply do not see one. We pray, believe, and then wait on His perfect timing. When God answers a prayer, He blesses us more than we could have imagined possible (sometimes, within hours of each other).

In a single day, God brought Lennar Homes staff (pictured right) and their huge hearts to Food 4 Kids to help pack bags for children in need. We loved having them with us, and were so surprised and grateful to learn they gave a life-changing donation to Interfaith and the Food 4 Kids ministry! But hold onto your hats, because a few short hours later a beautiful and kind woman came in for a tour and asked how to help. We told her she was welcome to volunteer, donate, host food drives and the like and mentioned that she could stand in prayer with us for God to provide a shed to store food. A few short hours later she called us and said, "I told my husband about it, prayed about it, and we would like to provide you with that shed!" WOW! WOW! Double WOW!



These amazing gifts will feed more children in need, supply the financial ability to host a summer feeding program, allow us to buy food items in bulk (saving a ton in food costs), allow for storage of food so we can host even more food drives, and has given us new friends to cherish. These special people heard the call from God and were faithful to give, serve and honor Him! Food 4 Kids thanks all the amazing donors and volunteers who bless us daily. We are so humbled to be a small part of something so BIG. There is power in prayer!!



P.O. Box 992 • Ocala, FL 34478

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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.

Blessings from Partnerships
by Cherie Galloway, CFL Manager

Lots of little blessings to report at the Center for Life! Because there's such a demand for our clients to visit clinics, we now can send clients to Estelle Byrd Whitman Wellness Center at no cost. In addition, we can send patients to any of Heart of Florida's many locations as well as the Hope and Freedom clinics. We're grateful for Freedom Clinic, who offers dental, vision and medical care, and are available at no charge to a client that qualifies for services. Freedom Clinic served 166 patients at our location this year alone. So far in 2024, Interfaith has paid for 40 visits for our clients to Heart of Florida, who otherwise could not afford to go. And of course, thanks to funds provided by our Hospital District grant and proceeds from our Interfaith Thrift Store, clients are able get medical care at Estelle Byrd Whitman and Heart of Florida. Thanks to our partners, the availability of no cost healthcare is greater than it has ever been! Together we save lives.

Thrift Store News,
by Shannon Pickering, Thrift Store Manager

Stop by your favorite thrift store to pick up a brand-new purse to celebrate the special woman in your life for Mother's Day! We have a gorgeous selection of gently used and new to you brand name bags, dresses, and shoes! Treat mom to a new patio or living room set! Interfaith Thrift Store has it all! Located at 718 North Pine Avenue in Ocala, Florida. Hours of operation are Monday through Saturday, 9 am to 4 pm. We can't wait to see you!



See Your Donations in Action

Want to see how we utilize your contributions? Come and take a tour any weekday and you can see all of our ministry areas in action. Call Emily at 352-629-8868 ext. 228 and she can schedule a tour with our CEO, Karla Greenway.