

Team Work Helps Brett Find Shelter from the Cold

I found Brett one cold morning, huddled on our bench outside the Center for Life, wearing hospital scrubs and a bracelet from Advent Hospital. He was sitting, read his bible and trying to find some peace. I introduced myself and asked if I could help him. He'd heard about Interfaith and the Center For Life from the Care 360 Team at Advent Hospital where he'd just been released. I got him something to drink and some food, then we sat down and chatted.

Brett was from South Carolina and had driven to Florida, as many homeless do, in search of opportunities. He had been admitted to Advent Hospital due to a dehydration episode and had lost his car to impound during that time. **He had no job, no prospects and nowhere to stay, homeless.** I sent him to see Shannon at the Thrift Store for some clothing and then explained he could get some lunch at the Soup Kitchen. I told him to come back to see me so I could try to find a solution for him.

Ned, our Engagement Center Manager, came over to interview Brett and found no options. The Salvation Army shelter was closed for renovations and all other facilities in town for men required them to have a drug problem, which Brett did not. Sometimes there is not an easy solution and we can only fix the immediate needs, as heart breaking as it is.

I went home that evening with no answers and plenty of prayers on my heart. Brett came back a few days later and I learned that he had gone back to the hospital after having complications from his dehydration episode. He explained that he was found on the side of the road, unconscious and severely dehydrated. Sitting with me now, his feet were so swollen that he couldn't put his new boots on. I called on our Community Paramedics and Captain Blair came out to check on Brett. He informed me that Brett was still suffering the effects of dehydration and was too sick to be on the street. I could see that God was working this problem – getting more warriors on board to help! Our Engagement Center team found a shelter in Alachua County that could take him and Captain Blair agreed to drive him to the shelter. Ned even brought over a beautiful new sleeping bag for him. Thank you Lord!

God used our community partners and our Interfaith team to intervene in Brett's life. He thanked us many times over as he loaded up with his bible and new supplies, heading for the shelter in Gainesville. We have Brett in our prayers and hope for his delivery from the street into a successful future.

by Cherie Galloway, Center for Life Manager



Inspiring Night for Residents, by Jessica Vega, Director of Ministries

Thank you to Monica Bryant and everyone who put on Night of Hope. This evening is so inspiring to our shelter residents. They get to hear true stories for overcomers and heroes who have survived domestic violence. We are so grateful that we get to be invited every year and our residents get to enjoy a very powerful night out. We also want to thank our Interfaith Thrift Store for supplying all the ladies with something beautiful to wear. Thank you for making our ladies feel their best!

From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley-Greenway



First I have to share my gratitude for the outpouring of support we received over the recent holidays. All of you who gave, truly make this ministry possible. I know that God blesses you for it, because that is just how HE is. But what a blessing YOU are to the people we serve!

This brings me to a different “giving” subject. While many give money (and Lord knows we need it!), we also need your stuff. I often get calls from people who will say “I have this lovely couch but I want you to give it to someone in need”. Of course we will honor that because we are required to always honor the wishes of the donor. But it may just so happen that we may not have a person at that exact moment that needs a couch and we really struggle with storage space. So it’s important for you to know what we do with a couch (or other household items or clothes) when we can’t quickly move it into the home

of someone in need. We sell it and **use the money to buy life-saving medications for someone who doesn’t have insurance!** Isn’t that cool?! This is how we have funded our Prescription Medication Assistance Program for over 2 decades! And now the store also helps us fund other services that we can offer to clients. We also give away merchandise from our Thrift Store to shelter residents moving into their new apartments or other people in desperate need. Most years, our Thrift Store vouchers (gives away) over \$11,000 worth of merchandise in this way. But the items we sell allow us to purchase \$40,000 worth of medication and pay for counseling and other services that help people experiencing homelessness. So you are really doing a good thing when you donate your items (in good condition) to our store.

I would be remiss not to mention the partnership we have with the Marion County Hospital District. This wonderful entity manages the funds previously raised by the Munroe Hospital Foundation. A group of trustees distribute the funds to support projects in our community that improve the health and well-being of Marion County citizens. For Interfaith they specifically fund mental health medications and diabetic medications! This partnership has allowed us to save and improve the lives of thousands of individuals over the past several years and we are grateful!

Clothing Boutique Helpers Needed, by Andrea Jordan, Social Services Manager

It’s that wonderful time of year, and we are flooded with generous donations! You know how it goes, “out with the old and in with the new.” With that spirit in mind, I am **actively seeking enthusiastic sorters to help prepare the donated clothing** for our free Clothing Boutique. Do you have a love for fashion? Are you organized and detail-oriented? Would you like to contribute to something that truly makes a difference in your community? Then this opportunity is perfect for you! Just a few hours of your time can help make dreams come true for many individuals and families. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has stepped up to volunteer for the Clothing Boutique! There are still a few spots available, and we have lots of shifts available to accommodate your schedule – and only 3 hours! Join us in making a positive impact! Contact Tina at (352) 644-9196.

Holiday Donations Helping Families, by Maxi Rodriguez, Food Distribution Manager

We are so grateful for the outpouring of love from the community during the holiday season. We try our best to provide a turkey or ham to each family that comes during the months of November and December. Thanks to donations from some very special groups and businesses, we gave tons of turkeys this year! Special thanks to George Albright, Marion County Tax Collector (pictured), American Panel, and so many more for all the turkeys that were donated this year! It means so much to us **to be able to provide for these families that are in need, during the holidays especially.** I love the holidays and how everyone gets together to help each other - giving to make sure no one is hungry! God bless you all and thank you for your donations!

Change in Donation Drop off Location Reminder

Hey Awesome Community!

We are in our new building! Going forward, it would be super helpful if you could **please drop off ALL NON-FOOD (and hygiene) donations at our Thrift Store at 718 N Pine, Ocala.** Our Thrift Store team will help you unload and give you a tax receipt. If you would like your donation to go to a specific ministry (clothing to our free clothing boutique) please just let them know when you drop it off. They will take great care to make sure it goes where its supposed to! Food and hygiene donations will still go to the Food Warehouse at 450 NW 2nd Street, Ocala.

Financial donations can be dropped off at our new building: 421 NW 1st Street, Ocala. Thank you for making a difference in your community!

Special Gifts

In MEMORY of:

Chris Richardson
By: Gloria & Burton Marsh
William Woody, DDS

Nate Gilman
By: Gloria & Burton Marsh

Lee Medema
By: Karen Medema

Greg Hill
Carolyn Richardson
By: Deborah and
Thomas Bond, Jr

Charlotte Jean Justice
By: Terry Spray

Ken Nelson
By: Karen Fant

Ellen Matthews
By: Patricia Bishop

Dr James Gamble
By: Virginia Gamble

Helen Stutz
By: Linda Robinson

Sarah Durschug
By: Brick City Cross Stich

Bryan Trappe
By: Carri Scott
Dan & L B Houff

Bill Evans
Ron Wells
By: Winston & Karen Needham

Lanny Johnson
By: Faye Johnson

Tom Fuller, MD

Special Thanks to...

Special thanks for these large donations (in pounds):
Temple Beth Shalom: 23; Peanut Butter & Jelly Man: 71; The Way Church: 273; First Baptist Ocala: 264; Twilight Cruisers: 338; Coca Cola: 1,649; Palm Cay: 1,260; Bowl Ladies: 230; Ocala Police Dept: 119; Remax Priemer Realty: 1,153; OTOW Jewish Club: 90;

In HONOR of:

Andy & Louann DeSantis' birthday
By: Sandy Fuller

Sid & Carolyn Varner
By: Sandy Fuller

Thanks continued...

Countryside Presbyterian: 536; First Christian Church: 36; Marion Landing: 102; Belleview Chiropractic Clinic: 70; Blessed Trinity Church: 64; Oxford Downs: 429; Cumberland International: 400; American Panel: 1,163; Montessori Prep of Ocala: 215; Lake Weir High School: 509; Great American Insurance: 222; Professional Realty of Ocala: 1,660; HCA Heart & Lung: 168; Marion County Sheriffs Dept: 254; Ward Highlands Elementary: 660; Forest High School: 11,810; Concentra Medical Center: 1,099; 8th Street Church of God: 420; Grace Episcopal: 201; Ocala West United Methodist: 2,823; Zone Gym: 608. Also donated: Paradise Ministries: 120 cans tuna; Joy Lutheran Church: 19 Blessing Bags; Bob & Christy Carlson: 12 turkeys, 4 hams; Ocala Fort King Lions Club: 12 frozen turkeys; Fort King Presbyterian Church: 35 cases pudding; Rotary Club of Ocala: 20 turkeys; Cross Point Church: 7 Thanksgiving baskets. And a BIG thanks for BRING THE HARVEST HOME this year!

Engagement Center Helps Austre in Time of Need

My name is Andrea and I am a volunteer at the Engagement Center. I would like to share with you what a wonderful experienced I had recently. Each day we have the opportunity to help many individuals, but I was especially touched by a young woman that came in.

Austre came into the Engagement Center and approached me. She was not quite sure what to say, so I quickly tried to engage in casual conversation and see how I could help her.

Austre said it was difficult to ask for anything because she has never been a situation as she was now. She was from Utah and found herself here without a job or place to live. Her funds were quickly running out that she had saved. She explained to me that she spent most of the day at Career Source applying for jobs. It was there that she received information about Interfaith and our Engagement Center.

As we sat and talked, I learned that Austre needed clothing, toiletries, a shower, some food and housing. After some collaboration with our volunteer Danny and our shelter staff, we were able to get Austre a room in our Shelter. Now that she has a safe place, Austre can focus on getting herself employed and a permanent place to live. This is an example of great teamwork between all departments at Interfaith in serving someone in a time of crisis.

Christmas Miracle for So Many Families!

Our hearts are so full! Thank you once again to Steve and Sandy Hawter and the Twilight Cruisers for a truckload of toys and an incredible \$5,000 donation to support our families in need at Christmas!



Andrea poses with her new friend Austre in the Engagement Center

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.



P.O. Box 992 • Ocala, FL 34478

Return Postage Requested

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #243
Ocala, FL 34478

IES BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Kent Adams
- Alejandro Arango
- Craig Baggs
- Monica Bryant
- John Bradish
- Doug Day
- Quinnette Durkin
- Jamie Gilmore
- Jacob Jordan
- Mike Jordan
- Amy Jo Lord
- Mary Beth Neely
- Winston Needham
- Anne W Parker
- Scot Quintel
- Wally Wagoner
- Wesley Wheeler
- Karla Grimsley-Greenway, Chief Executive Officer

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.

The Blessing of Giving Hearts!
by Teesha Garcia, Manager

2024 was a great year in Food 4 Kids! We are helping nearly 2,000 children weekly, thanks to the love and support from all of you! We are in 38 schools and expect even more to come on board soon. Only 5 months into the school season, we are on target to help more children than ever before.

December is such a fun month for people who are givers. We see so many people in the holiday spirit, giving and loving others in the Name of Christ Jesus. A huge company of givers would be Lennar Homes! Lennar has made several monetary donations to our program (and food donations), and this week their check took my breath away (and made me cry)! Lennar Homes does so much more than build dream homes. They are building hope in our local community.

Without these generous hearts, our program could not continue! And please know, **we need that generosity to keep coming!** Food costs are so expensive for our little program – your donations are helping to feed all those hungry tummies on the weekends! God Bless all the amazing givers living right here in Marion County. May you all be blessed 10-fold this year!!



Thrift Store News,
by Shannon Pickering

Looking for a fresh start this new year? The community has been incredibly generous to Interfaith's Thrift Store, bringing in a fantastic selection of home decor and furnishings just for you! The post-Christmas period is the perfect time to visit, as residents and businesses donate gently used treasures, from major appliances to cozy sofas and stylish brand-name clothing. **Come on down to your favorite thrift store at 718 North Pine Ave, Ocala, and discover all the wonderful finds waiting for you this year!**

