

Donor Gives Car to Resident and Changes a Life by Michelle Collier, Shelter Manager

Almost every morning I see one of my clients walking to work from Interfaith to Popeyes. And every morning I thank God for the determination and will she has to be successful in our program. Valentina came to us through drug court. In her first two weeks here, she gained employment and has been saving her money and doing what is required through the court and here at Interfaith.

In our last case management meeting Valentina was asking about buying a car. I explained that our goal for our program is to get her stably housed. We discussed the cost of living and how hard it is for a single person to have the income to qualify for housing in the area. Especially on the bus line. So, I asked her to get some prices, try to find something for cash (no payments), and we would discuss it the next week. We prayed for the answers and put it in God's hands.

The next day I received an email from my Director of Ministries, Jessica Vega. She asked if I had any residents that had a valid driver's license, and that could afford to transfer a tag and title. A very generous and kind man named Dave wanted to gift a car to a resident in need. *My heart jumped for joy especially when I was able to tell Valentina our prayers had been answered!*

On Monday, Valentina, Dave, and Jessica met at the DMV and transferred everything over. Valentina is now able to get a second job that will increase her income, this will open up a bigger window for housing, and get her one step closer to the independence and self-sufficiency she deserves.

Thank you, Dave, for this selfless act of kindness. It is people like you that make a huge impact on the less fortunate that need a little lift up to completely change their lives. God Bless you.



Valentina and Dave pose with her new tag and new car!

Thrift Store Partners with Kenny's Place to Gift New Wheels



Interfaith Thrift Store frequently collaborates with other non-profit organizations in Marion County to support clients in need of unique or hard-to-find items. Recently, a Rifton140 adaptive 3-wheel special needs bicycle was generously donated to the store. This bicycle enables the rider's feet to be securely strapped in place, with the option for someone to assist from behind if needed. Without hesitation, we decided to pay it forward by aiding clients at Kenny's Place Nursery in establishing a workout area for their members. This bicycle accommodates all 12 members, including one individual who is visually impaired. My staff members, Richard Costa and Ronnie Sells from the Thrift Store graciously delivered the bike to the nursery free of charge.

Kenny's Place Nursery has been serving the community for over three decades, supporting individuals with special needs by imparting life skills and assisting customers with plant purchases. *Collaborating with Kenny's enables us to extend our assistance to others in the community.* Do you have something that can be a blessing to others or are wanting to make room for new furniture, give us a call! To arrange a donation pickup, please contact us at 352-351-3541 today.

By Shannon Pickering, Thrift Store Manager

From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley-Greenway



This past June I was extremely blessed to go on a vacation I dreamed of for a lifetime. My husband and I treated my daughter and son-in-law to a Mediterranean Cruise to reward her for obtaining her Doctorate in Pharmacy. While we were in the region we visited the Vatican, the many ruins in Rome and Greece and some other very beautiful old cities. Two of the highlights of my trip were seeing the tomb of Saint Peter and seeing the rock hilltop where the Apostle Paul preached the gospel. It was so cool to be walking the streets that were the location of the events I've studied in the Bible my whole life. I was also fascinated by the differences in culture that I witnessed. Although, some of the differences made my heart heavy. As we walked and rode through the hugely populated cities of Rome and Athens, I can count the number of homeless that I witnessed on one hand. I did see a couple of people begging for change, but they were elderly and did not appear to be high or intoxicated. Maybe they do a better job of hiding poverty than we do. Or maybe I just didn't make it to the "right" areas. But I also didn't see any soup kitchens, homeless shelters or missions giving out basic necessities. It just begged the question, "if we are among the richest countries in the world, why are so many of our citizens struggling?" I worry that being in the land of the free also means freedom from some important things like self-discipline and social responsibility; freedom to make irresponsible choices; freedom to be more materialistic than we should and freedom to succumb to addiction and stay in that pit. We just celebrated Independence Day and I truly love this great country. But I can't imagine that our forefathers intended for freedom to be so destructive. While I'm so very grateful for the freedoms we enjoy in America, I have to believe that they expected us to be responsible with our choices. I fear that in some ways we have failed. I wish there was no need for places like Interfaith or Salvation Army or Kimberly's Center for Child Protection. I wish we would experience a national revival that would change our society so much that we would be put out of business. But until that day comes, we will be right here, with your help and God's blessing, making the way a little easier for those in need. **Thank you for being a part of what is right with our country and caring for your neighbors.** With that I know God is well pleased.

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." John 16:33

Backpacks Needed for Back to School, by Teesha Garcia, Food 4 Kids Manager

The 2024-2025 School Year is right around the corner, and we need your help. Last school year, we helped feed nearly 2,000 children per week at our peak and that required a ton of rolling backpacks. Rolling backpacks are given to each family the very first time they are added to the program by referral from their school's guidance department. Each family may have from one to eleven children in the home. I can just picture a first grader rolling their backpack onto their bus to help feed all their siblings! We have heard directly from the notes from the children, the pride it gives them to be able to help their family. Smaller children would never be able to carry a traditional backpack as full as we fill them, so the wheels are such a blessing. We get our backpacks at a deep discount from a distributor, and we are forever grateful.

These backpacks are more than just carriers – they're a lifeline. But we can't fill them without your help. **We need \$20,000 to cover the cost of 900 backpacks** for the coming school year. Can you or your business sponsor the purchase of backpacks?

Here's how you can help...

1 backpack	\$ 23
50 backpacks	\$ 1,150
100 backpacks	\$ 2,300
500 backpacks	\$ 11,500



Teesha poses with Backpack

Every donation helps! **Together, we can make sure no child goes hungry this weekend – or any weekend!** We'll keep our progress going on Facebook so you can see what we've collected and how much we may need until we get them covered. I know this amazing community can make this happen! We love you Marion County!

Please put "backpacks" on your check or online at www.IESmarion.org/donate (select Food 4 Kids in the dropdown). If you have questions, call Teesha at (352)620-8239.



Special Gifts

In MEMORY of:

Jack Douglas
By: Vernon & Gail Shukoski
Nancy Ferguson Jones
By: Mike & Diane Finn
Ed Cluster
By: Winston & Karen Needham
Shirley & Bill Cochran
Frank Roberts
John Hagood
By: Jarl Hagood
Christopher Lane Richardson
By: Robert Woody
Lisa Holt
Faith Friends
Dayle & Steven Silver
Sandy Fuller
Thomas & Evelyn Weaver
Carswell Ponder
Brents & Janice Bullock

Charlotte Jean Justice
By: Terry Spray

Helen Stutz
By: Linda Robinson

Ann DuPree
By: Frank & Pamela Stafford

Joseph O'Brien
By: Dennis O'Brien
F James Shurtleff
Karlyen & Andrew Manke
Mary Oliver
Michael & Debra Battista
Michelle & Thomas Stearns III
Bond, Schoeneck & King, PLLC
Kevin & Maureen Manke

James Gamble
By: Roxanna & William Maddux

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:

Bob & Ann Flynn's
50th Anniversary
By: Stephen & Nan Adams
Our Military
By: Southern Oaks RV Resort



Volunteering at the Food Pantry Changed My Life

My name is Kelly and I love volunteering at the Food Pantry. Being a volunteer has been a resource for me to express myself and gain control of my life. After a traumatic experience, which took my dignity, my freedom, and self-respect, I sought an outlet, an escape. I desperately needed a positive activity to take my mind off the hardships I was experiencing. It became my blessing and in turn I could offer blessings to others.

Volunteering is a way that I can give back and to show that people do care. However, it's not only about aiding others. It offers so much more. Through volunteering, I learned valuable community and social skills, as well as gained valuable work experience. I learned how to work with children, the elderly, and those with special needs. In addition, I learned what it is like to have a job and responsibilities.

Volunteering has played a significant role in the shaping of who I am today.

I love the people I work with – the staff made me feel comfortable enough to relax into my position. It's a place I feel safe, and like I belong. The volunteers I work along side are my friends, even family. It's because of all this that I can't help but smile when I walk through the door. This group offered the personal connection I was looking for, the patience to find my place and show what I had to offer in return. Here, it shows that a diverse group from different cultures and background make it work and thrive.

Thank you Steve, Maxi, Bruce and Red for the support for allowing me to shine. And to all my Interfaith family – thank you!

With love, Kelly

Want a Life-Changing Experience?

Every month we hear stories just like Kelly's above. Stories of inspiration and how volunteering changes people and their perspectives. Many of our volunteers are so amazed at what all we do when they first take a tour with Tina, our Volunteer Coordinator. She walks them through all our ministry areas so they can see what appeals to them. There's lots of choices. Tina and our staff work hard to make sure your time is appreciated and valued. If you want more information, give Tina a call at (352) 644-9196 or check out our website: www.IESmarion.org/volunteer

Special Thanks to...

Special thanks for these large donations (in pounds):
First Assembly of God: 150; Ocala West United Methodist: 38; Countryside Presbyterian: 501; Fredia: 597; Palm Cay: 154; Dept Juvenile Justice: 27; American Panel: 140. Also - Central Christian Church Ladies Bible Study: 85 shower kits; Dave Chover: 100 hygiene items and Kindred, Ocala: 2 tubs clothing

We are so grateful to the youth group from Crosspoint Church. They joined us recently to volunteer. They helped out all over our campuses. Special thank you to Kyle and the team leaders for making it happen. The team is pictured left.

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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.

Showers of Blessings - 268 Showers Provided in One Month

In June, Florida experienced record-high temperatures. Interfaith's Shower Ministry provided 268 showers! This marked a significant increase from the 180 showers in May. We are grateful for the overwhelming response from our donors who generously contributed towels and hygiene products in response to our Facebook request. Thanks to their support, we were well-equipped to serve our community. ***Our Shower Ministry of Blessings has had a remarkable impact on the homeless population.*** They have reported improved access to public places and increased confidence when attending job interviews. Additionally, their overall health has shown signs of improvement, resulting in fewer incidents of illness. The initiative has also positively influenced their interpersonal relationships and has contributed to an overall restoration of their dignity. This uplifting outcome is a testament to Interfaith's commitment to providing valuable resources that have a meaningful and positive impact on the lives of those in need.

Pictured right is Billy, who runs the Shower Ministry, and Daniel, who works hard and utilizes the showers a couple of times a week.



By Andrea Jordan, Social Services Manager