

## The Superheroes of Interfaith, by Sonya Tyler, Director of Operations

I love giving tours of Interfaith – it's one of my favorite things. Getting to brag on God and all the cool things He does around here is pretty amazing. After all, we all know that Interfaith wouldn't exist without His blessings. And one of the biggest blessings we receive from Him is our volunteers! As I guide a group through our facilities, I always talk about our ministries and how they work. Each ministry is full of volunteer workers – busy as bees. To the staff and clients at Interfaith, our volunteers really are Superheroes!

As I walk through Food 4 Kids, there are always smiles from folks packing backpacks and loading them in their cars for delivery to one of our local elementary schools. We have a total of 75 faithful volunteers in this program.

Walking through the main office, I cover the Intake area where volunteers meet one on one with clients to help meet their needs. Recently, I overheard a client tell a volunteer, "You are such a blessing to me." There are currently 33 volunteers in this ministry.

As I walk through our homeless shelter, we talk about all the extra programs that are available - thanks to volunteers – including sewing, GED classes, and baby-sitters, add to that our faithful Devotions Pastors and Dinner Providers (that we could not live without), we have 59 volunteers that share their time with the residents.

Our Clothing Ministry includes 15 awesome volunteers that help in our free Boutique 5 days a week, and I always see volunteers sorting a huge pile of clothing and shoes, or helping clients find what they need.

As we walk through the Warehouse, I talk about the 71 volunteers that sort food, and work in the Pantry and Prayer Room. Each job, whether sorting canned goods, stocking the pantry or praying for a client, is a huge blessing.

Our Thrift Store keeps 18 volunteers hopping, Monday through Saturday, with sorting donations, fixing broken items, cleaning and running the register. Although I never get to take a group through the store on my tours, I always encourage folks to stop by and check it out.

Our new Center for Life building, where our Prescription Program is set up in our Administration offices, also uses volunteers, who answer phones and help with our Long Term Prescription Program. Soon, we'll be adding another position for client assistance – so stay tuned for details.

And at the end of the tour, I always mention our Facilities Department. Here, we have a couple of amazing gentlemen that help our part time employee Billy each week, with everything from fixing toilets to building ramps and closet organizers. It takes a lot of work to keep Interfaith in tip-top shape.

This month's newsletter is dedicated to all our volunteers, and highlights some specific folks in each ministry. Interfaith loves each and every one of our 270+ volunteers and think they are truly God's blessings to us and the community. As we celebrate National Volunteer week, April 24-29, join us in prayer lifting up these fine folks – that are superheroes every day!



## From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley

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When people take a tour of our many ministries here at Interfaith they are always surprised at how much we do and the wide range of services we offer. And then when I explain that we do all of this with 26 paid staff (not all of which are full-time), they are even more astonished. From operating a retail Thrift Store to a homeless shelter, a medication program, a backpack program and food pantry, it takes well over 200 “laborers” to get the work done each week. All of this to say, our volunteers are vital to Interfaith. We are so grateful for each and every one that gives of their time or talents in some way. The volunteers that I personally work the closest with are those that give of their time to serve on the Boards of Directors. I say boards because I have the privilege of working with the board that oversees the Interfaith operations, as well as the board that oversees the Interfaith Foundation. These board members are a collection of beautiful hearts that come with wisdom and experience in a variety of fields such as insurance, real estate, finance, education, medical and more! We also have representation from the ministerial community which is so important to our mission.

As I was asked to spotlight one, I'd like to make special mention of Kevin McDonald, current sitting President on the Interfaith Board of Directors, who also serves as a liaison between the two boards. Kevin has been on this journey with me here at Interfaith since I came on board the end of 2010 and his leadership and support have been a blessing to this organization and to me personally. Under his leadership we have added a permanent supportive housing ministry to serve chronically homeless handicapped women, a facility to provide medical, dental and mental health care and have restructured the administration of the entire organization to accommodate growth. All of these changes have been made through sincerely seeking the perfect will of God and his direction for the ministry of Interfaith. Kevin has been key in keeping God as the real head of this organization and I am so grateful for his passion for the Lord, his love for this community and his commitment to serve God. As we here at Interfaith celebrate our volunteers in the month of April, I ask that you would remember them in your prayer time and ask God to bless each and every one in a special way. They truly are the heart of Interfaith and I know that what they do pleases the heart of God.

*Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Romans 12:10*

## Carlos Tobon - Board Member and Food 4 Kids Champion

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In 2014, Carlos Tobon joined his co-workers on a ‘day of giving back to the community’ event and Interfaith happened to be the charity selected. Carlos was tasked with clearing vines and overgrowth from our fence. The job took longer than the time they had allotted for the day. We were shocked when a couple of days later, Carlos showed up to finish the job he had started.

When Carlos learned about our Food 4 Kids program that day, he realized that it was no coincidence that he found Interfaith. Carlos said, “For a long time I carried a passion to help feed children, and when I discovered Food 4 Kids, I felt it was God directing me here.”

Within a few months Carlos co-chaired a Paso Fino horse show sponsored by the Southern Regional Paso Fino Horse Association in Ocala, raising over \$8,000 for the Food 4 Kids Program!



In September of that year, he joined the Board of Directors for Interfaith, who are a very special group of volunteers that take on a huge responsibility for the oversight and integrity of this organization.

Carlos continues to volunteer with us in that capacity. Since that time, he and his wife organized a benefit car show and provided a very special formal dinner for our shelter residents. On top of all that, he also serves on our Thrift Store Task Force and delivers backpacks to one of our schools in Silver Springs Shores. We are so grateful for dedicated volunteers like Carlos! He's definitely one of our Interfaith Superheroes!



**by Tina Reid, Volunteer Coordinator**

## Thrift Store Superhero, Tom , by Brenda Callahan, Store Manager

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Tom Lovely is a volunteer who always pitches in and helps wherever there's a need. From making repairs of donations that need a little TLC, to helping customers load up their purchases, Tom is always right where I need him. I love that he will even do the mundane tasks like breaking down boxes. He stays busy all the time and never seems to slow down.

Tom started volunteering with us last year and has steadily increased his schedule with us. Tom can regularly be found at the store Monday thru Friday but you just might see him on a Saturday as well. Tom will help with most anything and is greatly appreciated by staff as well as other volunteers. And from all of us at the store – we thank him for all he does for Interfaith!



## Special Gifts

### In MEMORY of:

In Memory of:

Jane Cameron

By: Frank and Pamela Stafford

Earl Supernault

By: Carolyn Grissom

Cindy Stafford

By: David Stafford

Randy Gause

Dennis Wicklein

By: Tim Shanahan

Sharon West

By: Friendly Fellowship Class of  
1st United Methodist Church

Herb Meza

By: Ruth M Albright

Ralph and Samelia King

Ted Jansen

By: Julie Moody

Linda Mae Cheatum

By: Carolyn Grissom

Horace W and Elaine McMullen  
Camp

Horace W Camp, Jr

By: Elaine Camp

### In HONOR of:

Hank Harrell

By: Luann Mayer

Cheri Casey

By: Richard George

Luke, Jane, Dylan and Drew DeSantis

By: Andy and Louann DeSantis

*Would you like to honor a loved one? Give an honorary donation in their name to Interfaith! The person honored or their family will receive a letter of acknowledgement. For more info contact Kayla at 629-8868x202 or kayla.grimsley@iesmarion.org. Mail: PO Box 992, Ocala, FL 34478.*



## Meet Another Superhero - Tony Curtis, by Ken Nelson

Tony Curtis may be a famous actor, but there's another Tony Curtis that's a famous volunteer! Tony volunteers in the Food 4 Kids backpack program and he is in charge of picking up 20 backpacks (that provide food to 70 kids) for Emerald Shores Elementary School every Wednesday morning, and delivering them to Food 4 Kids.

**Helps 70  
kids a week!**



Tony is originally from south

Alabama, and also spent many years in Atlanta. Tony, and his wife Debbie, have a large family including 4 sons and 11 grandchildren that range from 2 – 21 years old. He's retired now, after spending 19 years in banking and another 21 years as a Financial Consultant, where his job took him to all 50 states. During his career, his passion for kids led him to be a part of Kiwanis International, being the Director of the Marietta Boys Girls Club and helping with the Good News Clubs.

The Food 4 Kids program was a perfect fit for Tony. Ken Nelson, the Food 4 Kids Manager said, "Tony is such a blessing because Silver Springs Shores is one of our more difficult schools to get volunteers for, because it's so far out. He is so pleasant to work with and always does a great job!"

Tony told Ken, "Our (free) will may be the greatest of all, other than the Grace of God. I often feel that life is a proving ground of sorts, for us to learn how to use that will wisely.. and to help others."

## 83 Year Old Hero Saves the Day - Every Day!

I had an opportunity to sit down with one of our hard-working volunteers, Jim Wittren recently. Jim is such a blessing to everyone at the Warehouse. He is a great joy to work with. I know I'm not alone when I say that Jim is like the energizer bunny – he just goes and goes. I wish I had that much energy. Jim's a great worker and everyone loves him!



Jim has volunteered 12 hours a week for the last 3 years. His job primarily involves checking out our clients and wheeling their groceries to their car. Jim said, "I have been so blessed helping our clients, and a huge majority of them are so grateful, and tell me so every day."

Jim was born in Duluth, Minnesota in 1934 and grew up in Minneapolis. He spent 2 years in the Navy as a corpsman at a Naval hospital in Philly, PA. Jim was a pharmacist for 35 years. He was married to his beloved wife Judie for 60 years until she passed away in 2013.

When Jim's wife passed, he found it was quite lonely. But one of our staff members Debbie, came to his rescue. Jim said, "One day Debbie presented me with a kitten to keep as a companion. This kitten was one of the best blessings that ever happened to me. I will be forever grateful. Sweetie, the cat, is 3 years old now and the best pet you could ask for."

In his spare time, Jim enjoys golf and boating. He has 4 children, 7 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.

"I hope to be able to volunteer in the pantry for a long time. It is a fun and useful place to spend idle time. My thanks to Steve and Debbie for having faith in me."

**By Steve Clem, Warehouse Manager**

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Check out our website at  
[www.IESmarion.org](http://www.IESmarion.org)



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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.*

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### **Intake Counselor Uses His Battles to Help Others, by Jessica Rodriguez, Intake Manager**

Ray Stender has been an asset to Interfaith since 2013. He works as an Intake counselor, and every person he meets, no matter the age, will get something positive from their visit.

Ray is kind, generous, loving and connects with the clients on a deep, personal level. He prays and talks with them, without judgment, and connects with his life experiences. Ray will tell you his testimony of being broken, having a life full of bad choices and hurting others. He also had a difficult battle with cancer.



Ray said, "I had to learn to put my ego and pride to the side so I could receive help, love, compassion and understanding from others." It is because of his understanding that he can connect so well with our clients.

Ray says that through a strong personal relationship with the Lord and lots of prayers and perseverance, he was able to pull himself up and overcome his choices. Even though today he battles chronic pain because of his battle with cancer, he is here every Wednesday with a smile ready to help others.

Ray also leads morning worship with our residents twice a month. He really enjoys the opportunity to share his love of Christ with others.

Everyone that works with Ray enjoys his joyful spirit. And when clients see Ray, he gives them hope in Christ and hope that things can and will change for the better. I am so grateful to know him.

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**From everyone at Interfaith, thank you to all our volunteers, in every ministry - you really are our**

***Superheroes***