

Changing Lives One Resident at a Time, by Yanique Duff-Ballard, Case Manager

As the saying goes, "Never judge a book by its cover." This quote is an accurate representation of the life changing moments we experienced recently with one of our shelter residents.

Several months ago, Shyla reached out to us for help. She was in her second trimester of pregnancy and living in a tent in the woods. Upon learning about her situation, we were heartbroken. We were able to house Shyla in a room in the Elizabeth House wing of our shelter. In my first encounter with her, she had a bad attitude. She didn't believe in God and had a hard time conforming to our shelter rules.

Due to Shyla's poor choices in the past, she had temporarily lost her parental rights to her children and had an estranged relationship with her family. She turned to drugs to cope with her pain. Shyla felt such sadness and loss. We knew we had to take the time to understand where she was coming from, so that we could help her toward a better future. Shyla needed assurance that regardless of her situation, there is a God who loves and cares for her. As a shelter team we loved on her, prayed for her and with her, to demonstrate that we are here to help her be the best person and mother that she can be.

One week after entering the shelter program, Shyla got a job at a local fast-food restaurant not too far from the shelter. Shyla did not have a high school diploma or a GED, so she attended volunteer led GED classes. She also attended daily devotions and weekly Bible Study classes. Shyla started working on her recovery and sobriety by attending weekly meetings.

At first, she struggled against a belief in God and met our programs with strong resistance. But through modeling and positive reinforcement, we were able to show Shyla that every action taken is to help her become a better person and a productive member of our community. Thanks to our Mental Health Counselor, Dawn, Shyla received weekly counseling sessions to help her work through her pain and trauma. With her parental rights temporarily revoked, she was ordered by the courts to complete parenting classes if she ever stood a chance of getting her children back. But Shyla was determined to make a change.

Today, Shyla is a proud recipient of a GED and a parenting certificate, she completed her mental health counseling, chose a wonderful family to adopt her baby, obtained housing and was reunited with her children. Most importantly, she has started a relationship with Jesus. Because of our community partners like Pay it Forward and our Interfaith Thrift Store, we were able to help furnish her apartment. We are so honored to watch her journey and to help her be a success.

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8

Our awesome Shelter Staff that walks with God to prayerfully make a difference in the lives of those that come to our Shelter!



Pictured above: Jessica Rodriguez, Dawn Lovell, Layla Nikoonejad, Yanique Duff-Ballard, Angela Kinney and Michelle Collier

From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley



It's hard to believe that the first 2 months of 2020 have come and gone, and there is already so much to be thankful for. First, I'm so grateful to all those who came out on February 12th for the Shelter Dedication and to honor Clover and Jeffrey Lovell as our Legacies of Love honorees. I'm even more grateful to the Lovells for their kindness to those facing homelessness and for allowing us to show our gratitude publicly.



Lovell family with their pastors, the Gilligans

On the other end of the spectrum, I'm thankful to our Ocala Police Department. Around the first of the year, the drug problem in our neighborhood once again escalated as it has all over the country. The presence of drug dealers preying on those who already struggle with life was starting to inhibit our ability to provide services. One call to our Chief of Police and a couple of texts to our Mayor and within a couple of days - officers showed up on and around our campus and got the situation under control. I am so grateful to these community leaders for not only supporting us in what we do, but also helping us when we need help. To take it a step further, I love the fact that our Chief has implemented an amnesty program for those battling addiction so they have a choice between being arrested and getting help. Let's pray that more people take advantage of this opportunity.

Last but not least, I'm grateful to God for impressing on the hearts of donors so that we have the resources to hire a campus pastor for the first time. This isn't just any campus pastor, this is one who has a heart for the population that lives outdoors. We realize that Christ is the only hope for a better life and now we have someone who can build relationships with them and guide them toward services, healing, hope and ultimately housing. I say this often and I still believe it to be true; God hears the desperate prayers of those who live in the most difficult circumstances and attempt to survive in spite of their need. That is the only reason that Interfaith exists...because God loves them so very much. As always, thank you for your continued prayers and support!

I will praise you, Oh Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all your marvelous works. Psalm 9:1

I Need a Cookie, by Koya Harris-Beard, Intake Manager

The title of this article may sound funny, but day in and day out I see firsthand the countless number of individuals whose stomachs growl while waiting for the Soup Kitchen to open for lunch. Last month I was sitting in my office and I heard a small commotion in our lobby. When I went to see what was happening, there was a man standing at the counter very upset. I walked into the lobby and asked him how I could help him. He said he had a complaint and needed to talk to the supervisor. I grinned and said, "well, that's me" as I took him into my office. Roosevelt complained and grumbled on and on, I let him talk and yell and pace the room. When he was finished, I calmly asked, "Are you done?" and I asked him to sit down. "What are you really here for?" I asked. He put his face in his hands and he said "Ma'am I just need a cookie." I chuckled at first and said, "a cookie?" He replied, "yes, just a cookie and oh maybe something to drink." I asked him, "Why a cookie?" Roosevelt said "because I am so hungry after walking 5 miles to get here, only to discover the kitchen doesn't open til noon. Besides, cookies calm me down." We both laughed. I told him to wait just a minute let me see what I could find. There were some left over cookies from a training the day before, so I grabbed him a heaping handful and a bottle of water. While enjoying his cookies, he was so relaxed and happy that he kicked off his shoes, took off his book bag and kicked his feet up! I was so tickled! In that time, Roosevelt poured his heart out to me, released his cares, and shared how he became homeless after being wealthy and married with a beautiful family.

When he finished, he put back on his shoes, stood up and put on his book bag and said, "Ma'am, in case I have another hard day, I think I need some more of those cookies to go!" We both burst into laughter. When I returned with his cookies to go, he said "you must've prayed over those cookies you gave me." I smiled and said, "God has not forgotten you." I prayed with him and invited him to surrender his life to the Lord and lay his burdens at the feet of Jesus. I believe he accepted Christ into his heart that day and my sign was the tears streaming down his face.

I've changed my eating habits this year, but I think every time I start to feel overwhelmed or disconnected from God, I'm going to eat a cookie as a reminder that he hasn't forgotten about me, and just like Roosevelt, I'm going to cast my cares aside and allow the Lord to give me rest from my troubles.

Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

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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 by email Kayla.Hess@IESmarion.org. Mail donations to PO Box 992, Ocala, FL 34478.

Many Thanks to...

Thank you Marion County Tax Collector's Office for hosting Bunco to support several Marion County charities and Interfaith is blessed to be one of those charities. 931 pounds of food was collected and will greatly benefit our Marion County children.

Interfaith is so grateful for the support from Silver Springs Rotary Club. Not only do they serve dinner at our shelter every month they just donated \$7,413 to our ministry from the proceeds of their golf tournament. A special thanks to all who participated!

Special thanks to these donors (food in pounds): Palm Cay: 246; Fort King Presbyterian: 280; First Presbyterian: 404; Grace Episcopal: 44; Twilight Cruisers: 383; Countryside Presbyterian: 176; Friendship Baptist: 1,129; Country Club of Ocala: 126; Timber Ridge Community Church: 174; Brother's Keeper: 9,130; College Park Church of God: 141; and Bucher Trucking: 1,008 pounds.

Also received recently were Crafty Christians: 12 bedmats w/fleece blanket, 12 children's afghans, socks, gloves; Advent Hospital: 300 blankets; Warm Ocala's Souls (Natalie Flechas): 316 pairs of socks; and College Park Church of God-Women's Ministry: 36 cloth bags with water & hygiene items

Honoring Kitty

For the past 7 or 8 years, Food 4 Kids was fortunate to have Kitty Moore as a volunteer. She was a very dedicated, caring volunteer with a big smile and charming personality. She is in her 80's and would drive about 50 miles round trip to pick up and deliver the backpacks to Ft. McCoy school. Kitty loves Food 4 Kids and would say that the backpacks were her reason to get out of the house knowing she was doing something that made a difference. Well to my sorrow, Kitty told me recently due to health reasons she would no longer be able to continue BUT she had found a great replacement, Laura Garcia. Kitty knew Laura would be a very dedicated volunteer. How many people tell you they have to retire and find their replacement? Kitty is awesome and we are going to greatly miss her, but are so thankful she was a part of our lives for several years. We wish her well. Thanks again Kitty.



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Check out our website at
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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.

Meet Our New Assistant Manager - Brentley



Brentley Anthony is a man of many talents and we are so very blessed to welcome him aboard at Interfaith Thrift Store as the new Assistant Manager. Before joining the staff, Brentley's work history included restaurant management, a daycare teacher and a landscaper. Brentley is an enthusiastic addition to the team. When asked, Brentley said, "I love the positive impact we get to make on a daily basis in people's lives while being at the store." He understands that being here is not just a job but a call from God and a lifestyle decision.

Brentley has been happily married for 10 years. In his spare time, he plays offensive center/tackle and defensive tackle for the Central Florida Bulls in the UFL, a local football league. As a youth football coach and mentor, he ascribes his success to God and leaves us with Romans 5:3-4: "We can rejoice too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they helped us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation."

Please stop by the store and welcome Brentley to the family.

Volunteers Needed!

We are so grateful for our community and how faithful they are with donating items and clothes they no longer need. We are always in need of volunteers to sort through these items and the schedule to do so is very flexible. We will gladly take any little amount of time you have to spare. We do also need help filling a couple positions in our Intake Office for a 4 hour shift once a week. If you are interested contact Tina at tina.reid@iesmarion.org or (352)629-8868 ext 210.

Tina