

A Blessing in Disguise, by Jessica Rodriguez, Director of Ministries

As Director of Ministries, I am pretty hands on in some of the ministries and admittedly not so hands on with our Food Warehouse. Steve and his team do a wonderful job, they work like a well-oiled machine. Have you ever thought of what it takes to run a drive thru pantry? Yes, it takes food, but it also takes volunteers and helpers to distribute the food. Due to the corona virus, many of our beloved volunteers cannot come in to help, and others cannot come due to the heat.

Steve let us know they were shorthanded and Karla volunteered me to go over and help. Honestly, I was not too thrilled about this. I am from Chicago, so I am not a fan of the Florida heat. Nonetheless I wore my shorts, put on my mask, rolled up my sleeves and decided I was going to help with a cheerful heart. What a blessing and eye-opening experience it was for me. I was so grateful for it! I saw every kind of car come through the line. New cars, old cars and falling apart cars. I saw brand new people, some of our regular clients, people with lots of little kids and many seniors. I was able to pray with a senior couple because the wife was battling cancer for the third time. There was a woman sobbing every time we put a bag of groceries in her car. She was so emotional because she had never asked for help before and she said she was so grateful and so embarrassed, but she really needed the help. A couple came through and called me over, they tried to give me \$3.00 to help pay for their groceries. I told them no, it was our blessing to help them! Kids were cheering when we would put milk and cookies in the car. Moms were relieved when we had diapers and wipes. One man pleaded, "cat food, please?" Yes, the answer was yes, we could help. We had it! We were even able to give out flowers that were donated recently from Walmart!



Clients receive surprise while waiting for food



After 120 cars served, a line still wraps around the block for Drive Thru Pantry

As I looked around at all the volunteers and helpers, do you know what else I noticed? Most of the people out there helping put the groceries in the cars were homeless themselves. When I realized this, I became so emotional. I just thanked God repeatedly. What a blessing, what joy and what a humbling experience. They knew we were short staffed; that there were cars wrapped all the way down the block and they knew people needed food. They jumped right in to help their fellow man. Those with the least always give the most, isn't that a saying? Well it's true, I have seen it with my very own eyes. They were so happy to help, without complaint. Before I knew it, three hours had passed, and we had helped most of the cars in line. I was tired, I was sweaty, but I was so grateful and so happy. I was so proud to be a part of Interfaith and proud of those experiencing homelessness. I thought this is what God wants, all of us, no matter status, gender or color, coming together to help each other in our time of need.

If you'd like to experience the joy of helping others, we have several openings. Our afternoon drive-thru pantry needs extra hands to help load groceries outside. Please contact Tina, our Volunteer Coordinator at (352) 629-8868 X210.

From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley



As the chief administrator of Interfaith I rarely get to experience the joy that our staff and volunteers experience on the front lines. Due to the pandemic we've all done jobs that we don't normally do so I was able to get in the trenches a little deeper. Thanks to the generosity of the James M. Cox Foundation, the Marion County Hospital District, Frank DeLuca and CenterState Bank, I had the privilege of alleviating some of the fear in those who felt the negative financial impact from the pandemic. With support from these donors, Interfaith paid rent and mortgage bills for hundreds of households in crisis. I wish I was an eloquent writer and could convey through words what it feels like to lift someone's burden in an instant. I'll do my best to describe one of those mornings.

It was busy in the intake office, with a couple of volunteers and a couple of staff reviewing documents with applications for assistance. The funds were designated for people who had lost income due to COVID-19 business closures so we had to do some vetting. Meanwhile the clients sit there waiting in the lobby; only a few at a time and properly distanced of course. Many of these people have never been to Interfaith before. You can feel the heaviness in that waiting area as they sit there contemplating what might happen to them and their family if they can't pay their bills. So many of them have gone 2 or 3 months now without a paycheck. Every now and then a staff person pops through the lobby door, calls a name and has a question or needs some clarification. Occasionally someone would have to inform a person that they didn't have the necessary documents for us to qualify them. More often than not a staff person or volunteer calls a person to the door and says, "please sign this form in receipt of this check made payable to your landlord". And that's when it hits you. The wave of relief and then the tears on the face of the person in front of you gets ahold of you too. You get to witness a sincere "hallelujah, thank you, Jesus!" You start grinning and your eyes water up; you just can't help it. And for the moment you forget there is a pandemic and accept a hug to celebrate with this person. And then you get this feeling of humbleness, knowing that the money didn't come from you. You just have the honor of being the "middle-man" and the messenger. This is the gift I wish I could give to every donor. If I could bottle up this feeling and pour it on all of you I would! This is why God put us here. And once again I'm reminded that God hears the desperate prayers of people in need and uses our donors to answer them. Thank you for answering the call for help.

I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Acts 20:35

The Gift of Eve, by Yanquie Duff-Ballard, Case Manager

Giving of yourself when you have nothing to give speaks to the kind of character God intended for us all. It is easy in trying times like these to be selfish instead of selfless. We have a tendency to care about our wants and needs and forget about our brothers and sisters in Christ. However, our shelter resident Eve, is the opposite.

Eve's journey with Interfaith began in November of last year when she started volunteering at the Warehouse. We saw Eve in passing but did not know the story behind her infectious smile. A few months later, Eve was officially introduced to us by our Outreach Coordinator, Chris Downing. During a conversation with Eve, Chris found out that Eve was homeless and living in a tent. Chris immediately brought Eve over to our Admin building where an interview was conducted for admission into the shelter.

Eve revealed to us that she has been homeless for over 10 years. She has been bouncing from town to town and state to state with friends and significant others, living in places not meant for human habitation. We were surprised, because Eve showed up every day to volunteer, in rain or 100 degrees sunshine. She took her volunteer job seriously, as she helped ensure families and individuals who have lost income and jobs, are provided with food and other resources. This spoke volumes to Eve's character and we immediately fell in love with her and took her into the shelter.

Eve is now in a safe place and is surrounded by people who love and care for her. She was able to secure employment in a time when businesses are closing and workers are losing hours or worse, their jobs. Eve continues to volunteer whenever she is not working. She has gone above and beyond to help her fellow shelter residents and the people who come to Interfaith for help.

Eve has also volunteered to clean at Interfaith's duplex for the elderly and disabled to ensure that the ladies all stay safe and healthy. Eve might not have money or tangible gifts to give, but she has been using her God-given talent to help others, The Gift of Eve.



Eve, ready for work

Special Gifts

In MEMORY of:

Sally Williams

By: Kathryn & Jeffrey Hart
Mike & Diane Finn
Ellen Miller
Sandy & Robin McBride
Dr David & JoEllen Sneed

Millie Massey

By: Mike & Diane Finn

Helen Stutz

By: Linda Robinson

Teresa Russ

By: Valorie Bailey

Bubba Lott

By: Charlotte & Carswell Ponder

Betsy Phalen

By: Marilyn & Don Cernecari

Tilton Boutwell

By: Eddie & Beth Lewis

Randy Hinz

By: Ben & Helen Hayes

A B Crass

By: Dr James & Virginia Gamble

Jerry Brown

By: David Brown

Saundra Brown

A Special Gift

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.

Covid Testing

Special thanks to Lab24, who performed 120 COVID tests onsite for our community. We are so very grateful! Thank you to Staff members Koya for her hard work organizing the event!

Many Thanks to...

Thanks to Friendship Baptist Church in Reddick for providing church in the Garden. Also thanks to Brett Wood from Get Fit in the Garden, Campus Pastor Jody and Chris for being there. It was a great morning of fellowship and breakfast. Musicians pictured right.

Thank you for these special donations (in pounds): Countryside Presbyterian: 220; Ocala Lions Club: 250 (pork); Zion United Methodist Church: 135; First Presbyterian Church: 2,290; New Day Christian Fellowship: 400; Spruce Creek North: 2 pick up trucks loads; College Park Church of God: 159; and First Assembly of God: 266.

Also thanks to: Crime Stoppers of Marion County: 100 tote bags, 60 hand sanitizers, 100 bracelets and Temple Shalom, Oxford: \$500 in Visa gift cards



We are so excited! The shelter received a new couch and loveseat through a collaboration between Ocala Rotary Club, Anne Parker and On Top of the World Veterans Club. Pictured left: Shelter Case Managers Yanique and Michelle, and Ashley.



Center for Life Partners with WellFlorida, by Diane Coleman, Manager

The Center for Life has recently partnered with WellFlorida Council's High Impact Prevention (HIP) program. This program aims to decrease the spread of HIV through education, community partnership, HIV testing, distribution of safer sex materials, support and participate in sponsored HIV events and activities, as well as support of HIV positive individuals through linkage to care and adherence.

As a partner with WellFlorida, we receive free HIV/AIDS information and resources, free safer sex materials such as condoms to distribute to clients, and basic HIV/AIDS training for staff, volunteers and clients.

WellFlorida can also provide free HIV testing and we are now an established partner testing site!

Food 4 Kids Planning for New School Year, by Karen Fant, Manager

Wow what a summer this has been! Will schools reopen or not? Will some open and others do virtual learning? As of this writing, the Marion County schools do plan to open, so Food 4 Kids plans to be ready to feed the students like we have been doing since 2004. I'm sure there will be changes that need to be made but we still plan to provide for our students that are in need. I was amazed to hear all the food that has been donated to Interfaith over the summer. The generosity of this community is heartwarming. I don't know what the future holds, but I look forward to seeing what plans God has for Food 4 Kids. I know it will be amazing as always. And we cant wait to see our volunteers again!





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

- Craig Baggs
- Brittany Beall
- Bill Bender
- Steve Christopherson
- Quinette Durkin
- Winn Keeton
- Cindy MacKay
- Paulette Millhorn
- Nick Nikkinen
- Anne W. Parker
- Lisa Sheilley, Secretary
- Vernon Shukoski
- Carlos Tobon, President
- Matt Vilella
- Wesley Wheeler
- Karla Grimsley, 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.

New Safety Protocols for Volunteers

We have been delighted to see the cheerful faces of some of our volunteers over the summer. We know it has been hard for our volunteers to keep away from helping their community, especially in times like these when the needs are so great. For those that are with us, we are doing everything we can to keep them safe. Our first goal was to be sure everyone working alongside them would be wearing masks. We have all worked hard to ensure our work areas are clean and disinfected. And, we have also modified all of our services to be as 'contactless' as possible.

There are 2 areas that have been hard to fill during this time. First, our outside afternoon help for our Drive-Thru Pantry, and second is at our Thrift Store. If you have been debating on helping out in your community, now is the time! Please contact me at (352) 629-8868 and I will be sure to find the right fit for you!

Tina

Update on Faith Over Fear!

Many of you have either seen or have a sign in the yard proclaiming FAITH OVER FEAR. This movement that started out of the hearts of some of our local citizens has now resulted in donations of over \$29,000 to support the work of Interfaith. We are so grateful to the individuals and businesses that have sold these signs and spread this awesome message. Also, thank you to those who took it to another level and made shirts, stickers, travel mugs, decals, etc. to promote faith during this strange season of uncertainty. You have been an inspiration to the staff and volunteers here at Interfaith and we are so grateful! If you haven't checked out the Facebook Page, look it up by putting "faith over fear crosses in Marion County" in the search box. And then be sure to go to the Interfaith Emergency Services page and like us too!

