

Resident Finds Freedom and Independence, by Michelle Collier, Case Manager

Imagine if you weren't allowed to keep your own paycheck? If you had no money of your own? Michelle, a resident of our shelter, was in just that situation. She spent 20 years as a caregiver for her ailing, controlling husband, who kept her isolated from working outside the home and from social areas. She divorced in 2019. God brought her to Interfaith to bless her beyond measure.

As a resident of our shelter program, Michelle has gone above and beyond. She is required to attend self-improvement classes, Bible studies, and shelter events throughout the week, including dinner and morning devotions. A great role model to other residents, Michelle has overcome many obstacles in her life.

Michelle began working at the Interfaith Thrift Store in September of 2020. Her position was supplied by monies through a grant to support the ministries who were hard hit with the loss of volunteers due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Always early for her job and with a smile on her face, her heart expresses the deepest gratitude to Interfaith. She continues to job search and interview for a more permanent, long term position.

Michelle is also a great example of how the ministries at Interfaith interact, coordinate, and work together to serve God. At the store, Michelle is talkative about her passion for cat rescue. Along with a home of her own, Michelle's long-term goals include opening a foster home for abandoned felines.

On her days off from the Thrift Store, she volunteers closely with a local animal rescue that fosters kittens and that uses the TNR method for feral colonies of cats to keep the population of strays down.

Shannon Pickering, Store Manager, says "Having Michelle at the store is a delight. She spends her hours tagging clothing to put on the sales floor. Michelle processes items to be sold or to go to the free clothing boutique at our main campus. She is a bright, perky addition to the store and we are blessed to have her here."

When it came time for Shannon to present Michelle with her first paycheck, we were all a little misty eyed at its significance to help her along her goal path and with her personal independence. As her Case Manager, I was so proud of her and her accomplishments and have enjoyed sharing Michelle's spiritual growth journey. She is a true example of God planting a seed, using Interfaith as the water, and watching this resident grow into an independent, beautiful, thriving woman.



Michelle with her first paycheck

Sharing My Heart, by Jessica Rodriguez, Director of Ministries

Speaking engagements are not something I do regularly. Karla does such a great job and typically handles those with ease. While she was out of town recently, I covered one for her. It was my first time going to speak to Immanuel Baptist Church and their Missions Team. I was so nervous. I had rehearsed a 15 min speech over and over in my head. When I arrived at the church I felt flustered, nervous and a little anxious. Sharon Cummings and her friend saw me and prayed over me before I stepped to the podium. We prayed that God would open everyone's hearts, and his Holy Spirit would provide the right words to learn about Interfaith. Thank God for answered prayers! Those 15 minutes flew by and I was so grateful the church was engaged and excited to help our ministry. Later, the Deacon's wives took a tour of Interfaith with me and blessed us with purses filled with hygiene items to donate to the homeless women in our community. Interfaith thrives on partnerships, we are so grateful for them!

From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley



As we enter the holidays in one of the most “extraordinary” years in recent history, I wish you all a peaceful and healthy season. This year has been filled with challenges but so many people in our community turned them into opportunities. Some who received stimulus checks because of the pandemic turned them into opportunities to bless others who were more deeply affected by the closing of businesses. Even though there were times that the shelves at the grocery stores were thin, many of you saw the opportunity to clean out your pantries and share your extra food with us. While there were times that people were quarantined and forced to stay home, many cleaned out closets and donated shoes and clothing to people that needed them more.

Most importantly, I don't think people have prayed this much since 9-11. I know that we have felt the prayers of our supporters here at Interfaith and God graciously protected our staff from catching the virus while continually interacting with the public. For that we are so grateful.

Another opportunity was found in a new event that allowed us to participate with other local non-profits to raise funds in a 24-hour period in late October. The first annual Give4Marion event was hosted by The Community Foundation of Marion County and provided an opportunity for people to make up for all of the donations that we generally receive from the events that had to be cancelled this year. We rely heavily on the fund-raising events to raise funds and awareness and many local non-profits were crippled by the loss of that revenue. I participated as donor as well as a receiver! It was very fulfilling to send those charities, whose events I look forward to every year, a gift in lieu of the price of a ticket. For those of you who don't enjoy attending events and only do so for the good of the charities, Give4Marion is a definitely a win! We raised \$44,515 in Give4Marion because of the generosity of an anonymous donor to match every donation made that day, dollar for dollar. Of course, we missed seeing your happy faces at our events so I hope to see you in 2021. With that said, I'd love to see you in 2020 if you can make it to our Sunrise Breakfast on Lake Weir. This is an outdoor event we've brought back this year just to bring people together for a breakfast, community prayer and to honor our Interfaith staff who have served so faithfully through all of the changes and uncertainties this year. It will be held on the beach at Gator Joe's on the banks of Lake Weir on Tuesday, December 22nd. Come early to see the sunrise at 7:00 am (or so) or get there just in time for breakfast at 7:30 or the community prayer at 8:00. If I don't see you there, I want to thank you for the incredible love and support you've shown to the people that we help over this past year. We truly don't exist without the generosity of the people in this great community. Merry Christmas and God bless 2021.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:27

Finding Grace at Interfaith, by Richard Moseley

My name is Richard. Although I was raised a Christian – going to church religiously up until my young adulthood. Later as I broke away from church, I fell out of touch with God. I thought I was the one that made everything in my life happen. I thought I was on top of the world and had everything I needed. Ever been there? I had the new car, new house, plenty of money, and my family. What more could a guy ask for?

I have recently been reminded of God's will and grace. As a parent now know that love is not always gentle. God reminded me of his will by taking everything that I thought mattered. There I was, in my mid 30's and my job gone, new car gone; money gone, and house on the cusp.

But God gave me what he knew I needed, Interfaith Emergency Services! Insert God's grace! I felt his presence at Interfaith the minute I walked in. It was the warmest, cozy feeling I have ever experienced. I was hired as a temp staff with grant funds, and it literally changed my life. Working in the Intake office, I was happy to be the front person assisting and touching the lives of close to 100 people per day. All while giving back to my soul through the power of giving. And it wasn't even me giving, but allowing God to use me to share his blessings with others.

In my time at Interfaith, I have touched the lives of so many, but my life has been touched even more so, by the staff and the clients alike. Meeting and getting to know some of our clients like Mack, and Thomas and Shine, has been a joy. Interfaith will always have a special place in my heart, and soul.

And the God of all grace, who called you I to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

Special Gifts

In MEMORY of:

Richard "Dick" Marr

By: Chip & Mary Hurst

Carolyn Kingsey

Charles "Mutt" Thompson

Jim Smith

Alice Pfister

By: Jimmy & Allene Jackson

Marilyn Allsopp

By: James & Katherine Yancey

Brent & Frances Malever

Art Meadows

By: Bruce Hutchinson

John Baxter

By: Charlotte Erikson

JoAnne McDevitt

By: Jeanne Hagan

Iris Salenko

By: William & Suzanne Hall

Bobby Richardson

Nan Deen

By: Ann Richardson

In HONOR of:

Laura Baber

By: Tim & Lyn Shanahan

Wilma Andrews 90th Birthday

By: Margaret Bowman

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.

*On behalf of the Board of Directors and all the staff at Interfaith, may you be blessed beyond measure during this holiday season!
God bless you!*

Many Thanks to...

Special thanks to Lt Col. Carlos Lopez and the cadets at Lake Weir High School JROTC for collecting 791 pounds of food – way more than their goal! Lt Col Lopez is pictured with Drive, Bruce Reed, right.

The results are in! Student, Rhett Counts dropped off 718 socks recently to Interfaith! His original goal was 50 socks to help the homeless, and he way exceeded it! Thank you to Rhett, his family and all those that donated to Socktober! What an amazing blessing! Well done !!!

Let's give a shout out to Palm Cay Community and these awesome residents for hosting their annual food drive for Interfaith. These generous folks gave 3396 pounds of food in one morning! Over the past 5 years they have donated a total 14,962 pounds!! WOW! What a blessing. We love our partner communities. We couldn't do it without you.

We are so grateful to the Ocala Palms community for a generous donation of \$5,650!! The residents of this community are so kind and demonstrate the good in humanity. God bless you all!! Pictured is Karla Grimsley with Ocala Palms residents, the Nelsons.

Thank you for these recent food drives (in pounds):

First Baptist Church Ocala: 121; First Assembly of God church: 197; Twilight Cruisers: 553; and Marion County Youth Football: 4,301 pounds of food. Also, special thanks to St John's Lutheran for a donation of underwear, socks, hygiene and Glenn and Rebecca O'Connor for 500 wipes & 500 diapers



IN MEMORY OF CHIEF GRAHAM...

While our entire community mourns the loss of our Chief of Police, Greg Graham, we want people to know that even those who live in our community without the benefit of a home feel the loss. This is one of our regular volunteers who has experienced homelessness. He made this beautiful tribute to Chief Graham for us to hang in our building. Chief Graham garnered the respect of so many more than he probably even realized. Our prayers continue to go out to his family and our Marion County family.

Stop by and meet Angie! by Shannon Pickering, Store Manager

My daddy always told me to find a job you love and you'll never work a day in your life. My daddy was a smart man. Working at Interfaith is a labor of love. Coming in every day to an amazing staff and incredible volunteers makes my job easy. Truly, the people I work with have big hearts and make coming into work a pleasure.

If you haven't been in to Interfaith Thrift Store lately, stop by and chat with Angie - she has the biggest heart and never forgets a face. Angie has been with Interfaith for 13 years and is the heart of our store. We're located at 718 N Pine, Ocala and we're open 9am - 4pm Monday - Saturday.



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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.

COVID Brings Changes to Food 4 Kids, by Karen Fant, Food 4 Kids Manager



Food 4 Kids looks a little different these days, but our mission hasn't changed - we strive to make sure no child goes to bed hungry in Marion County.

Due to COVID, we had to rethink the safest, most efficient way to continue to feed our students and not be a burden to the schools. After much deliberation and lots of prayer, we decided the new backpacks would not go back and forth from the schools to Food 4 Kids each week.

At the start of the school season, the backpacks were taken to the school. Volunteers now pack plastic bags labeled for each child's backpack, then are delivered to the school to be put in each backpack. With great relief, the schools and volunteers are liking the new procedures. One school employee said, "I love this new system. When I get the plastic bags I just take them to the backpacks and with my gloves on I fill the backpacks and I'm done. So easy and I don't have to handle the backpacks as much. It's great." Other schools have had the same response. Even though things are a little different at Food 4 Kids we are answering God's call. As the Bible says, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink." Matthew 25:35 We are thankful to be able to fulfill this mission God has put on our hearts.