

Successful Year for Food 4 Kids - thanks to Donors! by Delores Bulgin, Manager

With the ongoing Pandemic, our program has gone through a dramatic shift in how we conduct our daily procedures. I am pleased that the schools and volunteers were happy with the process of leaving the backpacks at the schools and delivering food (in plastic) bags at the schools to transfer to the backpacks, which has ensured the safety of our children and volunteers. Most importantly, ensuring that they still receive meals. I want to thank all the participating schools for the hard work they do on a weekly basis from the start of the school year until now, ensuring that each family is screened and registered so that they can be provided with the correct amount of meals per eligible participants. Teamwork truly makes our program work and the children being cared for are what makes us all happy.

Our successful year was thanks also, and especially, to our donors, as we would not be able to supply the thousand of pounds of food throughout the year to the children. Our financial donors that faithfully send support every month, are the true heroes of our program!

We are also grateful for in-kind donations – helping supplement the food we must buy for the program is awesome! We typically spend around \$5,000 a week on food, so having groups do food drives for us throughout the school year helps keep our cost down! This year we had Ft King Presbyterian Church donate 18 cases of pudding, Reddick United Methodist Church contributed a trunk full of various food donations, and the Tax Collector's office always comes through to help save the day - just to name a few! These are just some of our champions! Because of the pandemic, we did not have the regular volume of food drives this year, so our donors really pulled us through this year. If you are interested in becoming a Food 4 Kids Champion – please reach out to me. We would love for you to do a food drive for us starting in September!

Finally, our volunteers are the backbone of our program, and every day that they show up I say thank you! They remind me that for them, “volunteering is not an inconvenience when you have the passion to try to better the lives of the children that we are delivering the food to.” I am sad to say we lost one of our volunteers, Leo Schadeck a member of the Knights of Columbus - he delivered food to Marion Oaks Elementary. Our prayers go out to every child, donor, volunteer and school for making the Food 4 Kids program succeed. We salute you!



Ft King Presbyterian donation

Time to Elleviate, by Shannon Pickering, Thrift Store Manager

The purpose of the Thrift Store is to raise money that supports the Center for Life, to pay for prescription medicines for our friends experiencing homelessness and the uninsured in Marion County. My team at the store, both my staff and our Board Committee, work together to continually improve the store, in order to increase sales and the quality of donations. We often comb through our processes and tasks we do, to figure out what's a better/easier way. Sometimes it's as simple as changing batteries in donated watches. It is a small, seemingly insignificant change but makes a world of difference. Volunteers Paul and Lynn have taken this task upon themselves twice weekly, to change out and test new batteries in old watches. It's one step closer to achieving the goal of a higher quality store, for both donations and sales. We thank you, the donors and shoppers, for helping us achieve these goals at the Interfaith Thrift Store. Watch and see what is coming next! Stop in and shop at 718 N Pine, Ocala. And be sure to follow us on Facebook – we often post pictures of new arrivals!

From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley



Recently the city was forced to close down homeless camps located around town on private properties. The only problem with that is that there was no designated place for those without the benefit of a home to go. Realistically, there is not one square inch of property in Ocala where a homeless person can legally sleep outdoors. Unfortunately we don't have appropriate beds to serve this population in our 2 shelters. Very quickly a large group of people took up residence along our fence line on NW 2nd Street. When it was just a couple of our regulars we didn't mind so much. But as the crowd grew so did the people that dropped by for visits (basically those selling drugs) and it started looking like a mini "skid row." As the crowd grew to 40 or so people with no access to bathrooms, things got bad. The real challenge was that our Homeless Services Team had already started engaging with many of these chronically homeless individuals and to send them away would cause us to lose the progress we had made. But we had to do something. It seemed inhumane to leave them sleeping outside of a fence just a

few feet from porta-potties. Out of compassion, one of our board members suggested that we find a secure place on our property to let them sleep so they wouldn't have to be in the public right-of-way. So, on April 5th we launched the Open-Air Shelter in the same area where we hold church services for those who live outdoors. We added some fencing, hired a guard, vetted the ones that wanted to be case-managed by our staff, then issued each a cot and a plastic tote to secure their bedding. We were not sure how it would go. We started with about 16 coming in and several staying out on the streets. Over the next week, those that came in, adapted to the routine and we asked the local authorities to help us with those who chose to stay outside. Waste management came and cleaned up the trash that had accumulated along the street and our open-air shelter volunteers now keep it clean. We are now averaging about 15 people each night sleeping in the fenced area with access to toilets, water and guarded by security while they sleep. Some have told us it's the first time they've slept soundly in years. Almost everyone in the open-air shelter is a candidate for something called permanent supportive housing. This is housing that comes with help; human help. These are individuals who end up homeless due to mental illness, intellectual disabilities or other conditions caused by trauma that they have survived in life. Our Continuum of Care along with the County Community Service Department are actively seeking permanent supportive housing units and we now have funding for the support staff to assist the residents. While the general public is experiencing a shortage of affordable housing, it was revealed in a Public Policy Institute study 3 years ago that we had an immediate need for 200 permanent supportive housing units to address those who have been homeless for an extended period of time in our community. The good news is that there is hope that some of these will finally be housed. We just hope that until then we can at the very least offer them a safe place to sleep during the night. By the time this newsletter is printed, it will have gone before the City Council and Mayor for a vote either allowing or denying this continued use of our property. Either way, these human beings will still be here in our community, surviving the only way they know how. Let's pray that as a community we come up with a better plan for their future. Homeless lives matter, too.

The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40

Daily Routines, by Jody Schaible, Campus Pastor

We all have our daily routines that keep us centered and grounded. I wake up in the morning, have my coffee, then head to the bathroom to get a shower and prepare for the day. I make some breakfast and then out the door for work.

As I arrive, I say hello to our homeless friends that call NW 2nd Street their safe haven. Most start their day seeking items such as food, water, warmth and rest, then security and safety. The daily routines that we take for granted every day are hard to come by for them. One man, near to my heart is named Hollywood (pictured right). I have known him since the first day I was led by God to Interfaith. Just like us, he has had his ups and downs. Hollywood was given the opportunity to call our new outdoor shelter his home when we opened it. Prior to that, he would try to find anywhere he could that was safe to lay his head (which is difficult). As part of his agreement for our program, he took on the task of being in charge of the clean-up crew. Everyday he wakes up and begins to clean the area where everyone sleeps. As I arrive at 7:30am, he has already cleaned the shelter area and has started cleaning up along the street.

Giving him this new routine has given him a new boost to his self-esteem and a pride in his work. I know our daily routines seem pretty normal compared to his, however Hollywood has been on the streets for nearly 25 years. Now he has his eyes on getting off these streets and wanting to get into a home with 4 walls and a roof. Working with our Homeless Services Team, Hollywood will have a chance to have a place of his own, with his own responsibilities. What an incredible gift that will be.



Hollywood, after 25 years of homeless has a chance at a place to call home.

Special Gifts

In MEMORY of:

Ray Newhouse

Gertrude Newhouse

By: Patricia Bishop

Kathy Moore

By: Gerard Moore

Shirley G Ausley

W F "Buddy" Hogan

By James & Shirley S Ausley

Scott Copeland

Mack Dunwoody

By: Ana Dunwoody

LaRue Hickman

By: Phyllis Tate

Nelwyn Yeary

By: Katherine Neebe

Sam & Martha Kay Love

Carl R Carlberg

By: Alpha Delta Kappa Sorority

Matthew Fortin

By: Timothy Shanahan

Theresa Ann Monroe

Interfaith Staff

In HONOR of:

Shirley Gould

Sandi Cleghorn

By: Dot Glazner

CPL Jacob Hutchinson

By: Bruce Hutchinson

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

Many Thanks to...

We are so honored to be the recipients of a \$500 donation on behalf of these Osceola Middle School students! They just completed the Youth Philanthropy in Action course and are already making a difference. Pictured right with CEO Karla and Board President Brittany Beall.



Thank you for these donations of food, in pounds: College Park Church of God: 130; Paradise Ministries: 25 cases of food Ocala West United Methodist Church: 155 pounds of food & hygiene

Thanks to Brentwood at the Fore Ranch community for an incredible food drive effort that brought 1,164 pounds of food to our pantry! We love our community partners! God bless everyone who helped.

COVID wont stop us, by Volunteer Cherie Foster

Little more than a year ago the world, and Marion County, shut down to control the spread of Covid-19 and a new world opened at the Interfaith Satellite Food Pantry at Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Marion Oaks.

Our new world was scary, lonely, and achingly heartbreaking. As Interfaith paused to figure out how to still provide food and other resources to those in need despite the shutdown, we too were afraid we would have to close. But we still had cars lined up in the church parking lot. Clients, both old friends, joined by new folks, were there and sometimes averted their eyes to hide their fear and tears. With the help of community donations and food left over from the previous week, we donned masks and gloves and our new way of service began.

The next week, like the cavalry, Bill Rush from Interfaith arrived with what he could scrape together from the downtown Warehouse, and gradually our "drive through" service grew and prospered through those who stepped up to become God's hands in our community.

Lead by the Nor'easter Club, the residents Summer Glen held multiple food drives. Our brothers and sisters at Redeemer Lutheran delivered donations to us. The little Community Congregational Church in Marion Oaks came with a big donation of turkeys for Thanksgiving.

Gateway Ministries supplemented our food supply. Sometimes community members would wait hours in our line, not for a box of food, but to hand us a donation or open their trunks to give rather than receive. Over the course of the year Bill retired, but he returns to serve (and eat lunch) with us every so often. We are proud Interfaith selected a member of our community to step into Bill's shoes. Kevin Rhaney knows our community and serves with a generous heart.



The Marion Oaks crew poses together

This year we said goodbye to our beloved Pat Hinkley, whose ministry was making sure our volunteers always had a homemade lunch. Even when she couldn't risk exposure to Covid, she sent a packed lunch into us every week. Her unexpected death after a surgery was all the more painful for our months of forced separation before her passing.

Friends from community organizations serving Marion Oaks, unable to reach clients in traditional ways, have come to us to offer services through our drive through operation, and help load bags and boxes with us. What we thought would be a year of lonely, dangerous, service, has instead showed us we can still come together behind our masks and gloves to work as God's hands. Today, we can see new hope for better year ahead.



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

Kent Adams
Alejandro Arango
Craig Baggs
Brittany Beall
John Bradish
Quinnette Durkin
Winn Keeton
Cindy MacKay
Paulette Millhorn
Anne W Parker
Lisa Sheilley, Secretary
Vernon Shukoski
Carlos Tobon, President
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.

Joining the Interfaith Family, by Maxi Rodriguez, Warehouse Assistant

My husband and I moved to Ocala from Miami, where I drove a school bus for many years. When we came to Ocala, I found a job at the Hilton and was there for over 13 years. Originally starting as a housekeeper, I worked my way up to decorating for banquets and holidays, and the Executive Lounge. My hospitality skills flourished, and I really enjoyed my time there.

My husband was receiving cancer treatments early on, and I remember the empathic words from a guest telling me to have hope and keep our family with him. When he passed away, I was surrounded by people that cared about me and help me through that time. I was determined to always pay back the love and respect I was shown each day.

Family is everything to me. My two children and nine grandchildren hold my heart in their hands. My Hilton team and the Meyer Jabara family ranked up there as well. When the pandemic hit and we all got laid off, my boss told me about Interfaith. He had reached out to Karla and asked if there was any help for his staff. I later learned, thanks to a local grant, Interfaith received money to pay temporary staff, even helping to pay our rent and utilities. It was an incredible blessing I will never forget. We worked hard to provide help to others, just like us, that were laid off and needed groceries and other help.

A year later, Interfaith offered me a job to stay on permanently. I love being part of the Warehouse crew, working with Steve, Bruce, Jeff and all the volunteers. It is an incredible opportunity to get paid for helping others. My thoughts went back to my determination to pay back the love and respect I was shown in my time of need when my husband passed, and today, I'm still passing that along to each person I meet.

