

## **Gone Fishin' by Gloria Cribben, Housing Case Manager**

The pathway to housing is often a very complicated route for the homeless, and Ken Watts' story is no exception. Ken was one of the very first clients I met when I started as a volunteer advocate at the Center for Life in July 2020. At that point Ken had been living in a tent behind the CVS for a couple years already with little hope for change. He had been unable to work since a near fatal motorcycle accident took his Waffle House job, and he admits he made a series of very poor choices that landed him in prison for 5 years. His 'prison discharge bus ticket' deposited him in Ocala....no job, no money, no family and no hope.

When Ken appeared at my office he only asked for help to get some food stamps, so we worked together over the next few weeks to get him food assistance, but more importantly to help investigate his application for Social Security disability. The requested documents were submitted, the expected denial was obtained, and then connections were made with an attorney to continue the drive for a more favorable disability determination. Through it all, Ken remained such a quiet and grateful person, always thanking me for my time and efforts.

The next year contained seemingly endless doctor appointments, forms, and prayers but then... SUCCESS! In December, 2021 Ken was awarded a small monthly check from Social Security, and finally we were able to start looking for housing to move Ken from a tent in the woods to warmth from our cold January weather.

Through the grace of God, a kind pastor with a heart of gold in Floral City, is willing to take a chance on Ken and is renting him a furnished room and a new beginning to life. Ken will not only have a warm place to live, but his back yard is adjacent to a small river full of fish and being able to go fishing again is a dream come true for Ken. Ken's story is a living testimony to Ephesians 3:20 which states "Our God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think".



**A chance to fish is a dream come true.**

## **A Simple Act of Kindness, by Josy Cascino, Boutique Volunteer**

We see blessings happen nearly every day at the Free Clothing Boutique at Interfaith. As a volunteer, it warms my heart to be a part of it. Recently, a man came in wanting some clothes. We quickly realized that the man, Sam, was blind, so we helped him find a shirt and pair of pants. Finding a shirt that fit was much easier than finding pants, as our selection of mens' clothing is always extremely limited. All the pants we found were either too small or too large. We eventually found one pair of pants that would work if he had a belt. And that's the next thing we're always really low on. When we told Sam we couldn't seem to find a belt, another single mom shopping for her family said, "Please, take mine!" The young woman pulled off her belt and gave it to Sam. I'm not sure who's smile was bigger, but both of them walked away much happier. What a sweet thing to do for a total stranger. I think we need a little more of that in this world.

If you would like to help, we are always in need of mens' clothing – shirts, pants, jeans, belts and shoes. Dress clothes and every day wear. We often see our homeless friends come in to get clothing after getting a clean shower and it's such a blessing for them to find something to wear.

If you'd like to volunteer to be part of the Clothing Boutique, we'd love for you to join us. You can reach out to Tina Reid at (352) 629-8868 x210 or Tina.Reid@iesmarion.org.

### **Most Needed Items for Free Boutique**

#### **MENS:**

Shirts (dress & casual)  
Jeans, Pants & Shorts  
(up to size 38)  
Belts  
New underwear - boxers

#### **WOMEN/CHILDREN:**

Plus Sizes (tops & dresses)  
Boys/Girls Teen  
(sizes 10 -16)  
Underwear/panties (new)

## From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley-Greenway



As we've been preparing to expand our permanent supportive housing services, I've spent quite a lot of time online looking for successful programs across the country. Of course when you google anything with the word "homeless" in it, you get a few documentaries on housing programs but many more showing the homeless situation across America. I've watched countless videos recently, showing people experiencing homelessness, interviewing them, interviewing the public servants that interface with them and ministries that serve them. One thing is certain...this problem is not exclusive to Ocala! And the stories across America are all the same. The newest members of this population talk about being priced out of their rentals. Others fell on hard times a few years ago and just never found their way out. Seeing this side of humanity daily at work, I was surprised when I found myself crying as I watched these documentaries of people sharing their real life struggles and fears. Some have completely lost hope while others are still waiting for their situation to change for the better. As I watched the story of the 40,000 people living in cars or tents across Los Angeles my heart felt heavy. This isn't how it was when I was a child. Not here in America. I remember hearing my dad talk about homeless men he met while working on the railroads. He knew a few of the homeless that traveled from state to state that way, but I never saw them. There was one older gentleman with dirty clothes and a long gray beard that hung out at our public library and read all day. But other than that I don't remember seeing anyone living on the streets in my hometown of Lakeland. It used to be a rare condition and easy to ignore. When did it become so normal for so many people? How did we get to this point? More importantly, what can we do about it now? It seems that the number quietly grew at some point and now we are so far behind in addressing this need that it seems overwhelming. In 2019, our local Public Policy Institute reported that we needed 212 beds and that was just for those homeless with special needs. At that time, Marion County logged 12 such units where people in that category could live. This is why we are so grateful for the opportunity to add a few more units and house a few more people in the new apartments we are purchasing. And as excited as I am about this opportunity and the lives it will change, my very next thought is how many more units are still needed. I'm no expert, but I do know that it's going to take more than Interfaith, or Salvation Army, or Saving Mercy to make a difference. It's going to take a unified effort between churches, civic groups, businesses, city and county governments to effectively address this ever-growing problem. It's also going to take a whole lot of compassion. But if there is a community anywhere that can do it, I believe Ocala/Marion County is it. Please be in prayer about what your role might be and say a special prayer for those who are doing the best we can to make a difference.

*And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. Mark 10:27*

## Saving Lives All Year Long at Center for Life

2021 proved to be a year full of both challenges and successes. We had to learn how to do more with less, create more space, see more clients, spend less money, all while still obtaining the best results. Is this even achievable? I can say that only with the best teams, best resources, best leadership, best community, could we have ever thought it was possible to serve more.

Our largest funding at the Center for Life comes mainly from community grants and proceeds from our Thrift Store. In 2021, we were able to serve 625 clients from our Hospital District Grant. We provided 1,239 services at a cost of approximately \$67,000. That's clients with no/low income, that had a prescription that they would not have been able to pay for themselves, but were able to receive help through our program. Through proceeds from the sales at our Thrift Store, we served 468 clients with thousands of life-savings prescriptions, at a cost of over \$36,000. We are certainly grateful to the shoppers that frequent our Thrift Store – your patronage literally is life-saving!



In addition to provided prescription assistance, we began a program to assist clients with their Heart of Florida copays. We started in March and were able to provide 140 clients the ability to see a medical provider.

Our programs exist to find gaps in our community where clients are struggling to meet their needs. I'm grateful for our staff and volunteers for being so diligent to jump in and see where the Center for Life can offer services where none exist.

**by Diane Coleman, Manager**

## Grateful to the Gazette

Thank you to the Ocala Gazette for spotlighting some of our very special clients recently. The writers at the Gazette are committed to helping dispel some of the misconceptions about individuals who experience homelessness. If you haven't seen it, check out the January 7th edition with a front page article featuring Tina Howerton and Lisa Dondero, residents of our permanent supportive housing duplex. The article is titled "Home Sweet Home".

They've also done articles about the new project we are launching to house more clients at the 14th Street Apartments. We appreciate their dedication to telling real stories about real people in this local community.

You can look up the articles online at [Ocalagazette.com](http://Ocalagazette.com).

## Special Gifts

### In MEMORY of:

Katherine Ann Walter  
By: Ruthanne & Tim Mizner

Russell Mantel  
By: Sandra Mantel

Mary Louise Kerr  
By: Janice K Owen

Bobby Richardson  
By: Ann Richardson  
Chris Richardson

Tom Fuller  
By: Ann Richardson

Charles & Juanita Murray  
By: Robert & Miriam Murray

John Dwyer  
By: Ann Stanley  
Valerie Kiser

Wade Davis  
Forrest Perryman  
By: Betty Haskins Kutz

Gail Shuford  
By: The Mitzner Family

Justin King  
Stephen Head  
Regan White  
By: Ruth & Larry Dexheimer

Carlyle Ausley  
By: Cindy & Bradley Fleetwood

James H Patrick  
By: Barbara Jo Patrick

Mack Dunwoody  
By: Ana Dunwoody

Zarah Lapp  
By: Bruce Hutchinson

John & Irene Argus  
By: Adam & Jennifer Argus

Bobby Simpson  
By: Arthur Simpson

"Sy" Rivers  
Harold Donahue  
By: John LaSelva

Doug Oswald  
By: Frank & Pamela Stafford  
Carswell & Charlotte Ponder  
Anne & Buddy MacKay  
David Stafford

Helen Stutz  
By: Linda Robinson

Greg McNeal  
By: Kath McCormick

## Special Gifts

### In MEMORY of (continued):

Jane Cameron  
Dr & Mrs C Scott Hagood  
By: John & Jarl Hagood

Jeanne Focht  
By: John Ross

August Vorwerk  
By: Sandy & Robin McBride

Margaret Camp Murphy  
Dick Chazel  
R E Nettles, Jr  
By: Lillian Updike

Billy Hudson  
By: William & Pamela Pittman

Bonnie Carpenter  
By: JoAnn Smith

### In HONOR of:

Jan & Bill Brueckner  
By: William Brueckner  
John Brueckner  
Beth & Richard Arndt

Beth & Craig Cannon  
Harris Cannon  
Alice Cannon  
Chris Richardson  
By: Ann Richardson

Garris Graham  
By: Bill & Susan Sewell

Patti & Bob Barto  
By: Jan & Bill Brueckner

Al & Nancy Ott  
By: Tara Mauldin

Faith Doiron  
By: Mark Doiron  
John & Debra Roumas

Dr R Asokan  
By: Ann Richardson

Mr & Mrs Tom Powers  
Mr & Mrs Max Newhart  
Mr & Mrs Wayne Davis  
Mr & Mrs Bob Cox  
Mr & Mrs T J Cottingim  
By: Tim & Lou Petty

Robert & Cindy Heath  
By: Donnie & Rhonda Slone

Gail & Bill Tuck, Sr  
By: Marie & W H Tuck, Jr

Wilma Andrews  
By: Mac & Becky Andrews

## Special Thanks to...

Special thanks to Tom Osborne and Oak Run Country Club for their donation of 2,187 pounds of food. Pictured right.

Special thanks for these large donations (in pounds): Tax Collector's Office: 1,486; First Assembly of God: 1,394; Happy Feet Dance Club: 350; Real Truck: 409 pounds of food; Alicia Kenouye (Amazon TPA6): 906; Silver Springs Shores Moose Club: 203; Ocala West United Methodist Church: 5,495; First American Title: 2,518; Oak Run Dance Club: 391; Ocala Middle Charter School: 123; Howard Middle School 8th Grade: 360; Transformco: pallets of popcorn; Florida Credit Union: 1,030; Belleview Chiropractic: 462; South State Bank: 747; Spruce Creek South: 1,669; Saddle Oak Club: 106; Trinity Baptist: 1,552; and Bradley Blessing State Farm: 324; Also: Paradise Ministries: 70 cases & 25 bags of food & toys; First Baptist Ocala: 351 of food & 128 pounds of clothes; Christ the King Soup Kitchen: 35 bags of clothes & books and Christine's Blankets, Inc: 100 blankets.



Special thanks to Pauline and the Montessori Prep school of Ocala for their donation of 532 pounds of food! Pictured left at drop off.

## Find Your Best Deals for Valentine's Day at the Interfaith Thrift Store

February is upon us and you won't be able to find better deals for your loved ones than what we have at Interfaith Thrift Store. Gently used name brand purses, Wedgwood china, Waterford crystal, and so much more. All items are generously donated and sales fund our prescription assistance program at the Interfaith Center for Life. Shop at 718 North Pine Ocala for your loved one and save a life!

## Special Gifts

### In HONOR of (continued):

Ann Richardson  
Beth Cannon  
Craig Cannon  
Alice Cannon  
Harris Cannon  
By: Chris Richardson  
Celine Mack  
By: Dr & Mrs Keith Knorr  
Wayne & Shirley Hall  
By: Beverly & David Spencer

## Honor Someone Special

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.

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



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## **MISSION STATEMENT**

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*Interfaith Emergency Services is a community of faith called by God to offer emergency assistance without judgment to all persons in Marion County.*



**Cataline Enjoys Getting Pampered**

## **Cosmetology Instructor and Team Saves the Day by Michelle Collier, Shelter Manager**

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Since many of our new residents are job seeking, one of the things we determined would help boost their confidence was a fresh haircut, but with some many people needing cuts, it wasn't in our budget to help. Enter the hero of our story! Rachell Jarvis, Barber/Cosmetology Instructor from Marion Technical East Campus, and her students came to the rescue!

In December, Rachell and her team of students came to Interfaith, and we created a makeshift barber shop. Within the limited time we had that day, 11 residents and 9 of our local "homies" were blessed with free new haircuts.

Catalina, one of our residents who has two children, ages 1 and 2, was able to relax and get 12 inches of hair cut off. Catalina said, "To me, it felt like time away at a spa – being pampered and taking a moment for me!" Being a single mom, a little 'me' time is precious. We are so grateful to Rachell and her team for giving of their time and talents. Our residents have more confidence in themselves now, as they go out to upcoming job interviews.

Do you have a special talent to share with our shelter residents? Give me a call and let's talk – you can reach me at (352) 629-8868 x205.