

Shaun's Story, the Reality of Living on the Streets, by Gloria Cribben, Housing Case Manager

Shaun came into my life when I was working as a volunteer Client Advocate at the Center for Life almost 2 years ago. Shaun was one of my first clients, and he taught me so much about the reality of life as a homeless person on the streets of Ocala. Shaun found himself in Ocala upon release from prison for habitual traffic violations, but missing most of his basic documents like his Social Security card and birth certificate. Shaun had been sleeping on the back porch of a doctor's office and was grateful to have a screened area away from bugs and to have access to a garden hose so he could bathe and brush his teeth. His meager belongings were secreted away deeply hidden in various bushes, always divided among several locations so in case one cache was discovered he wouldn't lose everything.

It was Shaun's loss of documents since his release from prison that brought him to my office in July of 2020. I worked to help Shaun regain copies of the documents needed for employment and SNAP benefits, and Shaun began the long journey to stable housing. We applied online for an available job at Skyline Homes and he received an interview the very next day. With the help of donated clothing and the benefit of a shower, Shaun aced the interview and was hired! This job was such a blessing since a felony conviction makes employment extremely difficult even though their debt to society has been fully paid. I was also able to find temporary shelter for Shaun at a Recovery House so he could rest well, eat healthy meals, and be prepared for the long shifts he was working at Skyline Homes.

Shaun proudly saved most of his salary from his job and slowly regained his sense of worth, dignity, and confidence over the coming months. Unlike many homeless people, Shaun actually had family in the region... a daughter and two grandkids in Crystal River. After many discussions with Shaun, he realized he had much to offer to his grandkid's lives and they welcomed him into their home. Shaun found employment at a tool rental company in Crystal River and was also able to help with babysitting the grands. Life seemed smooth... until it wasn't. Shaun awoke one day with vision problems and over the next few days he lost total vision in both eyes from a brain infection that affected his retinas. The doctors at Shands Hospital felt the brain infection probably began during his period of homelessness when he had little access to proper hygiene. Fortunately, after months of antibiotic treatment, Shaun's vision improved dramatically and he was able to return to his job. The support and encouragement of his family were essential to Shaun's recovery.

Fast forward to July 2022.... I received a call from Shaun with the proud announcement he now has regained his Florida Driver's License! Not just a regular license, but the CDL license he lost before incarceration. This took many months of working and saving to pay off the fines and court costs, and it is truly a dream come true since it opens so many more employment opportunities.

Shaun's story highlights how just a little help, coupled with their sincere hard work can change lives. Basic documents and clothing for the interview led to successful employment, the job provided not only money but return of self-esteem, and self-esteem helped bring family reunification and continued progress to success. Bravo to our many donors whose support enables the work to continue here at Interfaith. I am reminded of Jesus' words in Matthew 25:40 when he said "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."



Shaun and his grandkids

From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley-Greenway



For some people in our community it is hard to imagine being in a situation that requires you to ask for food or go hungry. I have to admit that even after being at Interfaith for a couple of years I had an experience that truly put things into perspective for me. Often when I'm giving tours of our pantry I'll raise the lid on the big freezer and show off the wonderful meat that we are able to give away thanks to our partnership with local grocery stores through Feeding America. This program allows us to pick up food from the local grocery stores weekly and pass it on to our clients in need. The store gives us whatever it is that they need to move out of the way, so that they can stock their incoming food. The food is still good and in date, but they have fresher food to put out in the store. This is truly a blessing as we are able to give clients chicken, ribs, pork chops and sometimes even steak. And this is what I would say with pride every time I'd open the lid and show off the day's assortment of meat. But then came a season in which every time I raised the lid, it was just ground beef a/k/a "hamburger meat." So then my speech became, "well today we only have hamburger meat, but sometimes we have ribs or steak." It was around that time, I came in one Monday morning and the staff person who listens to the voice messages from weekend phone calls beckoned me into her office. She said, "you've got to listen to this." She then played a message from one of our clients and the message went like this: "I wanted to call and thank you for helping me on Friday. I used to volunteer years ago at Interfaith but the past few years have been hard. I finally broke down and came for assistance and everyone treated me so well. The best part was when I got home and in the bottom of the bag I found ground beef! It's been three years since we could afford to buy meat. So this weekend I'm going to make tacos and spaghetti for my family! Thank you for everything." I wish I could convey the joy in her voice at having the ability to provide ground beef in a meal to her family. You would have thought we had given her filet mignon. One by one as other staff came to listen to the message, not one walked away without tears welled up in their eyes. This phone call truly put things into perspective. The reality is this world isn't just or fair and even if we are all created equal, we sure don't live out our lives in equal fashion. The only place we are truly equal is at the foot of the cross. We should never take God's blessings for granted. So the next time I lifted the lid to the freezer while giving a tour and found it filled with ground beef, I have to admit that I got a little teary eyed. This hamburger meat was going to be such a blessing to our clients and my heart was filled with gratitude.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28

Trauma and Homelessness, by Dawn Lovell, Registered Mental Health Counselor

Trauma is a pervasive theme within the homeless population. In a recent research study of homeless individuals, it reveals that 100% of homeless women and 90% of homeless men have reported experiencing at least one traumatic event. Childhood trauma and homelessness are significantly correlated. Trauma increases the risk of homelessness but homelessness also increases the risk of trauma, making this an endless cycle of re-traumatization.

The majority of homeless individuals are underinsured or have no insurance at all, making access to mental health services extremely challenging. Here at Interfaith, thanks to our generous donors, we have begun the process to provide trauma and



mental health counseling to our homeless friends, free of charge. Creating a safe and nonjudgmental environment allows our clients to share and express the traumatic experiences they have often buried deep within. Repression of these experiences cause deeper shame, depression, resulting in faulty coping skills. Through uniting with compassionate and skilled professionals, the client is able to reframe their experiences, gain self-compassion, and learn adequate and healthy coping mechanisms. This is a critical piece of the whole puzzle in eliminating homelessness.

Those other pieces include food supply, case management, homeless prevention, shelter program, supportive housing, and affordable housing. We are working hard to join all these pieces into place to

create restored and whole lives. Each department provides dedication, knowledge, commitment, and love. At Interfaith, we are beginning the journey to breaking and healing generational and individual traumas. We want to thank our donors who are making it possible to serve the mental health needs of our clients. Our vision is to expand the number of counselors and clients we can serve, who otherwise would have no access to this vital service towards healing and wellness.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30

Special Gifts

In MEMORY of:

Alan McFarland

By: Rev Robert & Patricia Greaves

Irene Rezendes

By: William & Sharon Whitehouse

Biddie Kirk

By: Dr Keith & Janet Knorr

Melissa Murry

By: Dr James & Virginia Gamble

Mary Alice Adkison

“Jimmy” Blocker

“Kay” Drake

Branchard Tucker

Carolyn Williams

By: Walter & Anne Berman

Raymond E Putansu

By: Shelby Putansu

Helen Stutz

By: Linda Robinson

Madelyn Roberts

By: Patsy & Jack Harward

Mable & Bill Staplin

By: David & June Staplin

Hilda Perry Surrency

By: Joyce Murer

Lottie Markel

By: Ruth King

In HONOR of:

The DeSantis Grandchildren:

Luke, Jane, Dylan, Drew

By: Louann & Andy DeSantis

J Jarvis

By: Freddy Revels

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.

Special Thanks to...

Special thanks for these large donations (in pounds): Ocala West United Methodist: 105; First Presbyterian: 167; Twilight Cruisers: 258; Countryside Presbyterian: 163; Zion Bible Believing Church: 125; Ocala Elks Lodge #286: 186; Fort King Presbyterian: 286; and American Panel: 107. Also: Glenda Vietingoff: 210 pairs of socks and Paradise Ministries: 72 cases food; 41 cases toiletries.

Thanks to Hale Products for their 754 pounds of food for our Food 4 Kids Backpack program! Plus a donation for \$5,357 as well! Thank you for being such a wonderful community partner!



Thanks Hale Products!

The Helped Becomes the Helpful

Meet Billy, by Wendy Davis, Homeless Prevention

Humble is the best word to describe my former client and coworker, Billy. Billy is the Shower Monitor for our Shower Ministry but that is a far leap from what his profession a short 2 years ago. Billy worked 38 years as a supervisor in manufacturing until a stroke altered his life in 2020. COVID, a lay off and the inability to perform in his life's industry ended that career. He applied for Unemployment and disability. Unable to perform the same skills as before it was very limiting what type of work he could do. He tried to sustain his monthly expenses while waiting. But like most working folks, he wasn't financially prepared for this situation. A few months later Billy came to me in need of rent assistance. Still waiting for Unemployment and still waiting for disability. Though understandably frustrated by the sluggishness of the process, Billy never waived in his faith. His spirit and energy were always positive. Months went by with no income and no answers. More than a year after the stroke, God opened our position of Shower Monitor. In fact, Billy has served in that capacity for a year on August 9th. About the same time that he began with IES, his disability was approved.

Billy's faithfulness and reverence are displayed each day in an environment that is completely unlike any he has encountered. He ministers and encourages all that he meets (see an example below). He humbly gives our Lord the glory for all. Yes, humble is the word to describe Billy. And blessed we are to have him at Interfaith!

Meet Elvis, by Koya Harris-Beard, Social Services Manager

When Elvis first came to Interfaith he was really on hard times. He wasn't looking for a handout, but a hand up. He was unemployed and homeless. He came in to see how we could help him.

Some people call the Social Services Department the 'one stop shop.' Where else can you go and get food, clothing, showers, receive prayer and uplifting words, resources and counseling all in one visit? Right here of course! It is my goal to make every single person that walks through our doors feel that they are welcomed here regardless of their needs. We care...I care.

As for Elvis, he was able to get a ID card, a job, and find a place to live. Because of his appreciation, he still comes to have lunch at the Soup Kitchen when he can, hang out at the showers with Billy and bring a little more joy to our campus. He's pictured here with Billy, our Shower Monitor with the walking stick he made for Billy to show his gratitude when he realized Billy walked with a cane.



Billy and Elvis



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
- Paulette Millhorn, President
- Rebecca O'Connor
- Anne W Parker
- Lisa Sheilley, Secretary
- Vernon Shukoski
- Carlos Tobon
- Wally Wagoner
- Wesley Wheeler
- Karla Grimsley-Greenway, 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.

Beating the Heat, by Tina Reid, Volunteer Coordinator

Summer can be hard times for us, especially as our volunteers are enjoying vacations. We also don't get as many new sign ups. That leaves us shorthanded, but God always provides, by tugging on the heart strings of those that are still here volunteering. They step up and work extra shifts, many times whole days for multiple days a week. It's amazing to see these volunteers literally sweating it out with our staff. But if you ask them, they say they are more than happy to be here when we need them. I want to personally thank Gabe, Kelley and Bob for all the time and sweat equity they have given us this summer. The warehouse team couldn't have done it without you and we're truly thankful. I pray many blessings over all of you as you go through the rest of this year! Thank you to all those that put in extra effort for us and our community this summer.

NEED: Are you handy and want to volunteer a few hours a week to help your community? Interfaith needs maintenance volunteers. As we work towards renovating our new apartments and keeping up with the normal every day light bulb and air filter changes, we could use some extra hands. No special skills required. If you're interested, please call me or email me at Tina.Reid@iesmarion.org.

Upcoming Events

Give 4 Marion, our annual online fundraiser will be held September 20 – 21 this year. Non profits from all over Marion County join together for one day to devote a special day of giving. Join our campaign and spread the word! *How can you help?* Be our Champion - tell 3 people you know about Interfaith! Spread the joy on social media! Become a donor and give online. Join us as we work with the community to help our community! Go to www.IESmarion.org/donate to share your support.

Interfaith will have a fall silent auction event on November 18th, from 6pm – 8pm at the Ocala Downtown Market. *We are looking for sponsors and donations for silent auction items* – recognition to local businesses for their donations! Call Sonya at (352) 629-8868 x203 or Sonya@iesmarion.org