

Steve Clem Retires After 18 Years at Interfaith

Interfaith is celebrating our dear friend Steve Clem's retirement. Steve has been an amazing blessing to Interfaith throughout the years and has worn a lot of hats in that time. He first started managing our Thrift Store, then moved to Facilities for a while, and then found his true calling at the Warehouse Distribution Center. Steve has done a tremendous job managing the warehouse and its contents so that we give as much food and other supplies to the community as possible. He's opened doors that led to better opportunities and donations, and built relationships with our community partners. And when donations come in that we cannot use, he has always done his best to reach out to partners and share those donations.



Steve, soon to be retired



Warehouse Dream Team: (from left) Bruce, Maxi, Steve & Red

We're throwing a retirement party for Steve on September 6th at the Warehouse.

If you know and love Steve like we do, you're welcome to stop in and say congratulations. But it won't be good-bye, because Steve promises to return to help when we're short handed or have big events. So we'll still be blessed to have him on occasion. Join us in praying for Steve to enjoy this new chapter in his life! He will be missed!

Stepping into those shoes is Maxi Rodriguez, previously Assistant Manager. This little dynamo is looking forward to what the future will bring. Her management and organization skills will be an integral part of the Warehouse as it grows in the coming months. Along with Maxi, Bruce Reed will set up from Driver to her previous role. We're also happy to have Red still part of the crew, who works hard every day to keep all the 'Jenga pieces' moving from pallet to pantry. They are the dream team.

Take Me Out to the Ball Game, by Michelle Collier, Shelter Manager

Brett Wood has been a huge asset to Interfaith for many years. He hosts "Get Fit in the Garden" on Saturday mornings where he feeds and fellowships with our community. He is also a faithful dinner provider for our homeless shelter residents once a month. Brett, along with his friends Carlos and Kenny, were able to get some tickets to the Daytona Tortugas baseball game. They came to Interfaith and loaded a van with a few of our friends - Danny, Tomas, and Cantobie, and they got to have a fun night out with the guys! *All of the guys were so happy when they returned and couldn't wait to share their experience.* "Oh, it was just a beautiful time. Real live baseball and I was there!" Tomas said as his face lit up. "Tomas and I ate a whole pizza too," Danny added on. "What a special night with great people". Cantobie said he felt very blessed. "We loved being able to spend time with our brothers enjoying America's favorite pastime. We look forward to more moments like this. It was truly a blessing from God." Carlos and Brett shared, "It was a fun trip to Daytona - just a bunch of guys hanging out, joking, and enjoying the pizza, burgers, and hotdogs." What a great memory for all of us. We are so blessed and thankful for the people the good Lord puts in our lives so these amazing moments can be shared.



The boys on the way!

"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

From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley-Greenway



It's a rare occasion that I leave work in tears. It happened more often back in the early years of my tenure with Interfaith, but over time you get used to seeing people in desperate situations. You don't get hardened to it, you just learn to focus on the good you can do; even if it's just showing someone kindness by giving them a bottle of water on a hot day. But on this one day recently, even a small act of kindness didn't feel like enough. I think it started earlier in the day when I read that our county had just appropriated \$5.2 million to build a new animal shelter. Now I'm an animal lover. I'm happy for the animals to



Jason and his dog

have care because I know our current shelters are over-crowded. But it just hit me like a punch in the gut, that our society thinks nothing of spending millions to build a shelter for unwanted animals, but not for human beings. According to the recent count there are over 30,000 homeless individuals in Florida. And this number doesn't begin to capture them all. I thought about the blind man that we are trying to find an affordable room to rent because his rent went up and he has to be out by the end of the month. I thought of the couple that I met recently that rely solely on their social security income and have fallen behind because of the increased cost of everything. They too are about to be evicted and can't find another rental they can afford. Maybe this is why the situation that I had to deal with that day got to me. It involved both a human and an animal. A gentleman who lives on the streets was on our front porch with his sweet companion dog as I was leaving the office. A few days earlier his dog had given birth to 9 puppies with some complications. We scrambled to get him a box for the puppies and for the next couple of days he carried the box of puppies with him and his little new "mama" by his side. When I came out I found him cradling his dog's head in his lap and sobbing. He told me that his dog was suffering because she missed her babies. He had given them to a person that rescued animals and was assured they would bottle-feed them. Meanwhile, the mother of these pups was bloated with milk and appeared to still be swollen from giving birth. It was obvious that she was suffering. The man had so much compassion for his pet that it was heart-warming. Meanwhile, he had nowhere to lay his head or provide a comfortable space for her. He asked me if he could have permission to just stay on our porch that night so they would at least be out of the rain and not risk being arrested for trespassing. I granted his request, got him some food and our Director of Ministries (who has a heart as big as they come) offered to bring him a can-opener so he could feed his dog the food he had gotten from the pantry. As I walked away I began to cry. For the poor dog that was suffering, but even more for the poor human that was suffering. And I asked God why. Why is it that in this country where we have millions of dollars to shelter animals, we can't find the money to provide shelter for our fellow-humans? I didn't get an answer. **But God did answer the homeless man's prayer for his dog.** The next morning with the help of another wonderful non-profit called VOCAL, we were able to get the dog to a vet for emergency surgery, saving her life and possibly the life of her owner. He told the vet that this dog had changed his heart which changed his mind and now he is sober and trying to get his life back on track. I'm still praying for solutions for our homeless population. I need some saints to join me.

Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. Matt 18:19

Farewell to Devoted Volunteer, by Andrea Jordan, Social Services Manager



Meet Jill, a devoted volunteer who has selflessly served at our Social Services Office for the past 12 years. Her introduction to Interfaith came through Church of Hope, a vital community ally. Known affectionately as "Miss Jill" by many, she earned this endearing title because of her steadfast dedication. Having triumphed over her own 20-year journey with recovery, Jill established deep connections with clients, providing them with empathy and encouragement on a personal level.

Jill has been an invaluable asset to the Social Services office, generously volunteering for four weekly shifts. Her expertise is truly remarkable. As Jill returns home in November, our hearts are heavy at the thought of bidding her farewell. Her presence in the Social Services office has been absolutely indispensable, and her absence will be keenly felt. However, we are also excited for her as she embarks on a new chapter fueled by her faith. **We are looking for new volunteers to join our office and fill the spaces she will leave.** If you are interested in lending a helping hand, please contact us at (352) 629-8868 x210.

Special Gifts

In MEMORY of:

Grat Rosazza
By: Frank & Pamela Stafford

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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.

In MEMORY of:

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By: Susan Azevedo

Dorothy Thompson
By: Dr Carolyn Pepler

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John Hagood
By: Jarl Hagood

Carole Schuch
By: Joe Len & Joan Battle

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By: Barbara Reinckes

Jean Cellon
By: Rosemary Naas

Alan Ritchie
By: Richard & Evelyn Nachman

In HONOR of:

First Responders
By: Timothy Shanahan

Special Thanks to...

Special thanks for these large donations (in pounds): Ocala West United Methodist Church: 601; West Marion Moose Lodge #2356: 1,334; Rose Grove Farms: 484; St Paul's United Methodist: 553; Countryside Presbyterian: 224; Joy Lutheran: 205; Ft King Presbyterian: 610; The Way Church: 798; First Assembly Church: 119; Grace Episcopal Church: 43; and Twilight Cruisers: 367. Also: Grace Episcopal Church: 78 pounds hygiene products and Twilight Cruisers: 80 pounds of clothes.

Thank you so much to Daughters of American Revolution Ocala Chapter for the donation of beautiful purses full of hygiene! These are going to make some women so happy! Andrea, Social Services Manager, pictured right with donor!



Give 4 Marion Great Way to Introduce others to Interfaith

Sometimes the need is simple. Sometimes it's just one small hurdle that our clients are struggling with.

What if you could help supply someone's work boots so they can find new employment?
What if you could ease the suffering of a child that isn't getting enough food over the weekends when they're not in school?
What if you could help provide life-saving prescriptions for an elderly couple on a fixed income?

The answer is simple – yes, you can!

On September 17 - 18, Give 4 Marion is kicking off - an online fundraiser. For those that support us throughout the year, we appreciate you more than words can say. And please keep doing what you're doing - making a difference in the lives of others! If you haven't given and are still on the fence, or if you want to share with friends and co-workers about this great non-profit Interfaith that you love (big smile), then this might be a great opportunity and an easy share.

This link www.bit.ly/give4marion will take you to the Give 4 Marion website. You'll find a complete list of services we provide as well as simple check boxes that allow you to donate to the direct need you want to support.

Dates/Times: Sept 17 at 10am through Sept 18 at 7pm

For those of you that already give, join us in prayer that we would find new friends in the community that would join you in the fight to change lives for the better in Marion County. Thank you in advance for your support! If you have any questions or would like more information: Sonya@iesmarion.org or call 352-644-9202.





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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.

Food 4 Kids Kicking off New School Year
by Teesha Garcia, Food 4 Kids Manager

We are entering a new and exciting school season for Food 4 Kids! As we begin our 2024-2025 school year, we are blessed to hit the ground running. We have several children already signed up for the program and guidance counselors ready to go August 12th when school begins. *We are happy to announce, even with the cost of food prices skyrocketing, Food 4 Kids has been able to feed a child for an entire month for only \$25* and we will continue to do so this year. We are hoping to implement an “adopt a backpack program” this year which will allow local families to provide the rolling backpack and all food items provided to children throughout one school season. If you would like more information on adopting a backpack, sponsoring a child, donating, or getting involved with our backpack program, please reach out to Teesha Garcia at: (352) 620-8239.



Thrift Store News,
by Shannon Pickering, Thrift Store Manager

Are your children back in school? Are you retired and looking for something to do? *Please consider the volunteer opportunities available at the Interfaith Thrift Store.* The community’s generosity has led to a need for volunteers to help showcase, process, and assist with donations. Opportunities include processing clothing donations for our free clothing boutique on the Interfaith main campus or for resale at affordable prices in our thrift store, testing electronics, greeting donors and customers at the door, and staging the store with stunning artwork and home decor. If you have a few spare hours during the week or on Saturday, please contact volunteer coordinator Tina Reid at 352-629-8868 ext 210 to arrange a tour at Interfaith. We would be delighted to have you join us!

