

The Help Center is Open - Praise God!

The staff and Board of Interfaith want to thank everyone that took the time to drop in during our Grand Opening event at our new Help Center on November 13th. We are very excited about this opportunity to expand and improve our services to the community. If you missed the event but would like to come tour the new center, please reach out to Emily at Emily.Pozo@iesmarion.org and she will schedule one of our management staff to show you around. You can also reach her by calling our main number 352-629-8868.



Grateful clients are lined up before the doors open

We also want to give a special thank you to the Marion County Community Services for their assistance with a HUD Community Block Development Grant to help us build this project. We appreciate Tallen Builders for doing such a spectacular job, Joe Rispoli Architect for designing such a beautiful space and Tillman & Associates Engineering for their work to get this project off the ground (literally).

Finally and most importantly we want to thank God for His direction and provision for this ministry. We know that He lays Interfaith on the hearts of many people who respond to his calling to support us financially and with in-kind donations. Thank you to our donors for your obedience, generosity and faithfulness.

Donald Finds Hope in His Darkest Moments, by Ned Giroux and Melissa Hanson

We're excited to have our first article from our new Engagement Center team – Manager Ned Giroux and Client Support Specialist Melissa Hanson. We're looking forward to reading all the life-changing stories from their team in our new building!

On September 23 Donald arrived at Interfaith. He was in distress and explained to Melissa, who helps to case manager our clients, that he had just been released from jail and was living on the streets. During the discussion Donald said he was afraid that something was going to happen to him. He didn't have any moral support and had used methamphetamine. Donald let us know that he was so depressed and was considering suicide. Engagement Center Manager, Ned Giroux, overheard the conversation and spoke briefly with Donald. He became very emotional and said he was seriously considering it. Ned asked Donald if he would like us to get him some help. Donald agreed. Shortly thereafter, an Ocala Police Officer arrived at our facility. He and Donald went in a private office to talk. After a short period of time, they came out and the officer advised that he was going to take Donald to a mental health facility, SMA, to be evaluated.

We later learned that Donald was Baker Acted and would remain at the center for 72 hours. Melissa contacted Erik's Place, which is a sober living facility in Citrus County, and inquired if they had a vacancy for Donald. After a Case Manager at Erik's Place received Donald's information, they approved him for admittance to their facility. We learned that their staff would pick Donald up once released and take him to Erik's Place.

This is one situation where this story could have had a horrible ending, but instead, we know God sent Donald to us so we could help guide him to get the help he needed. Donald has been in regular contact with Melissa, and we've learned he is doing much better and has had a great experience while he has been at Erik's Place. This is another great example of multiple agencies working together to make things happen for our clients that are experiencing homelessness. We are so thankful to be on the front lines with our community partners so that together, we can provide very needed services and support.

Serving Marion County Since 1983

From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley-Greenway



As we head into the season for celebrating the birth of Christ, I was just reminded again of why it was so important that He came. It's not just so that we can have a reason to get together with friends and family, or give gifts, or decorate our homes. It's more about the endgame. Recently I had an unusual day. I spoke with two completely different people that were both about to be transitioned to Hospice for their last days here on earth. One was a precious donor. I don't know if I ever met her in person but I could tell by our phone conversation that she was a beautiful person, elegant, educated, and a Christian who had lived a blessed life and made it to the age of 81. She called because she had put Interfaith in her will and wanted to make sure everything was in order. She knew she was about to begin her journey to Heaven. Even though the illness that was taking over was going to cause her incredible discomfort, she was ready to face it with grace and courage as she looked forward to her "endgame". Later that same day I spoke with one of the gentlemen who lives in our supportive housing apartments. This man I had come to know well and called him friend. For those who read our newsletter faithfully, you may remember an article I wrote a couple of years ago about a bad day I was having when a homeless man prayed for me. Well, now this man was no longer homeless, and doing the daily work to overcome a lifetime of addiction and maintain his sobriety. He too, was suffering unbelievable pain due to the cancer that had taken up residence in his bones. He was having a rough day and was feeling discouraged and afraid. What do you say to someone who is in that moment where death is imminent? Well, if he or she knows Christ, not just in his birth but in his resurrection, you remind them where they are going. You encourage them to cling to the promise that they are about to step onto streets made of pure gold, where addiction, poverty, suffering and good-byes do not exist. Most of all, you remind them that they are about to be face to face with the God of all creation. That after this long hard journey through this life, they are about to make it to the "endgame" that lasts for an eternity. In the big scheme of things, isn't that what we should all be striving for? Jesus came to give us hope that goes beyond this life. That is why we celebrate Christmas! He came to give us the greatest gift of all; the gift of Salvation. I hope you have made plans for your endgame. It's the best gift you will ever receive. Merry Christmas!

On November 11th, Paul Shaw transitioned to Heaven. If I know Paul, he's not exactly "resting in peace"... he's dancing on streets of gold. I look forward to seeing him again someday.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21

Join up with Food 4 Kids and Help Feed Children in Need, by Teesha Garcia

Food 4 Kids is excited to enter into our holiday season. We have added two new schools this year and God has continued to bless our ministry. Through the faithful service of 75 or so volunteers and many wonderful donors, we have been able to serve 1,800 children per week to date! Think of all those little bellies being full – thanks to our awesome donors and volunteers!

We have seen our program grow each year with 2024 having our highest need yet. Food costs have hit many local families very hard and we are grateful to be able to help fill in this gap on the weekends. But, we need your help!



Carissa and Teesha pose with their Tuesday crew of volunteers, ready to make a difference in the lives of children in need

Our food costs (purchasing food for the backpacks) has also increased. Please consider donating to our wonderful program to help fill bellies for children that would otherwise go hungry on the weekends (www.IESmarion.org/donate).

There are many ways other ways to get involved and help local children in need. We have many members of our community who host neighborhood food drives. We have seen banks have competitions to collect food for our program. We could not do it without all of you. This holiday season if you feel like you would like to get involved or help in our ministry please reach out to Teesha at (352) 622-8239. I can tell you about all the many different ways that you could make a difference right here in your local community. May you all be blessed this holiday season, and we look forward to seeing you in 2025!

Special Gifts

In MEMORY of:

Ken Nelson

By: Shereen & Cornelious Fort
Mr & Mrs Ernest Brandes

Chris Richardson

By: Judith Chambers

Alphonso & Clotelia Lindsey

By: Virginitta Myers

Edward McClellan

By: Winston & Karen Needham

Rina Pare

By: Rolling Greens Water Aerobics

Nate Gilman

By: Winston & Karen Needham

Casius & Gwynn Pealer

James & Katherine Yancey

Judy Johnson

Kim Needham

By: Winston & Karen Needham

Sue Dean

By: Elizabeth Kutz

Barbara Merrill

By: World Wide Alliance

Jean Cellon

By: Terry Trexler

Howard VanDenburgh

By: Ann VanDenburgh

John Hagood

Pat Lovell

By: Jarl Hagood

Tom Fuller, MD

By: Henry & Val Ehlers

Lee Goodson

By: Alice Goodson

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 HONOR of:

Rosemary Naas' Birthday

By: Rose & Raymond Rozanski

Shirley S Ausley's Birthday

Walk Jones

By: Ann VanDenburgh



Meadowbrook & Staff With 2,687 Pounds of Food!

The residents of Palm Cay are amazing!! They collected 1,260 pounds for us and we are so grateful!

Ambleside Ocala came to put smiles on the faces of our residents! They put on an ice cream social that made the day of the children, as well as the parents, of those that stay with us. They even had a group that helped beautify our campus! Thank you to all that came from this school and made the day a truly special one!

Frankie Joins the Warehouse Crew with Big Smiles

Frankie has a long history at the ARC of Marion, where he became a client in June of 2002. He enjoyed working on a lawn crew for years alongside his dad Frankie senior, who recently retired. So Frankie decided he wanted to volunteer in the community. He came here to Interfaith with a group to find out about volunteering with us. He ended up loving the Food Pantry and he looks forward to volunteering every week. He really enjoys helping us and being with friends that he volunteers with. He's always asking me if he can come more days, so now he volunteers 2 days! That really put a smile on his face. He wears his volunteer t-shirt with pride and always has a smile for everyone he meets. We are grateful for ARC of Marion and their partnership with us to provide loving hands and hearts to help in our Food Pantry!



Maxi Poses with Frankie at the Warehouse

New Engagement Center Seeking Volunteers

Want to make a difference in the lives of others? We have a place for you! These are all the wonderful ways you can help: greeter/hospitality, computer assistance, hobbies & games, training for how to do laundry and data entry. Lots of opportunities available. Please call Tina for more information at 352-644-9196 or tina.reid@iesmarion.org.



**INTERFAITH
EMERGENCY
SERVICES**

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
- Monica Bryant
- John Bradish
- Doug Day
- Quinnette Durkin
- Jamie Gilmore
- Mike Jordan
- Winn Keeton
- Mary Beth Neely
- Winston Needham
- Anne W Parker
- Scot Quintel
- 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.

Volunteers Needed!
by Andrea Jordan, Manager

With the festive season in full swing, our Free Clothing Boutique will soon be buzzing with even more of our wonderful neighbors. Currently, we're only open for 4 shifts a week, each lasting just 3 hours. We are desperate for help! We're on the lookout for enthusiastic volunteers who have a passion for fashion and enjoy interacting with people. We also have a great need for clothing sorters (which is behind-the-scenes sorting and hanging up clothes for the Boutique).

Help me fill these empty shifts by joining us in spreading the joy of much-needed clothing to our community! Contact Tina for more information at 352-644-9196 or tina.reid@iesmarion.org.

Thrift Store News,
by Shannon Pickering, Manager

As we conclude another fruitful and fulfilling year at Interfaith Thrift Store, we reflect on our dedicated efforts. Throughout the year, we have been actively engaged in collecting and selling gently used donations, and reasonable prices to help our community that we know is struggling. Additionally, we have been working diligently behind the scenes to provide complimentary furniture to shelter residents transitioning to permanent supportive housing!

We also support other ministries at Interfaith such as supplying clothing and shoes for the Free Clothing Boutique (over 3,000 pairs of quality walking shoes). And just in the last few months, more than 350 towels to our Shower Ministry to assist our friends experiencing homelessness.

Thanks to your generous donations throughout the year, proceeds from the Thrift Store go to support the Center for Life and their life-saving medication program. Your support and generosity have been invaluable to our mission – and we thank you!. Should you require a donation pickup, please do not hesitate to contact us at 352-351-3541. We sincerely appreciate our awesome community!

