

Bringing Clarity to those in Need, by Andrea Jordan, Social Services Manager

Did you know that Interfaith generously offers reading glasses to its clients? The joy this brings to individuals who would otherwise struggle to focus on the printed word is truly heartwarming. Just the other day, a cheerful couple eagerly posed for a photograph beside our colorful bins filled with readers, their faces lighting up with delight. The gentleman, with a playful grin, struck a classic pose reminiscent of "The Thinker," adding a touch of humor to the moment (right).



From my office, I couldn't help but overhear the emotional exchange of a lady who was moved to tears. She had brought her neighbor in to collect a pair of reading glasses after he had endured a whole year of difficulty trying to decipher the words on the page. **It was a powerful reminder of how something as simple as a pair of readers can transform someone's life.**

A special shoutout to The Lion's Club for their incredible support, providing Interfaith with an impressive 300 readers each month, with strengths ranging from 1.00 to 3.50. However, these glasses fly off the shelves and often don't last until the end of the month. So, if you're looking for a meaningful way to give back to your community, consider donating reading glasses—you could make a significant difference in someone's life!

Hard Work and Perservance Helps Mom with 2 Boys, by Yanique Duff-Ballard



Ms. C and her two boys were displaced when their apartment building in Pennsylvania was condemned and demolished. With nowhere else to go, and a disrupted life, she moved to Florida with the hopes and dreams of starting a new with her family. She chose Ocala to relocate to because her gym, John 3:16 where she trains and fights, is here in Marion County. Upon arriving, Ms. C experienced difficulties securing housing, although she had a housing voucher from Pennsylvania. Our first interaction with Ms. C was at our Neighborhood Breakfast where we feed the homeless. She was there with her boys when our Director of Ministries, Jessica Vega, learned that they were living in their car. Jessica spoke to Ms. C about the shelter program and she quickly applied and was approved. Ms. C, a very competitive and hardworking woman, has always been dedicated to her trade which is boxing, and hopes to one day be a world champion. **We were able to provide Ms. C's family with a roof over their head, a safe space to learn and grow, and the resources and tools they need to put their lives back together.** Through hard work and dedication, Ms. C was able to achieve some of her goals. While at the shelter, she was able to enroll her boys in school, find employment, seek housing through her voucher from Pennsylvania, and continue her boxing

training. She also enrolled in school and is currently still working on her degree. Ms. C has kept up with her housing, she is still a full-time student, she works part-time on her own business as an entrepreneur, and she is now a 8th time champion with a very big belt to show for it (pictured with Yanique above). To say that Ms. C loves to box is an understatement, but she loves it because she is able to do it with her children. A family affair that brings joy and a sense of accomplishment to the entire family. We are very proud of Ms. C and her family. They arrived in Ocala with a plan, and with the help of Interfaith and all the resources we were able to give, they have achieved these goals and much more. Through your continued support of our shelter, we are able to make a difference in the lives of many, like Ms. C, and we thank each of you that walk with us on our mission.

Serving Marion County Since 1983

From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley-Greenway



Today is just a regular day at Interfaith. I met with my marketing committee, had some impromptu meetings with key staff and then it was my turn to lead circle time in our new Engagement Center. This is a space where those who are experiencing homelessness can come for essential services. Other than a few volunteers, everyone in the big open space is living on the streets, in the woods, under a bridge or wherever they can safely sleep without being arrested for trespassing. **While this is only a small part of the ministry of Interfaith (95% of our clients are housed), it is this population that weighs the heaviest on me and presents the most challenges.** It's also this number that is growing. If you knew how many of our clients are senior citizens and are reporting that they've only become homeless in the past 6 months you would be astonished. If you could see the 4 people in wheelchairs rolling around the room, you would be heart-broken. And even though many of them have income due to a diagnosed disability, they can't find a rental they can afford. But today circle time was a little ray of sunshine. One gentleman (in a wheelchair) announced that his disability has finally been approved so he's hopeful he will get off the streets soon. A woman in the circle celebrated her 40 days of sobriety and shared that for the first time she has goals she is working on; the main one is to become housed. Another gentleman (in a different wheelchair) shared that he was released from prison 6 weeks ago to return to his house that had burned down during his incarceration. He's in his 70's. Even still, he is determined to stay on the right path and hopeful he will be housed soon. He shared how much Interfaith had helped him by allowing him to shower every day and all the other services he receives while he's searching for a new home. When it became my turn in the circle, I simply reminded them that Jesus cares about them and that He can help them even when we can't. Then my mind went back to my marketing committee meeting and how necessary it is for us to come up with a successful fundraising campaign so we can continue to give help and hope to those who have no one else. If you have enough groceries in your pantry, a roof over your head, and any amount of money in your bank account you are way better off than many people in our country today. If you can spare even a few dollars or a few cans of soup please consider donating to our ministry. Every gift helps and helps us give hope.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things". Philippians 4:8

Thrift Store Helps with High Tea, by Shannon Pickering, Thrift Store Manager

Every year, our CEO, Karla Greenway, joins together with Marion County Hostesses for the annual Interfaith High Tea, a heartfelt event aimed at supporting the needs of our shelter residents. This lovely gathering is eagerly anticipated, offering a chance to savor an authentic high tea surrounded by beautifully adorned tables. Each ministry plays a vital role in this initiative, hoping to make every year more impactful than the last.

Behind the scenes, the Interfaith Thrift Store provides decor, exquisite china, and linens, ensuring that Karla and the shelter staff create a warm and inviting atmosphere. Yet, true magic occurs beyond the elegance of the tea itself. Shelter residents are invited to an exclusive after-hours event at the Interfaith Thrift Store. Accompanied by shelter staff and administration, residents have the opportunity to select an outfit, including a dress, shoes, and the perfect tea-party hat. Refreshments and charcuterie are served, adding to the celebratory spirit.

If you would like to support this event, **we are in need of ladies' Derby-Day style hats and dresses for this special occasion.** You can drop them off at 718 N Pine Avenue or contact Shannon at 352-351-3541. We are truly grateful for the chance to sponsor this evening of relaxation and joy for the women and families at Interfaith.

Corvette Club of Marion County Brings Blessings Every Week, by Teesha Garcia

The Corvette Club of Marion County has faithfully volunteered for Food 4 Kids for many years through rain, shine, hurricane, heat, and every other challenge that has been tossed their way. Their many drivers are such a blessing every single time they walk through the door with a smile and a hug. Recently, the Corvette Club has outdone themselves by blessing the Food 4 Kids ministry with a large donation to cover ALL the backpacks for the children at Harbour View Elementary for the 2025-2026 school year. **This donation will help ease the financial strain of inflation and allow us to help even more children and their families.** God bless every volunteer member of the Corvette Club of Marion County and all you do to help end childhood hunger right here in Marion County. We thank you and will forever love you all!!

Special Gifts

In MEMORY of:

Henry (Buddy) Morgan Frazee
By: Dayle & Steven Silver
Elizabeth Kutz

Charlotte Jean Justice
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Rose Rozanski
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Val Ehlers
By: Kirby & Sandra Manning

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By: Albert Chapman
Jan Jernigan

*Smile!
God loves you!*

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.



Don't forget to donate for your favorite Hostess for May 17th!

Donations can be made online at www.iesmarion.org/donate or mailed to Interfaith, PO Box 992, Ocala FL 34478. Thank you!

Special Thanks to...

Special thanks for these large donations (in pounds):

Marion Landing: 109; Paradise Ministries: 110; Ocala West United Methodist: 395; Marion County Tax Collector: 201; Advent Health Ocala: 273; First Assembly of God: 45; First Christian Church: 187; College Road Baptist: 495; Country Side Presbyterian: 55; Grace Christian School: 1,119; First Baptist: 183; Gary Langston: 51; and Joy Lutheran: 117

We received \$45,000 from the Ocala Open Pro-Am Golf Tournament hosted by Candler Hills at On Top of The World Communities. We are so grateful! Karla and Board pictured with Ken Colen and Matt Hibbs, pictured below.



Volunteers are Cleaning up and making a difference, by Ned Giroux



Volunteer Crew - Janet, Richard, Elmer & Devon

The Engagement Center has been open since mid-November and we have been running at full tilt since the doors opened. One of our biggest projects has been to recruit volunteers to fill the various positions that we have within the Engagement Center. One of these positions has been our "Soft Job Skills Program." This ministry revolves around the commercial washer and dryer that we have, that was so graciously donated by Truist Bank. To say that we had a few hiccups along the way to get this program off the ground, would be an understatement. But finally, in the beginning of March we got the equipment up and running and the next big task was to recruit people to operate the machines, clean the laundry (including laundering towels from our shower ministry), and then fold the laundry and have it ready for use again. Initially we had a couple of our members that took on the job, but due to them both moving on, we again had to occupy those positions. A few of our members filled in the responsibilities in different capacities, but no one was able to take on the majority of the various jobs that needed to be fulfilled, until one member came forward and said she wanted to take it on. Janet came to me and said she was tired of just sitting around and wanted to contribute by taking on this ministry. Janet has been one of the most reliable working members that we have. **2 to 3 days a week we collect the towels from the shower ministry and Janet is always ready to get everything washed, dried and folded.** We have been fortunate to also have Richard, Elmer and Devon to do the laundry pickup and bring it over for Janet to clean. We've seen teamwork displayed in its finest, when I was beginning to worry if the ministry was going to succeed. Wait a minute, as I recall this all happened right around St. Patrick's Day and Janet was obviously our Lucky Charm. Who says there's no gold at the end of the rainbow?



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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.

Letter Carrier's County-Wide Food Drive is Saturday, May 10th

On the Saturday before Mother's Day, May 10th, we have our largest food drive of the year. This food drive covers all of Marion County and everyone can participate in helping us help others. It is our Letter Carrier's Food Drive. Every year our Marion County residents put nonperishable food in a plastic bag and place it on or near their mailboxes. Letter Carrier's then come and collect it and bring it to Interfaith so we can distribute it to our community.

This food drive is vital to our ministry because we have an influx of community members needing food over the summer. This food helps so many people and we are so grateful to the Letter Carrier's and all of the community that help on this special day.

If you want to volunteer please contact Maxi Rodriguez Food Distribution Manager, 352-624-4204.

Please help us get the word out and remind all of your friends and neighbors to put non-perishable food items by your mailbox on May 10th! This food drive gets us through the summer months and we need all the support we can get!

Put a bag by your mailbox
Saturday, May 10th
Help Feed Families in Need

with

All donations STAY in Marion County!