

This month we're celebrating our volunteers. Within these stories, you'll find amazing folks that have such compassion and a spirit of giving that you'll find heart-warming and inspiring. Take a moment to read their stories and how they make a impactful difference in the lives of others, right here in Marion County.

Want to get involved? Tina Reid, our Volunteer Coordinator would love to hear from you. She'll give you a tour and show you the many ways you can get involved - shifts can be as brief as 2-3 hours once a week. Reach out to her at Tina.Reid@iesmarion.org or (352) 644-9196.

Volunteering Together is a Perfect Hit for Married Couple Kathy and Richard

Kathy and Richard Levy are a remarkable couple who embody the spirit of service as dedicated volunteers at the Thrift Store, Facilities and Food Pantry. Their commitment to helping others shines through as they generously offer their time, skills, and compassion to various ministries within the organization. They are always ready to step in when needed and respond to urgent requests to meet the growing demands at Interfaith.

Kathy's journey with us began in 2017 at the Food Pantry, where she assists clients in completing the necessary paperwork for food services. She takes great care in working with these individuals, ensuring that all documentation is accurate and effectively communicating that information to the next group of volunteers who prepare food for distribution. Additionally, she dedicates two days each week to the thrift store, where she often helps shelter clients select furniture and household items as they transition into permanent sustainable housing.

After many years of volunteering and many heartfelt conversations over dinner, Richard joined Kathy in 2021. Richard is deeply involved at the Food Pantry, where he helps unload trucks filled with food donations for clients seeking assistance. With his background as a retired construction carpenter, he lends his expertise to Pastor Jody by working on the landscaping around the new Help Center at 421 NW 1st Street. Additionally, Richard volunteers at the thrift store, where he helps with unloading donations and supports the truck during community pickups. He also recently installed drywall in one of the bathrooms at the Food Warehouse, which helped Interfaith save on the expense of hiring an external company and buying materials, as he covered the costs himself. He mentions that the administrative staff consistently express their gratitude and that appreciation is one of the reasons he continues to return to Interfaith.

Kathy shares that she and Richard crossed paths in first grade (how sweet) and rekindled their connection at a high school reunion more than seven years ago (so heartwarming). They tied the knot on April 26, 2023, and their beautiful story was highlighted in the October 2023 edition of Ocala Magazine.

Kathy and Richard have both found a meaningful connection with Interfaith. ***They are both driven by a desire to make a positive impact, stay engaged after retirement, and embrace the mission of the organization.*** Kathy often listens to clients express their gratitude, saying they can't imagine what life would be like without Interfaith. This resonates deeply with her, reminding her of Philippians 4:13 – I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

by Shannon Pickering (Thrift Store) and Maxi Rodriguez (Warehouse)

Serving Marion County Since 1983



Happy Duo Kathy & Richard

From the Chief Executive Officer: Karla Grimsley-Greenway



Even as Interfaith continues to grow and expand our ministry, we have been able to keep our overhead costs at an amazing 7%. ***That means that 93 cents of every dollar goes directly to the services we provide our clients.*** The national average for non-profits ranges between 20 and 35%. So how do we do it, you might ask? First, we expect a lot (maybe too much) from our staff. We have a staff of 38 and almost half of those are part-time employees. Between them we operate a homeless shelter 365 nights a year, a food pantry 5 days each week and another one 2 days a week, a backpack program feeding children every weekend, a medication program, a homeless services support program, a social services department - including a free clothing boutique and a shower ministry. Keep in mind these all operate 5 days a week! As if that wasn't enough, we operate 2 properties with a total of 16 units for supportive

housing and a Thrift Store that is open Monday through Saturday! So how in the world do we get it all done with so few staff?! ***One golden word....VOLUNTEERS. I say "golden" because their value is truly more to us than gold.*** We have volunteers that have been with us, faithfully coming week after week, year after year. We simply couldn't provide the level of services without them. I want to extend a very special heart-felt thank you to those of you who give so much of yourselves to make Interfaith possible. Additionally, I want to thank those volunteers who work closely with me as Board Members to keep me on the right path! Our 2025 Board of Directors are:

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And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:16.

Meet Nichole Eagle, Budgeting Volunteer

Hi, my name is Kalisha Nichole Eagle, a volunteer at Interfaith. After moving to Marion County in 2021, I sought for opportunities to connect and serve the community. My passion is to educate, empower, and provide resources to individuals in our communities that are struggling economically. ***This passion drew me to Interfaith whose mission, vision, and spiritual values aligned with my own creating a platform to teach and impact the community.***

In February of 2023, I excitedly accepted the opportunity to volunteer in the Learning Center teaching budgeting skills. This course was designed to show the residents how to manage their life, time, and money to better maintain their financial stability after program departure, in an effort to reduce the participant return rate. Interfaith allowed me to freely exercise this gift resulting in the opportunity to teach over 50 shelter residents and graduate 35 of them.

It brings me great joy when I see the graduates living and maintaining their new lives in the community and inspiring others to do the same. It is through this humility that I live and continue to be of service to others in partnership with the Interfaith community.

The shelter team would like to extend their gratitude to Ms. Eagle for her dedication and determination to making a difference through her expertise with empowering, educating, and motivating our shelter residents to succeed.



Nichole (2nd from left) with her certificate holding residents

By the Numbers

When you look at the work-force of volunteers at Interfaith, the numbers are down-right amazing! Tina, our Volunteer Coordinator, shared how many volunteers ***we have in each ministry and wow...369!*** Besides these numbers you'll find groups of community volunteers that schedule time with us throughout the year - those numbers can be a group of 10 all the way up to our largest group of 75 at one time! We are blessed by our volunteers throughout the year!

CFL-3; Boutique-16; Devotion Leaders-16; Dinner Providers-39; Engagement Center-27; Facilities-6; F4K-85; Food Distribution-93; Thrift Store-21; Social Services-32; Shelter-7; Prayer Team-5; and Marion Oaks Pantry-19

Leading a life like Nehemiah, by Devotions Pastor Chad Marinelli

In the Book of Nehemiah, we see a leader driven by faith, stepping out of his comfort zone to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Do you feel a similar calling to help others rebuild the walls of their lives?

You lead a busy life—working a 9-5 job, managing evening chores, and spending time with family. Yet, deep down, you know God has placed a leadership gift within you, calling you to encourage and disciple others. Perhaps you've led a small group, taught a Bible class, served as a pastor, or simply have a profound love for God's Word and sharing it with others.

This is my story. My family of 5 has been on quite a journey as I've pursued ministry while balancing a full-time career as an operations research scientist. Being new to Ocala in 2019, I initially knew little about Interfaith. However, through our local church, I began to witness the profound impact they have on the community. Then one day, I came across an opportunity to serve as a devotional leader—and it just clicked.



Pastor Chad cutting up with residents

Devotions are held at 8:00 AM on my designated day(s). This means I can participate in something life-changing, doing what I love, and still be home in time to start my workday. Sign me up!

The preparation is simple and flexible. Each leader has their own style. I like to begin with fun icebreakers, such as "Would you rather" questions, to get the conversational juices flowing. We then read a Bible passage and let it speak to us, highlighting what stands out. The guided conversation that follows is such a blessing.

The residents are so welcoming and engaging, and their sense of community is inspiring. Each has a unique story of God's providence, which I have the privilege to hear about during discussion time. *Initially, I thought I was there to bless them, but in reality, I have been profoundly blessed.* We have formed genuine friendships—laughing, crying, testifying, and growing together. And it doesn't end at 8:30AM. We collect prayer requests and pray for each other until the next time we meet. Honestly, it's bittersweet when my prayers are answered for them to complete the program and move on. It's like losing a member of our small group.

If you feel like Nehemiah, I encourage you to get involved. Your presence and leadership can make a remarkable difference in your life and in the lives of these wonderful residents at Interfaith Emergency Services.

We have a few openings for Devotion Leaders to lead devotions once a month. If God places filling this need on your heart please reach out to me, tina.reid@iesmarion.org or (352)644-9196 - Thank you - Tina

Center for Life Celebrates a New Volunteer, by Cherie Galloway, CFL Manager



The Center for Life has been blessed with a new volunteer this year, Teauna Robinson. She is a medical student who is on break. She walked into our office one day around Thanksgiving and said that she and her grandmother wanted to volunteer. We gave her the brief tour and told her to go with her grandmother to see Tina Reid, our Volunteer Coordinator. I told her that she would get the "big tour" of all our ministries and Teauna told me that she would definitely be back.

Teauna (pictured left working at the computer) started here at CFL at the first of the year and boy she has us spoiled! She helps at our front desk and is great at filing and any task we give her. *Teauna has such a lovely spirit and we are certainly blessed that she has chosen to give us her time and talent.* Our clients and staff love her.

Count Your Blessings with Mary Gene, by Andrea Jordan, Social Services Mgr



Meet Mary Gene, a dedicated volunteer at Interfaith since 2018. In her role as a Counselor in the Social Services Office, she has the privilege of connecting with individuals who truly inspire her. Discovered through her church, St. John's Lutheran, volunteering at Interfaith has become a vital part of her life.

For Mary Gene (pictured left), the highlight of volunteering is meeting people and listening to their remarkable stories. One story that deeply resonates with her is about a woman who, despite facing the loss of her husband and enduring cancer treatments, fills the room with her radiant energy each month when she comes in for food. Her cheerful attitude and positive outlook on life are truly uplifting. *Mary Gene said, "You really count your blessings when you leave here."*

This powerful sentiment encapsulates the transformative impact that Interfaith has on everyone involved, inviting more people to experience the joy of giving and receiving support.

All He's Missing is a Cape – Meet Super Hero Don Paulsen by Pastor Jody Schaible, Facility Manager

Here at Interfaith, we're lucky to have amazing volunteers, and one of the best is Don Paulsen. For the past two years, he has been working hard in our facilities division, helping to keep Interfaith in great shape for everyone who comes through our doors. He helps repair, built, unclogs toilets and even cuts the grass. Before every shift, he grabs a trash bag and picks up trash everywhere to keep us looking great (and we didn't even ask him too).



But Don doesn't stop there! He also helps at our free Clothing Boutique, where his wife, Barbara, volunteers too. With his help restocking the boutique, they make sure our clients have access to clothing, feel welcomed and cared for.

Over these two years, Don has not only become a great friend to me but has also built strong friendships with many of the people we serve.

His genuine desire to help others shines through, and it's heartwarming to see the connections he's formed with the homeless individuals we encounter. What stands out about Don is how he shows us all that one person can make a big difference in the community. His kindness and teamwork are a big part of what makes Interfaith a better place.



Don fixing a sidewalk

Putting together auction items

We are so thankful for Don and everything he does. His hard work and positive attitude brighten the days of everyone here, and we're excited to continue working together to support those in need.

Volunteer Retires (Again) After 18 years of Service by Tina Reid, Volunteer Coordinator

To say we get attached to our volunteers is an understatement but some volunteers have been so loyal to us, it's even harder to move on. *Lois will turn 90 this year and has spent 18 of those years with us.* She recently "retired" from volunteering and we want her to know just how much we'll miss her! And we appreciate her many years of compassion and dedication to the Food Distribution Center. Lois is pictured right with Food Distribution staff Maxi Rodriguez and Bruce Reed. We love you Lois!



Special Gifts

In MEMORY of:

Merritt C Fore, Jr

By: Winston & Karen Needham
Ruth & Larry Dexheimer
Michael & Kathryn Holloway
Anne Dozier
William & Pamela Turnley
Brad & Cindy Fleetwood
Julie Moody

Vera Agosta

By: Gus Agosta

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By: James & Katherine Yancey
Michael & Kathryn Holloway
Anne Dozier
Joyce & Kenneth Lemek
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Jessica & Jim McCune
Michael Ingram

Ron McMillin

By: James & Katherine Yancey

Charlotte Jean Justice

By: Terry Spray

Roger Parker

By: Ann Richardson
Charline Drake

Dottie Schweiger

By: Ocala Palms Residents Assoc

Velma Sowerby

By: Charline Drake

In HONOR of:

Saddle Oak HOA

By: Saddle Oak HOA
(Fred Mullen)

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): Juvenile Justice: 43; Hospice: 425; Ocala West United Methodist Church: 400; Countryside Presbyterian Church: 453; Church of God of Prophecy: 180; College Road Baptist Church: 928; Sonny's Bar B Que: 72; Trinity Baptist Church: 33 and Victory Academy: 229. Also donated: Central Church of Christ: 30 snack bags; Paradise Ministries: 60 cans tuna and The Rock Program: 400 socks

Special shout out to Crosspoint Church - they collected 589 pounds of food for their community! Pictured right.



Meet Ronnie & Elmer, Engagement Center Superstars



Ronnie & Elmer at the Front Desk

Both of these individuals come to us with similar backgrounds, they have suffered tragedy in their lives and have had to deal with these tragedies in their own ways to be able to cope. The good news is that both found their way to the Engagement Center and have been essential in the working success of the Center thus far.

Ronnie comes from Dallas, Texas originally, but has lived the majority of his life in Florida. Presently, Ronnie lives in the Recovery House, which he moved into the beginning of November. Ronnie started out volunteering doing maintenance type work within the Engagement Center. On a daily basis Ronnie could be seen cleaning the tables and floors, making coffee, helping with small repairs and talking with other members (Ronnie is definitely not the shy type). One day Ronnie came to me and said that he was interested in working at the reception desk, which I was more than happy to have him do. Now, Ronnie wears many hats, still assisting with the cleanliness of the center as well as working the reception desk, monitoring the other people who assist with the janitorial duties and he is also on the Engagement Center Advisory Board. It goes without saying that Ronnie is very involved and an important member within our team.

The second member of recognition is Elmer. Elmer is a Minnesota native that decided (like many of us) that he had had enough of the cold and snow, so he ventured to Florida. Elmer landed in Orlando to begin with, but after a few weeks there thought a quieter life in Ocala was more his preference. Elmer also started with the Engagement Center shortly after we opened our doors. Previous to coming to the Sunshine State, Elmer had worked for Case New Holland in Minnesota, in a variety of positions. Elmer brings that great work ethic with him. There is nothing that I have asked Elmer to do that he won't do. One day you will see Elmer taking out the trash, cleaning the various rooms, making coffee, picking up the grounds outside or even planting flowers with our CEO, Karla. Elmer is also a valuable member of our Advisory Council Board.

by Ned Giroux, Engagement Center Manager



P.O. Box 992 • Ocala, FL 34478

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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.

Meet the Amazing Kathy, by Teesha Garcia Food 4 Kids Manager

Food 4 Kids has about 85 volunteers each month that do the heavy lifting (literally) to ensure about 2,000 local Marion County students have food to eat on the weekend. There are so many faithful volunteers who gladly and without hesitation go the extra mile to do anything they can to be helpful.

One such volunteer is Kathy Defalco (pictured right, loading backpacks in her car to be delivered). Kathy joined our team back in 2021 as a driver for Anthony Elementary and has since started packing bags on two different days for about 1,200 children, as well as driving her school. *Kathy said she loves "everything" about being a part of the Interfaith team and helping feed the kids.* She always comes in with a smile ready to start the day and usually has a funny story to make us all laugh as we work. With Kathy here, it does not even feel like work.

We look forward to many more years working with her to help one child at a time avoid hunger. Food 4 Kids love you, Kathy, as well as all our beautiful volunteers and are looking forward to ending this school year strong. Love and hugs!!

