



SPRING 2016

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# THE GREAT ELECTRIC EMERGENCY!



Help Commander Current bring electricity to our neighbors in need.

**Create a team. Raise money. Celebrate with us.**

All proceeds will go toward helping families with children, disabled members and senior citizens who are in danger of losing their homes.

Mellow Mushroom in Avondale  
3611 St. Johns Avenue, Jacksonville 32205  
May 17, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.  
[greatelectricemergency.com](http://greatelectricemergency.com)



# DESC

Downtown Ecumenical Services Council



# FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

provide groceries, clothing and financial assistance.

In September, we started receiving and distributing groceries that we receive FREE from Farm Share, our new Groceries Ministry partner. This saved us approximately \$35,000 in 2015 and will save us \$80,000 in 2016.

These terrific savings will allow us to increase our Financial Assistance Ministry from \$90,000 in 2015 to \$120,000 in 2016. This will also allow us to continue to increase the number of brand new socks and underwear we give away.

We are excited about our upcoming Fundraising Events: The Great Electric Emergency on May 17 at Mellow Mushroom in Avondale and Bubba will be back yet again in the fall of this year. These events are a lot of fun and great opportunities for you to bring your friends and co-workers to enjoy a good time while learning about and supporting our ministries.

As always, we hope you will invite others to visit us, take a tour of our facilities, experience the lives we are able to touch through your giving, and share your joy of being able to help others with them.

Lastly, are you aware of all the benefits of volunteering...especially after retirement? Volunteering provides a sense of purpose, physical well-being, a longer life, and the pleasure of giving back all while enjoying camaraderie with like-minded good-hearted individuals just like you. It's fun and good for you.

Please contact me at 904-358-3935 or [jeff@descjax.org](mailto:jeff@descjax.org) to coordinate or facilitate tours, visits or discussions with any potential new donors or volunteers.

Thanks once again for making DESC such a vital ministry in the heart of downtown Jacksonville.

*Jeff Matthews, Executive Director*

Thank you and amen! We here at DESC owe you all, our donors, volunteers and partners, a huge debt of gratitude for your generosity of giving to help our clients in need.

In 2015, we finished the year financially in the black after two years of dipping into our reserves. We have been able to cut costs significantly, while still providing goods and services for a record number of those in need.

Please read this newsletter and learn about all of the new and exciting ways we now have to



MAKING  
A DIRECT  
DIFFERENCE

By fulfilling Jesus' mission to the poor and homeless by bringing peace and hope, DESC, a faith-based organization, uplifts families and individuals in real-time crisis. By providing emergency food, clothing, and financial assistance, our dedicated staff and volunteers offer our neighbors a helping hand during hardship.

**We provide care responsibly.**

For more than 30 years, we have refined our process to serve countless individuals. Through strategic partnerships with key organizations and thoughtfully managed systems, we maximize our impact within the community. [descjax.org](http://descjax.org)



# DESC RAISES AWARENESS

## at Ortega River Run

DESC attended St. Mark's Episcopal Day School's 2016 Ortega River Run on February 27. Proceeds from the event benefit the financial aid and scholarship program at St. Mark's.

Jacksonville law firm and sponsor of Ortega River Run, Rogers Towers, donated a booth space to DESC at the event, allowing us to raise awareness about combating homelessness in Jacksonville.

DESC set up a carnival bow and arrow game that represented three aspects of DESC's ministry: clothing, groceries and financial assistance. While children played the game, board member Julie Handley talked to their parents about the services DESC provides to the Jacksonville community.

Although DESC is one of the most-referred-to organizations in Jacksonville for financial assistance, unless people are involved with one of the downtown churches, they likely haven't heard of the organization. The run gave DESC members the opportunity to spread the word about DESC to the suburbs. Executive Director Jeff Matthews said he was excited to bring awareness about the organization to people who otherwise wouldn't have heard about them. Special thanks to board member Julie Handley for explaining DESC to the visitors to our booth.



MASON & BRAYDEN VOGT

## THANK YOU RIVERSIDE AVENUE CHRISTIAN CHURCH!

On Saturday March 12, immediately following the Gate River Run downtown, Brian and Carey Hepler from Riverside Avenue Christian Church delivered 295 pairs of men's and women's running shoes to DESC. These shoes are a tremendous help to our clients as tennis shoes, especially men's, are the most requested items and unfortunately, we rarely have them to give away. In addition, Brian and Carey had pre-sorted the shoes into men's and women's bags, saving hours of guesswork by our volunteer stockers. We are so grateful for their generous donation and efforts that day as well as everything Riverside Avenue Christian Church does in support of this ministry.



# BUBBA "REELS IN" SUCCESS AGAIN

*Thank you to everyone who participated in our annual Bubba's Back fundraiser!*

In 2015, we brought back our old mascot Bubba. The modern take on our old fishing tournament was hosted at the Jesse Ball duPont Center on November 12.

About 150 guests attended the fundraiser and enjoyed the debut of virtual fishing, where participants fought their way onto the leaderboard for a chance to win the grand prize of \$5,000. Guests were entertained by Jacksonville native and American Idol finalist Tyanna Jones, who supported the fundraiser because

DESC assisted her family through tough financial times when she was a toddler. Local singer Melissa Smith and bluegrass group Woods and Bridges also entertained the crowd.

We raised a net grand total of \$89,309 and reached our goal of spending less than 20 percent on expenses. We couldn't be more grateful for the success of this event! Thank you to our in-kind donors and sponsors, who are also critical to our success. We are so blessed that they continually support our cause!

We can't wait for this year's Bubba's Back this fall and The Great Electric Emergency coming up in May. See you there!



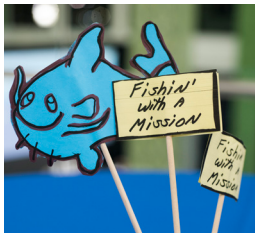
FRAN MOULDER & FRIENDS



TYANNA JONES



JU'COBY PITTMAN







**WOODS AND BRIDGES**



**ELIZABETH & CLAY MEUX**



**MARY SPUHLER & JEFF MEYER FAMILY**

# DESC NEEDS YOU!

Ask volunteers Dana McKay and Sally Solow why they volunteer at DESC and they won't hesitate to tell you how important it is to them.

"The moment you walk into some places, you know in your heart you've made it home," McKay said. "It's not always about the surroundings, but the people you connect with."

McKay and Solow are retired and usually work Mondays and Fridays. But on a Tuesday, both were happy to come in to sort and organize clothing. This kind of initiative allows clothing manager Beth Wilson to focus on other priorities like interacting with clients who need her assistance.

"This is a meaningful place where you can have a good time because you're needed," Wilson said. "We try to put ourselves in the place of our clients, so we share what we have."

When volunteers work with clients, sort clothes or give out groceries, they show love to people who need it most.

"Sometimes people come in so defeated but they leave with such a smile because you made a difference in their lives," Solow said. "It feels good to know you impacted someone's day."

By treating families with dignity and respect, simply by listening to their stories, you give them a hand up.

We are hoping to increase our financial assistance from seven to 10 families per week. DESC is in desperate need of more volunteers so that we can reach that goal.

So, how can you benefit from becoming involved? As Baby Boomers retire, research shows that volunteering helps people maintain their health and independence. Baby Boomers are volunteering at a higher rate than earlier generations did, according to The Corporation for National and Community Service.

Volunteering combats depression and provides a sense of purpose, improves physical well-being and helps you live longer.

The physical activity involved in certain forms of volunteering can be good for your well-being at any age, but is especially beneficial for older adults. Studies show that those who volunteer have a lower mortality rate and fewer symptoms of chronic pain and heart disease.

Volunteering keeps you in regular contact with others and helps you develop a solid support system, reducing social isolation and subsequent depression.

"Volunteering absolutely transforms your health," DESC executive director Jeff Matthews said. "Studies show you'll have a better quality of life because you're engaging with others. It makes the difference in not only your life, but everyone you help."

The bottom line: Volunteer. Do it for your community. Do it for the people you will help. But most importantly, do it for your health.

# EASTER BASKETS BRIGHTEN HOLIDAY

First United Methodist Church ACPS Women's Circle arranged, wrapped and donated 75 baskets the week of March 14 to make the Easter holiday special and memorable for children in need. DESC clients were surprised to receive the baskets and we loved seeing the children's reactions to the unexpected gifts.

We're grateful that because of First United Methodist Church, we were able to make the holiday special for so many families. Thank you First United Methodist Church for your gift and for making a difference in the lives of children.



JEFF MATTHEWS, ANNE DISON, LINDA ROBBINS,  
SUSAN SPALDING (LEFT TO RIGHT)

## Building Improvements On The Way Thanks To W.W. Gay Fire and Integrated Systems, Inc.

Thanks to the generosity of W.W. Gay Fire and Integrated Systems, Inc., DESC will be able to renovate its current basement office space.

DESC executive director Jeff Matthews hopes to remodel the current office space into a user-friendly break room, meeting space and kitchen. We will also be able to add more freezers to store groceries before distributing food to families.

W.W. Gay Fire and Integrated Systems, Inc. is donating its construction services, including labor and materials, to install an electrical conduit from the main electrical panel. The company will also install an electrical sub-panel.

Construction on the space will begin soon. We can't wait to see how our volunteers will love the updated space.

## DIAPER DRIVE: **MINUTE** FOR MISSION

*By Nancy Chamblin*

Every day, people walk down dark steep stairs into a crowded fluorescent waiting room with a few folding chairs and run right smack dab into the Beautitudes. DESC people are uneducated, poor, mostly unemployed, often homeless, nutritionally insecure (that means hungry), powerless, invisible; many are sick in body and in spirit.

If they are "the least of these," DESC babies are "the least of the least of these." They are pretty much like your babies; they gurgle, they cry, they smile, they're just sweet cute little babies. But already they are caught in the same spiral of poverty that claimed their parents.

Just like your babies, they need formula and food and wipes and diapers. Except, for so many reasons, their fathers can't just stop by the store on their way home from work and pick up diapers. DESC babies need so much and have so little. One woman told me she dries out diapers and uses them again. This is **BABY MONTH** at Riverside Presbyterian.

At DESC, our babies need diapers, especially the larger sizes. So, when you stop by the store on your way home from work, please pick up diapers for a DESC baby. Blessed are the poopy. Thank you.



# DESC Partners with Farm Share

Purchasing groceries for DESC used to be expensive and logistically difficult. The annual budget allotted about \$82,500 to buy groceries in bulk to fill up the pantry and freezers. Delivered three times a year, the shipments were costly to unload.

When DESC's executive director, Jeff Matthews, discovered Farm Share, a nonprofit dedicated to distributing surplus food to organizations free of charge, he quickly applied. In September 2015, DESC became Farm Share's community partner, enabling DESC to save about \$35,000 on groceries in the last few months of the year.

In 2016, DESC will take the original \$82,500 and allot it to help more families in need of financial assistance. The budget for financial assistance has grown to about \$120,000 because of the savings from partnering with Farm Share. Our 2016 goal is to increase the number of families we help with financial assistance from seven families to 10 families per week. This would be an additional 150 more families per year.

DESC is grateful for its partnership with Farm Share because now we can help even more families in need of paying rent, mortgage or utility bills. What a great start to the new year.

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## Successful PB Drive Thanks to Riverside Ave. Christian Church



We want to thank **Riverside Avenue Christian Church's** congregation for hosting a peanut butter drive in March to restock our pantry! The congregation collected more than 50 jars of peanut butter and donated them to add to our supply. Thank you for your generosity!

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## DESC "SHE-RO" HONORED BY WOMEN'S CENTER OF JACKSONVILLE

Congratulations to Nancy Chamblin for being named one of the Women's Center of Jacksonville's "Unsung Sheroes"! She is being recognized as one of 10 men and women who are improving the lives of women through advocacy, support and education. The Unsung Sheroes and Heroes ceremony will be held May 17 at the Riverside House, where she will be presented with an award for her achievement.

While working as a caseworker at DESC for the last nine years, Nancy has become known as "The Queen of DESC." She is also the president of Uptown Civitan Jacksonville. DESC's executive director, Jeff Matthews, said she practically runs the nonprofit by helping in every aspect of the ministry; including fundraising, stocking and teaching. Nancy may prefer to stay behind the scenes, but we are so proud she is being appreciated for all her hard work in enhancing the lives of women.



# DESC

Downtown Ecumenical Services Council

## OUR ALWAYS NEED LIST

There are always core items that our clients ask for when they come in. Below is our current list.

- Children's clothing for all elementary school age sizes
- Women's shorts (all sizes)
- Men's jeans
- Men's shoes
- Men's work boots
- Men's shorts
- Backpacks

You can see our updated Always Need List on our website at [www.descjax.org/needs](http://www.descjax.org/needs).

LAYOUT & DESIGN  
SERVICES PROVIDED BY



[elvamarketing.com](http://elvamarketing.com)



215 N. Ocean Street  
Jacksonville, FL 32202

**(904) 358-7955**

Fax: (904) 358-3135



facebook.com/DESCjax

## WE HELP...

DESC was founded in 1981 by churches in urban Jacksonville to be an emergency service ministry striving to provide food, clothing and financial assistance to working families struggling to live at or below the poverty level.

## PEOPLE IN NEED.

DESC helps those with emergency needs regardless of age, gender or race. Financial assistance is limited to cases involving children, the elderly or those afflicted with disabilities or illness.

Downtown Ecumenical Services Council  
215 N. Ocean Street  
Jacksonville, FL 32202

## GIVING THANKS

We would like to offer thanks to the many individuals and groups who have donated money and items to DESC in 2016 thus far.

Dave and Debbie Pierson

James Overton

James E. Martin Jr.

Sharon Meehan

Jeff and Ann Meyer

Nancy Armstrong

Carol Schonberger

W. Delavan Baldwin

St. John's Episcopal Church

Lee and Susan Wilson

John "Buck" Fannin

Andy and Lee Berner

Riverside Christian Church

Marvin C. Armstrong, Jr.

Ruth Woo

Riverside Presbyterian Church

Jennie Bibb

CrossRoad UMC Church

Joye Cassady

Mal and Lani Redington

Endowment Honoring Mary Spuhler

South Jacksonville Presbyterian

Th Suddath Companies

Edna Sproull Williams Foundation

Beth and David Mixson

Dr. Randall Russac

Diane Hale

Barbara Bath

Janeen Lafon Kilday

Kirbo Charitable Trust

Stuart and Dorothy Dornblaser

Sherrick Gilbert

Linda Foley

Josephine Wiley

Lyn Lazarus

Michael and Sharon Williams

Mt. Zion AME Church

Christi Veleta

Karen Clark

Christian Fellowship Church

United Methodist Women

We would also like to thank the many donors who generously gave to our DESC Endowment in Memory of Genie Cooke - a favorite longtime donor and volunteer for DESC. We miss her.