

FALL 2021

NEWS FROM THE DESC

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Timothy shows off his unique style.

It's okay to be different

There is only one **Timothy**. With his considerable height, his braided hair, the multitude of beads he wears and his unexpectedly shy, sweet smile, Timothy brings style wherever he goes. This was certainly true when he visited DESC recently.

Adversity isn't anything new for Timothy. He's had loss of hearing since he was 3 years old. Growing up with limited hearing and his unique style, Timothy was often teased in school. But, he didn't let that change him. He has always expressed himself regardless of what others thought.

Timothy learned to read lips and went to speech therapy for years. Because he had to work so hard to communicate, he's a careful and intentional listener who admits he is "very blessed, but would love to hear better."

Like many others, Timothy has struggled throughout the pandemic. He feels lucky that he's been able to get food stamps and his disability income, but he still needs help to get by.

Timothy's sons live with their mother in St. Augustine, and Timothy tries to help them as much as possible. "Things are just hard now," he said. "Everything is different."

Timothy has worked small side jobs like helping people move. However, he doesn't have proper shoes for being on his feet all day lifting heavy furniture.

After talking with him, Timothy received work boots for his job, clothing and groceries.

Timothy says he loves coming to DESC because he gets the help he needs, but mostly because he loves talking to the kind volunteers at the counter.

Just keep going

Shani hopes that one day soon she'll have a solid career with steady income so she and her three young children can enjoy a fuller life. She wants the children to have opportunities to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities, something she can't make happen right now.

As a single mom, Shani committed to go back to school to become a welder. "I would love to work with my hands instead of sitting in front of a computer all day," Shani says. Formerly, Shani did administrative work for a bail bondsman's office, but since she has no family to help her, she can only work and go to school around the kids' schedules. That means making ends meet is often a great challenge.

Shani makes it clear that her children are the most important thing in her life, and she will do what she can to give them the best life - no matter how hard she has to work. Thankfully, Shani is a hard worker. In their free time, Shani and the children enjoy taking walks, playing at the park or hanging at the library.

Continued on Page 3



DESC Defenders: Against All Odds

More photos on pages 6-7



From Board Chair Chris Buckley

Record-breaking has become a habit for our amazing donors, volunteers and staff working on our DESC Defenders event! They did it again this year – raising more than \$200,000 for our DESC Defenders: Against All Odds fundraiser.

I am so thankful for our exceptional supporters who made the event wildly successful (see more on pages 6 and 7). Thank you to our Honorary Chairs, **David and Lisa Williams** and **Susan and Rick Brodeur** of the



Riverside Presbyterian Day School food drive.

Edna Sproull Williams Foundation – the first foundation to support DESC. And thank you to **Lani Redington** for being an awesome Event Chair once again.

The funds are critical to help families fight poverty. The gifts support case management, emergency financial assistance, groceries and clothing and close gaps or purchase add-ons to ensure we can help when folks need it.

Some of those gaps this year may come in our Food Pantry as changes in the USDA distribution may stall our ability to get canned goods for months. The best way to tackle this challenge is to ask churches and organizations to host food drives!

Our goal is two drives per month through February, which should allow us to get over the initial slowdown in food deliveries. That's only eight total food drives, and the **Riverside Presbyterian Day School** has signed up again in November.

Please consider hosting a food drive and let **Beth Wilson** know (beth.wilson@descjax.org).

Another record-breaking activity this year has been the growth in our team and the distribution of emergency rental assistance.

Over the better part of the year, DESC added four contract team members as we participated in the U.S. Department of Treasury's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). The funds were sent to the City of Jacksonville who contracted with United Way of Northeast Florida to distribute millions of dollars to avoid mass evictions.

Our team, one of five agencies working with United Way, distributed more than \$2.7 million in addition to \$93,000 in traditional Emergency Financial Assistance. These totals were unimaginable when the year started, but they represent DESC's ability to serve the

community in much larger numbers than ever before.

We are grateful for God's guidance and gifts as we explore ways to do more for those struggling with emergency needs and/or poverty. Altogether, DESC has helped more than 500 families in our community stay in their homes or keep the electricity on. DESC is proud to be part of this community solution.

On a sad note, I want to express condolences to our Executive Director, **David Clark**, for the passing of his wife, **Noeline**, after a courageous battle with cancer. We continue to send prayers of comfort to David and their children, **Madeline** and **Owen**.

As we draw closer to Thanksgiving, please know that we are grateful for your continued support! The stories in this newsletter (and all our daily interactions) could never happen without you.

Welcome new Board members

We want to welcome our three newest board members Larry Roziers, Deborah Pierson and Gabrielle Bellamy.

Roziers is the President of the Mitch22 Foundation and is retired from the Duval County Public Schools.

Pierson has held multiple board positions with LISC and United Way of Northeast Florida. She is retired from Bank of America.

Bellamy is the Missions Coordinator for Mandarin United Methodist Church.

We are so excited to expand our Board and can't wait to see what's next.



DESC's vision is for individuals and families to achieve and sustain financial stability and independence. By fulfilling Jesus' call for us to assist the poor and homeless, DESC uplifts families and individuals in real-time crisis.

Families receive care with dignity.

Thanks to extremely generous donors and amazing volunteers and staff, our neighbors receive a helping hand during hardship with emergency groceries, clothing, financial assistance and case management.

Special Thanks

- ♥ We are grateful for all our donors since our last newsletter! We received grants from **Bank of America, Cavan Family Foundation, Edna Sproull Williams Foundation, Hall-Halliburton Foundation, Lucy Gooding Charitable Foundation Trust, MaryEllen Willis Charitable Trust, TechSoup** and **The Thomas M. and Irene B. Kirbo Charitable Foundation**.
- ♥ Thank you **Mandarin United Methodist Church Vacation Bible School** for the donations from the church's "Undie Sundie" underwear drive and helping unload food and sort clothing.



Students helped unload food and sort clothing from the church's "Undie Sunday"

- ♥ Once again, a thank you to **Carey Hepler** for collecting 400 pairs of shoes from the Gate River Run and the high school volunteers who helped sort the shoes.
- ♥ A big thank you for the amazing donations of school supplies and backpacks to our Back To School Supply Drive from **Christio'n Russ, First United Methodist Church** and **Jim Fortuna Senior Center**.
- ♥ Thank you to **Riverside Presbyterian House Sewing Club** for their creations of large pantry cloth bags.
- ♥ DESC was blessed to have a visit from the **Riverside Presbyterian Church Vacation Bible School**. We were overjoyed for their help with unloading and putting away food items in our pantry. The kids also practiced filling clothing orders and helped inventory the Gate River Run shoes. They donated cases of diapers too!
- ♥ And, thank you to **Ricky at Ladybug Quilt Shop** for donating remaining fabric from the store's closing for Sewing Hope.

More than college credit

Meet **Owen Cavanaugh**, our UNF Fall 2021 Communications Coordinator intern. Here are Owen's own words about how he found DESC and was inspired to join the fight against poverty.

In the internship position description, it said DESC helps people, no questions asked. That immediately caught my interest, and I began to research DESC through its website, social media and reviews online. What I found was a compassionate group who truly believed in what they did. I thought that no matter what career I choose, I would be proud to work for such a kind organization, so I applied.

Two hours after my interview with DESC, I had another interview where I was offered the position on the spot. However, I held off from accepting it, as I was still hoping to hear from DESC. Two days later, DESC offered the internship, which I accepted right away. I immediately began telling anyone who would listen, that I had landed the internship I had been hoping for.

I chose DESC because I believed that I could really do something meaningful here. I'm glad I made that choice.

As the Communications Coordinator intern, I get to meet all kinds of people and share their stories. Jacksonville is huge and it's easy to



Meet our fall communications intern, Owen.

lose my sense of community, but when the clients at DESC share their experiences with me, I'm reminded that this isn't a stranger, but rather a neighbor that I'm listening to. Our talks only last a few moments, but I often find myself thinking of them later. It's a good feeling knowing you've come to understand someone, even if only just a little.

I have worked with nonprofits before, but never anything on the same scale as DESC. The amount of support programs offered is incredible. From the food pantry to clothing, social work and financial assistance, I never thought that one place would be able to offer so much. And, I had no idea just how much effort it takes to make it all work. The dedication of the employees and volunteers that I see here every day is a testament to DESC's mission, and I am proud to be a part of it.

My internship may only last a few months, but I can already tell that my time here at DESC is worth so much more than just college credit.

Keep going (cont.)

Shani first came to DESC when she had her first child. She was prepared to have a baby girl, but was very surprised to have a boy instead. DESC helped her then, and continues to be an important part of helping her get through this challenging time with groceries and clothing.

Shani says she learns new things very quickly and tells herself to, "just keep going." She says she is extremely thankful for the help she's found at DESC and remains hopeful for her future and her children's futures.



Shani and her children have a hopeful future.

Taking that first step



Rudy shows off his new slip-resistant work shoes.

Despite living on the streets, **Rudy** is determined to have a job.

Even with the difficult circumstances of his life, Rudy secured an opportunity to wash dishes at a nearby restaurant. There was just one thing. Rudy needed slip-resistant shoes to work in the kitchen. He heard about DESC and came in hope of receiving anything, specifically some shoes to work.

Through our work boots program, DESC was able to provide Rudy with a brand new pair of slip-resistant shoes to help him land the job. His determination offers hope for real change in his life.

Thanks to continued generous donations, we have been able to provide work shoes for hundreds of people like Rudy who are trying to get back on their feet.

Rudy said these new work shoes are part of his first steps towards fulfilling his goal of getting an apartment that he can fill up with plants, musical instruments and, someday, a cat.

Going home again

Damon came into DESC with just the clothes on his back and nowhere to call home. He would be spending his first night on the streets after just being released from jail.

Although he was only looking for clothes and a sleeping bag, the DESC team wanted to see if there was any other way to help Damon. While **Kim Pollock**, our DESC Empowerment Program social worker, was getting to know him better, Damon talked about his family in Palatka. He was unsure if they would be willing to let him stay with

them. And, Damon had no way to get there.

Kim and Damon reached out to his family. They were absolutely willing to let him live with them, as long as he could find a way home. Thanks to DESC donors, Kim quickly secured a ride for Damon to go home.

Damon is now living with his sister in Palatka and has even found a part-time job. "We're so happy that we could find a way to get Damon home to his family where he is thriving," said Kim.

The power of working together

Sometimes helping one client with financial assistance can lead to helping another person in need. Recently, a concerned landlord who had just finished working with the DESC team asked if he could get help to keep one more tenant in her home.

The landlord's tenant, **Beatrice**, recently went through several surgeries and spent a month in rehab. Unfortunately, while she was away, her electricity was shut off. When the landlord talked to Beatrice about the possibility of DESC helping her, he found her home unknowingly in disrepair.

The bedroom air conditioner unit was dripping rusty water and the water heater hadn't been working for at least six months. Beatrice had been bathing and washing dishes in cold water.

The landlord purchased and installed a new window unit and a water heater, and he also made other repairs. Because of her landlord's concern, Beatrice got help with overdue rent from DESC. Not only can she rest easier knowing her rent is up-to-date, Beatrice also has hot water and cool air.

Thank you for all your hard work. I know I'm one of thousands that need assistance, but I thank GOD for this help. Thank you so much for not giving up and passing me over. I pray great prosperity over your lives!

Tarsha

Thank you so much for helping me! I am so grateful for all of the help you've given me. This changes everything. I have an interview with PepsiCo of North Florida. It's better paying than UPS and any job I've ever had. With your help it has been an amazing day!! I hope your day is just as amazing and thank you again!

Dean

Emergency Rental Assistance Program

By **Theresa Tippins**, Program Director



By the time you read this, DESC will have distributed more than \$2.7 million to more than 400 families.

Over the last several months, we have played a key role in distributing funds from the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), an initiative to distribute federal funds to local families unable to pay rent and utilities due to the pandemic.

I joined the DESC team as Program Director for ERAP in May. When presented with the challenge of making sure these funds made it to families in need, I was excited to be part of such a worthwhile initiative. The funds for this achievement are part of a partnership between the City of Jacksonville and United Way of Northeast Florida to distribute nearly \$24 million of the \$29 million provided by the U.S. Department of Treasury.

When the program launched earlier this year, Jacksonville did not have the infrastructure of pre-existing programs to assist with rent and utilities on this scale.

Thankfully, United Way asked DESC to join a few other agencies to implement ERAP.

As a team, everyone at DESC worked hard to distribute the funds to families desperate to stay in their homes. DESC served the second most households assisted among all of the agencies throughout the entire program.

What makes this all the more impressive, is we achieved this with such a small team of employees. Our team grew as we helped as many families as possible stay in their homes.

While there have been many challenges with

the ERAP process, it will never be as challenging as facing eviction.

Working with the DESC ERAP Team has been incredible. They are a dynamic group of individuals whose hard-work, service and compassion have helped create a major impact in the program. In fact, when the City reported a significant increase in the percentage of ERAP funds distributed in August, our work was a large part of that increase.

We are grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of such an impactful program, and we know the residents we helped are grateful too!

Thank you Lyn!

After 15 years, we find ourselves saying “goodbye” to our longest-serving volunteer, **Lyn Hay**.

Lyn has done it all, from answering the switchboard and working the client intake window to packing bags in the food pantry. She also searched for and printed recipes to help clients enjoy their food.

Serving those in need is what drew Lyn to DESC initially. When her children were young, she had a hard time providing for everyone in her family. She remembers how hard it was to ask for help.

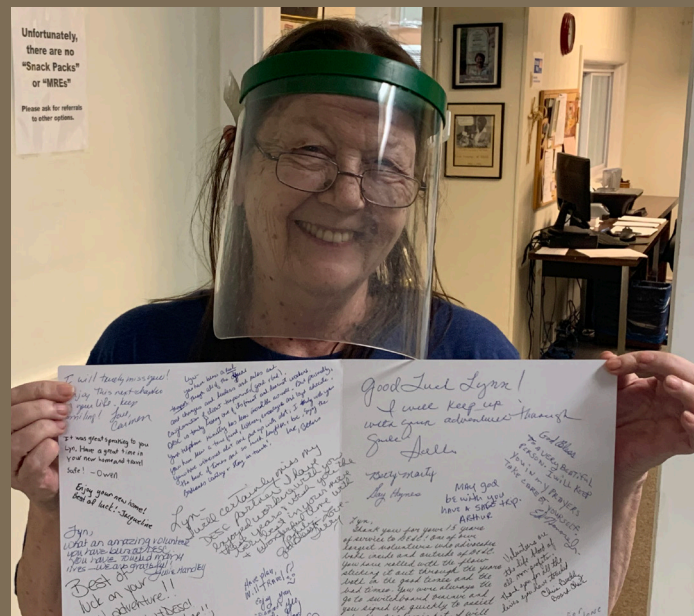
While Lyn was lucky to have help from friends and loved ones, she later realized not everyone did. She made a choice to “pass it forward”

as often as she could.

So when she experienced DESC for the first time, Lyn knew immediately this was how she would fulfill her mission. DESC has provided Lyn the opportunity to help in many ways, but one in particular that she feels is most important. “My real job is to listen... just listen.”

Lyn has been active in her church, Riverside Avenue Christian Church, and weekly served as courier for the items donated to DESC by her fellow congregants.

Lyn will be moving to South Dakota to be closer to family, and we wish her good luck in her latest adventure. We're so thankful for her service. We'll miss you, Lyn!



Volunteers, employees and Board members sent Lyn off with sweet messages.



Executive Director, David Clark and Emcee, Melissa Ross at WJCT.

Breaking records yet again!

While we weren't able to gather in person again, you still broke ANOTHER fundraising record! Alongside the DESC Defenders, you helped raise more than \$200,000! Thank you for continuously helping us exceed our goal and help even more families in our community.

We want to thank **David and Lisa Williams** and **Susan and Rick Brodeur** for graciously serving as our Honorary Chairs.



Touching client stories were shared during the live event.

2021 DESC FUNDRAISING TEAMS (ranked by funds raised)



DESC Frontliners



Redington's Renegades



Fireside Girls

The Pamtastic 4

The Golden Girls

Fund'er Roos

The Handley and Hal Dancing Machine

Hello Mr. Joe

Tenacious T

Buckley's Angels

Hedrick's Heroes

Sewing Hope

The Hueman Touch

Blue Berrey

Cory Driscoll & Kevin PM

Low-key Fundraising



Melissa Ross with the DESC Defenders.



Bob Cowsill

We had amazing performers send in videos for fundraising, including chart-topping recording artist Bob Cowsill.

**YOU CAN STILL WATCH
THE RECORDING AT
DESCDEFENDERS.COM**



PRESENTING SPONSORS

Delores Barr Weaver *Legacy Fund*
established 2012

*Mary
Virginia Terry*

**H
H**
HALL-HALLIBURTON
FOUNDATION

PLATINUM PRINCESS

Ed and Jo Pratt-Dannals

GOLDEN CAPTAIN

The AME Senior Housing Board
John and Jean Grant-Doooley
Carey and Ruth Ann Hepler
John and Susan Humes

SILVER COMMANDER

Hud and Rolly Berrey
Kevin and Chris Buckley
Vince and Linda Ferrigno
Fidelity National Financial
Steve Rosenbloom

**DESC DEFENDERS' ELITE
SQUAD**

Ed and Helen Albright
Carmina Aldana *(in honor of
Neurosurgery Outreach Foundation)*
Bay to Bay Appliance Repair
Marilyn Carpenter
Thad Eshelman
Judy Fackler
Sherrick Gilbert
Bob and Bobbie Gittings
Mark and Ashley Hand
Julie Handley
Joan Haskell
Chuck and Sandra Hedrick
JEA
Clay and Elizabeth Meux
Miller & Company Real Estate
Claude Moulton and
Christine Whitney
Bud and Kathy Para
David and Debbie Pierson
Mal and Lani Redington
Lesley Roberts
Rogers Towers Foundation Inc
Carolyne & Al Rutland, CPA
Bill and Peggy Scheu
SouthState Bank
Carol and Luca Stocchi
Telescope Health
Uptown Civitan Club
Warner and Sherrie Webb
David and Lisa Williams
Larry Zenke

FAITH GUARDIANS

Cynthia Anderson
Arden Brugger
Matt Carlucci State Farm
Insurance
Mike and Shelly Cavendish
A. Perry Chappell
David and Noeline Clark
Nolan and Susan Clark
A DESC Angel
Tom and Bonnie Dudley
Tra'Chella Foy
Mattie Fraser
W. W. Gay Mechanical
Contractor, Inc.
Mattox Hair
Haskell
John and Anne Reid Hawkins
Tim and Jessie Hedrick
Theresa Bennett-Hill and Shay Hill
Historic Mt. Zion AME Church
Tom and Gretchen Lynch
John and Ginger Manley *(in
honor of Julie Handley)*
Betty Marty
Jim and Connie Overton
Larry and Pearl Roziers *(in
memory of Larry "Mitch" Roziers II)*
Betsy Swayne

PERFORMANCES

1st Place
Morgan Wright – *The Pamtastic 4*
2nd Place
Hello Mr. Joe – *Hello Mr. Joe*
3rd Place
Bob Cowsill – *The Golden Girls*
Tom & Natalie – *Fireside Girls*
Michael Dell – *Redington's
Renegades*
Cory Driscoll & Kevin PM –
Cory Driscoll & Kevin PM
Hal Roland – *The Handley and
Hal Dancing Machine*
Daniel Bergey – *Sewing Hope*





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United Way
of Northeast Florida



NEEDS LIST

Families always need the items below.

- ♥ New socks and underwear (all sizes)
- ♥ Backpacks, totes and suitcases
- ♥ Men's and women's coats
- ♥ Men's pants (sizes 30-36), T-shirts and jeans
- ♥ Women's shirts and pants in larger sizes
- ♥ Men's shoes
- ♥ Work gloves
- ♥ Children's clothing for all elementary school age sizes
- ♥ Toiletries like deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, razors, bar soap, shampoos and conditioners

You can see the updated Current Needs List online at descjax.org/current_needs/



YOU HELP US?

We are in need of canned goods! Changes in the USDA distribution may decrease staple canned goods for several months.

We're recruiting groups to host canned food drives to help during this challenging time! We want two drives per month, through February. Will you help?

If you can host a drive, please reach out to the DESC team at beth.wilson@descjax.org.

