



FALL 2022

NEWS FROM THE DESC

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Schella has been coming to DESC for years. Here she is with her grandchildren when the weather was cooler.

Once a mom, always a mom

Schella is a grandmother extraordinaire! A mother of six (three boys and three girls), Schella is also grandmother to eight little ones, all of whom have come back (at least temporarily) to roost in her home.

Schella loves the noise and feel of a busy, full house and said she is always in the kitchen trying to keep everyone fed. "That's when they are the happiest," she said with a wry smile.

The love she has for her children and their children has been a driving force in her life. And it hasn't been easy.

Schella lost her oldest son tragically when he was young. And she still cares for her second son, who is disabled. One of her daughters, **Latoya**, came via adoption after losing her biological mom as a teen.

Latoya recently returned home after a marital split, and she brought her three children with her – ages 3, 12 and 15.

It has been extremely hard feeding so many mouths and providing clothes for everyone in these challenging times. The rising costs of food and gas along with food scarcity have been major obstacles for Schella in her efforts to keep her family fed and cared for.

Schella is grateful for the meals and clothing she's received from DESC thanks to many donors and partners. She loves the fresh produce and canned goods and especially when she receives meat and eggs.

Having everyone home for the summer was draining, but the older kids enjoyed the nearby parks and libraries. Now, with school back in session, it's a little quieter around the house, and a little easier to keep things running smoothly.

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DESC as a stepping stone

James is motivated. He made that very clear on a recent visit that DESC would serve as a stepping stone for him.

"If you don't put forth effort, nothing's gonna happen," he told us.

DESC has served as a stepping stone for many over the years. In this case, James needed black pants to be considered for a new job. Thanks to donors, James got what he needed.

Many clients come into DESC in need of specific items like work boots and more to be considered for employment. "We love serving this specific need," said **Beth Wilson**, Program Director. "We want to help clients get jobs and then keep them."

The vision of DESC is for individuals and families to achieve and sustain financial stability and independence. James' story reflects that vision, and he's on the right path.

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DESC volunteer is Senior of the Year

Details on page 6





From DESC Board Chair Pamela Prier

The lazy days of summer are gone, and it's officially the busy season at DESC! With a Board Retreat last month, our signature event in October and Christmas on the horizon, it's been and will continue to be a hub of activity.

The DESC Board of Directors met last month to review and update the agency's strategic plan. The volunteers gave a resounding endorsement of the 2019 plan and will be making adjustments throughout the rest of this year to prepare DESC for 2023 and beyond.

We will emphasize new programs and services that foster sustainable change for the individuals served at DESC. While we continue our signature services of food, clothing and financial assistance, the Board and senior staff are united in our commitment to help individuals who struggle with systemic poverty.

To maintain momentum with those new programs, we turn to the DESC Defenders: Journey Through Time fundraiser. Thanks to incredible leadership, we are in a fantastic position to break another record. **Ruth Ann** and **Carey Hepler** have been wonderful Honorary Chairs, and **Alex Benavides** has been terrific leading the working committee as they race toward DESC's first in-person event in three years.

The event is October 6 at WJCT, and I hope to see you there. Captain Underwear, Queen Appétit, Commander Current and Princess Pantaloons will be attending too.

DESC is on the search for more volunteers! If you have any interest, please reach out to the team at DESC. We can use more volunteers from drivers to board members. See the article on Page 6 for more information.

Speaking of volunteers, congratulations to Salli Solow for being named Senior of the Year by the City of Jacksonville's Council on Elder Affairs. It's quite the honor and well-deserved!

It won't be much longer before we all prepare for Christmas. At DESC, that also means more clients. We hope to benefit from additional food drives, clothing drives and more.

Part of our Christmas tradition is an appeal for contributions. We hope that if you're in the position to help financially, that you will!

Thanks to all of our readers! YOU are directly connected to the stories shared on these pages. In addition to the gratitude that Schella, James, Cooper and others share in this newsletter, I add my own. Thank you for giving so generously to help the poor among us!



Welcome new Board members

Welcome **Von Fuller** and **Laura Lane** to the DESC Board of Directors. We are honored to have these two join the Board and help proclaim God's love by meeting the needs of people in emergency situations or experiencing poverty.

Von is a manager of community engagement with JEA. Previous to joining the Board, she assisted DESC in her role with JEA's collection drives and support.

Lane works at Changing Homelessness, a familiar nonprofit to DESC. The organization's work to end homelessness compliments DESC's mission. Laura is determined to see change in Jacksonville, specifically here in the Cathedral District.

"It's wonderful to add new talent and perspectives to the DESC Board," **Pamela Prier**, Board Chair said. "Von and Laura have so much insight into the community from different backgrounds that they help make us a stronger organization."



DESC's long-term vision is for individuals and families to achieve and sustain financial stability and independence. By answering 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 struggling with hardships receive a helping hand with emergency financial assistance, groceries, clothing and case management.

Special Thanks for Special Donors

- ♥ There are so many amazing donors to thank for helping families fight poverty! We received grants from **Bank of America, Cavan Family Foundation, Edna Sproull Williams Foundation** and **the Thomas M. and Irene B. Charitable Foundation.**
- ♥ The children coming to DESC had extra help thanks to **Mitch22 Foundation** and **Larry Roziers** who donated backpacks with school supplies and **Planned to A. T., Inc.** and **Ashley Rutland** who donated pencils, crayons, scissors, binders and more.
- ♥ The children have a nice collection of books courtesy of **BOOKS-A-GO GO & Betty Metz** as well as **Tenikka Hughes' Books for Kids** (pictured below).



- ♥ **First Presbyterian Church of Jacksonville** and the **Jacksonville Bar Association** donated toiletries, shoes, clothing and food! In addition, the **UPS Foundation** partnering with **Blessings in a Backpack Director Susan Evans** donated 1,100 hygiene kits for folks living on the street.
- ♥ Three local churches are keeping Undie Sundie going by collecting underwear, socks, deodorant, toiletries, diapers and "Depends."

Thank you to **South Jacksonville Presbyterian Church, Mandarin United Methodist Church** and **Historic Mt. Zion AME Church.**

- ♥ We are so grateful to have help keeping the food shelves full! Thanks go to **Cypress Village & Sarah Sharp** and **Ortega Church** for their peanut butter and jelly drives. Also, thank you, **Juanita Senior**, for gleaning broccoli, tomatoes and potatoes and **Ron & Mary Littlepage** for extra produce! Other drives and donations were by **Gail Cole Mathis, Delores Danzy** and **Maggie Jones** and the **St. Paul's A.M.E. Young Peoples' Division's** "Souper Bowl of Caring," **Jacksonville's Community First Igloo** and **Laura Belluccia**, the **Winston Family YMCA, Hueman, First Presbyterian Church,** and **Riverside Presbyterian Church.**

- ♥ Lots of donors heard the call for fabric for **Sewing Hope for DESC** and delivered yards and yards! Thank you to **Paula Shields, Fortuna Senior Center** and **Ruth Woo, Trinity Lutheran Church** and **Mary Bolinger** and **Margie Meeker.** Thanks also to **Stacie Lynn** who donated fabric and a lot more as well as **Guarantee Vacuum and Sewing & John Smith** who donated a new sewing machine with accessories.
- ♥ Over the summer, we were thrilled to have the rising 4th and 5th graders from the **Riverside Presbyterian Church's Vacation Bible School** inventory our **Gate River Run** shoes and unload the food delivery.



Elaine Adams dropped off donations from Riverside Avenue Christian Church.

- ♥ We also greatly appreciate those who run perpetual drives for food, clothing, supplies, toys and more. Thanks to **Riverside Avenue Christian Church, Mitch22 Foundation** and **First Presbyterian Church of Jacksonville.**



James is determined to turn his life around.

James (cont.)

James said that he's tired of being homeless. He talked about a time when it rained, and he didn't have shelter. The rain ruined his phone. That meant that when James' disability lawyer called, he couldn't reach James to take the next step.

"I had to start the whole process over again," James said. That delay added to his time without a home.

James is determined to change his circumstances. Thanks to DESC donors, that change is a possibility. "I want to be the one to change my life around," James said.

"We know when clients make the decision on their own to change, success is more likely," Beth said. "We're praying this happens for James."

Always a Mom (cont.)

Schella doesn't mind sharing that she thinks the children "just seem to be more comfortable with grandmom." She said that they all come back, and nobody wants to leave. Maybe it's the cooking!

DESC has been a real comfort over the years for Schella where's she's found food, clothing, toiletries and emotional support. "I have to really commend y'all for all you do," Schella said. "You have really been with me all along - taking care of us. We have never been turned away!"

After her child-rearing days are finally over, Schella said she would like to work in customer service because she loves talking to and helping people. "Just like you guys, you don't care how people come in, you just want to help them so they can leave in a better way," she said.

Staying focused despite setbacks



Cooper poses for a photo with his original caseworker Jacqueline Carvallo.

When **Cooper** came to DESC back in March, his just wanted some new steel-toed work boots to help secure a job. Well, he got the boots and a whole lot more.

While getting his boots, Cooper opened up about being homeless. He had been living in shelters for four years and had previously been incarcerated. He wanted to make a change. With that clear goal in mind, Cooper was introduced to the DESC Empowerment Program (DEP) case manager, **Jacqueline Carvallo**.

As a DEP participant, Cooper sat down with Jacqueline for an assessment and goal setting. The two worked on an individualized case plan and discussed how Cooper could make the changes.

"I remember when I first came into DESC for work boots, and I met the three of you that day," Cooper said

referring to Jacqueline, her program colleague, **Jan Carpenter**, and Program Director, **Theresa Tippins**. Together, the team stayed focused on Cooper's goals and were soon seeing results.

Cooper's hard work, accessibility and commitment meant lots of visits and phone calls with Jacqueline while he enthusiastically progressed towards self-sustainability.

The first goal that Cooper achieved was gaining steady employment with good wages and benefits. Acquiring this job meant Cooper had more financial freedom, and it gave him the opportunity and resources to purchase a car!

Shortly later, Cooper secured housing in a "rooming-house" where tenants can rent individual rooms but share a bathroom and kitchen.

It wasn't much longer when everything took a decidedly different turn. Doctors diagnosed Cooper with Stage 4 liver cancer and discovered tumors on his spine. He would soon begin undergoing treatment.

Cooper fell behind on his rent since he was working reduced hours while seeking treatment. DESC helped Cooper with emergency financial assistance so he could pay his outstanding rent and avoid falling further behind, or worse, eviction.

Despite his diagnosis, Cooper continues to be kind and caring to everyone. He also continues to strive for more stability in his life

and creates new goals each time he achieves the previous one. Right now, with the guidance and support of the case management team he can focus on his treatments while seeking disability to help cover his expenses.

"Cooper has shown resourcefulness to make the change he wants in his life," said Theresa. "He understands that no one else can do it for him. By showing accountability, responsibility and trust, Cooper has become a familiar face around DESC. And we've loved working with him."

Cooper's dedication and desire to elevate his life is exactly what DESC had in mind when creating this program. He continues to put in the time and energy needed to create the life he has desired for so long.

"You guys have really helped me a lot," said Cooper. "I really appreciate everything you all have done for me."

New DESC caseworker

DESC is pleased to welcome **Angie Johnsen** as our new Community Outreach & Case Management Specialist.

Angie received her bachelor's degree from the University of North Florida and is currently in the social work graduate program.

"We are glad to have Angie on our team," said **Theresa Tippins**, Program Director. "She's a wonderful addition and has a real desire to help those in need."

United Way increases funding

DESC is pleased to announce that United Way of Northeast Florida has awarded funding for both 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 to support the Emergency Financial Assistance (EFA) program.

The new funding is \$175,000 for each year.

"This increased funding is incredibly exciting," said **Pamela Prier**, DESC Board Chair. "The additional funds

mean DESC can continue to provide financial assistance to hundreds of families every year struggling with overdue rent and utilities and the potential threat of eviction and homelessness."

As United Way emphasizes the importance of basic needs in our community, DESC has been fortunate enough to secure these important dollars. "By combining other donations with United Way

dollars, our EFA program has greater capacity to make a difference during the unprecedented challenges of skyrocketing rent and inflation," Pamela said.

Funding begins in October 2022 and runs through September 2024.

"Thank you to all of those who donate through United Way, and thank you to United Way volunteers and staff for selecting DESC to be one of your partners!" said Pamela.

United Way
of Northeast Florida



DRIVES to HELP

You are part of the best donors in the world! DESC donors continue to provide amazing support day after day. And we're hoping you can help find some solutions to some of the shortages we're experiencing right now at DESC.

Collections and drives are a great way to bring in additional resources while maintaining funds for our Emergency Financial Assistance and the DESC Empowerment Program.



Richard Reid from Hueman delivered food collected at their office.

"Groups who pitch in to host a drive, really help DESC stretch our dollars even farther," said **David Clark**, Executive Director. "Plus, we're told time and time again that the drives are a fun way to bring people together while doing good."

Current inventory in the DESC Food Pantry is significantly lower than normal. External food drives have been helping to fill the shelves and provide better and more nutritious food for DESC clients. Food drives of any kind are always helpful, but some groups like to focus on a specific type of food like peanut butter and jelly or soups or cereals.

The Clothing Center relies largely on donations for our clients, but there remain gaps in the inventory that can be covered through the collection of specific items. For example, a coat and hoodie drive is great as the temperatures cool down. Additionally, underwear and sock drives are a huge help as are jeans for everyone in the house! And, DESC can use more shoes for men, especially sneakers or running shoes.

"I am so grateful for all of the groups who conduct drives for DESC," said **Beth Wilson**, Program Director. "Right now, I would love help to ensure we

have enough food and clothing for all of our clients."



Wendy Bartlam, a Food Pantry volunteer, shows off one of the large bags made by Sewing Hope.

Another opportunity for a drive would be fabric. Sewing Hope for DESC can always use more fabric for the dresses and skirts they sew, but they also need denim or canvas weight fabric to create practical and stylish tote bags. These bags are really helpful for our clients who have to carry their groceries and clothing when walking or riding the bus.

For any questions or to coordinate a drive, please email beth.wilson@descjax.org.

Work boots reach milestone



Linda Ferrigno has spearheaded efforts to raise money and collect work boots to help folks get back to work.

Step by step over the last few years, work boots have become a big deal at DESC. Those steps represent thousands of miles if you consider that we recently distributed the 1,500th pair of boots!

A HUGE thank you goes to "Lindarella" (also known as **Linda Ferrigno**) and many awesome donors! The work boots and restaurant shoes have been a big boost to men and women who have been given the chance to work and build their lives again.

If you would like to help, you can donate at www.descjax.org/boots.

Thanks everyone for changing lives – one pair of boots at a time.



Deshawn walked 45 minutes to get to DESC so he could ask for work boots for a new job the following Monday. He left with his head held high, not only because he stands 6'4", but also because he had the boots to get back to work!

Volunteers receive city-wide recognition

It's official – DESC has the best volunteers in the community!

Salli Solow was recently presented the “Senior Citizen of the Year” award by the City of Jacksonville’s Council on Elder Affairs (COEA).

“The Senior Citizen of the Year award honors the achievements of these special seniors who have accomplished outstanding service to the community,” said Carrence Bass, Executive Director for COEA.

Salli has long had a heart for those struggling in their lives, whether it’s children in foster care or the homeless.

Shortly after Salli started volunteering, she realized that DESC needed a lot more clothes. She started hitting up yard sales to collect unsold clothes and frequented Goodwill’s “By the Pound” clothes bin digging for items the Clothing Center needed.

The “Nextdoor” application is a great resource for Salli. She promotes DESC on the site and pleads for blankets, backpacks, shoes and jeans for the homeless. She volunteers to pick up donations with the promise that it’s easier than driving to donate. Many “Nextdoor” users still call Salli about donations five years later!

“This award acknowledges Salli’s amazing work for DESC and our community,” said David Clark, Executive Director. “Salli is an incredible volunteer who has helped in almost every aspect of our organization!”



Salli continues to visit thrift stores and yard sales every week with her friend and fellow volunteer, Gay Hynes. The two have become best friends through their volunteer work.

Gay was also recognized for her volunteer work during National Volunteer Appreciation Week. The United Way of Northeast Florida featured Gay on one of the days of the week in appreciation for her awesome work.

“Gay has volunteered with DESC for more than eight years,” said Beth Wilson, Program Director. “She is extremely passionate, empathetic and considerate to those who are struggling, frustrated or having a hard time.”

Congratulations (and thank you) Salli and Gay!

Volunteers Needed

If you have any desire (or curiosity) to volunteer at DESC, we want to hear from you!

DESC has several opportunities to get involved with our Food Pantry and Clothing Center. Both programs are open to the public in the morning on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Most shifts are 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. but some split shifts could be an option.

Volunteers could help pull clothing, put together outfits, meet with the public for intake, pull food, bag and box food, restock shelves, sort clothing donations or help with crowd control. All of the work is in the basement of the First Presbyterian Church which requires using stairs.

If interested, please email beth.wilson@descjax.org.



DESC Defenders is almost here!

Captain Underwear, Princess Pantaloons, Queen Appétit and Commander Current continue their epic battle against poverty and are joining forces again for DESC DEFENDERS: Journey Through Time, October 6, 5:30 p.m. at WJCT Studios.

This year's event is in-person and kickoffs a year-long celebration of DESC's 40th anniversary. The

evening will feature '80s music and fun, a specially curated menu from **Chef Wes Nogueira** and friends inspired by DESC's Food Pantry, eye-opening program emceed by Action News Jax's **Tenikka Hughes** and more.

Honorary Chairs are **Ruth Ann and Carey Hepler**, and event chair is **Alex Benavides**. The night promises to be the best DESC event ever!



TOP SPONSORS

Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund
established 2012

Mary Virginia Terry

A "DESC Angel"
AME Senior Housing Board
John & Jean Grant-Dooley

Julie & Neal Anderson
Fran & Ken Baker
Black Knight
Barbara English
Thaddeus Eshelman /
Eastern Quality Food
Vince & Linda Ferrigno
FNF / Fidelity



HALL-HALLIBURTON
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Pratt-Dannals*

Ruth Ann & Cary Hepler
John & Susan Humes
Julie & Michael McKenny

Henri Landwirth Family
Endowed Fund
Jacksonville Jaguars
Foundation Inc.
Steve & Paula Rosenbloom
R. Lee Smith

*as of 9/06/22



Alex Benavides with Ruth Ann & Carey Hepler.

VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE

Event Chair: Alex Benavides

Christian Abrahamson	Elizabeth Meux
Gabrielle Bellamy	Debbie Pierson
Theresa Bennett Hill	Pamela Prier
Rolly Berrey	Lani Redington
Nancy Chamblin	Lesley Roberts
Von Fuller	Peyton Rohn
Julie Handley	Al Rutland
Tim Hedrick	Natalie Schoof
Jesse James	Stevie Schoof
Daniel Mahfood	Juanita Senior

HOST COMMITTEE

Honorary Chairs: Ruth Ann & Carey Hepler

Carmina Aldana	Kathy & Bud Para
Julie & Neal Anderson	Jo & Ed Pratt-Dannals
Susan & Rick Brodeur	Sally & John Ragsdale
Matt Carlucci	Steve & Paula Rosenbloom
Marilyn Carpenter	Katy Towers
Bonnie & Tommy Dudley	Lisa & David Williams
Barbara English	Sheila & Calvin Williams
Jannet & Nathaniel Ford	Larry Zenke
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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 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/

A Busy Year For DESC

DESC is experiencing significantly higher numbers of clients compared to 2021. In fact, services are on average 80% more through August 2022 compared to August 2021. In total, DESC has already provided more than 10,000 services, which already passes the entire total for 2021.

			
	4,373 Clothing Services		187 Emergency Financial Assistance
4,894 Grocery Services		1,476 Toiletries & Diapers	