



DESC NEWS

FALL 2026

People. Stories. Impact.

Hope, Help and a Way Forward



A new pair of work boots doesn't just protect the feet — they let a client walk into a job site standing a little taller.

Terri discovered DESC on the recommendation of a friend. She still had to manage some apprehension because she had never visited a social service agency and had no idea what to expect. Staff set her mind at ease with a warm welcome and genuine conversation

about her needs. Soon after, she received food and clothing with additional information about other opportunities.

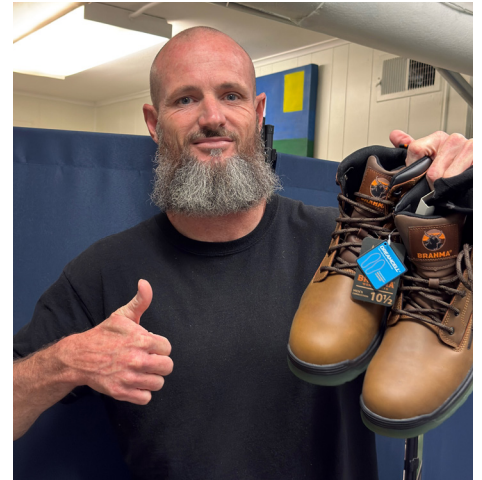
However, it was the discovery of DESC's Work Boots Program that set her sense of gratitude soaring. With a few job leads on the horizon, including positions with Amazon and a local construction company, she had no idea how she would secure the necessary footwear.

Stepping into her first pair of regulation work boots, Terri experienced a new sense of confidence that would motivate her towards taking the next right step toward full-time employment.

"This organization is amazing."

Donnie's path was a little different. Already employed, he was also working toward a career as a merchant marine which promised greater financial stability for his family. With nearly all his certifications complete, one assessment remains.

Like Terri, he needed new work boots, but replacing his current pair was not in the budget. He resorted to wrapping the worn-out soles with tape, which is not a weather-proof



Donnie is ready to reach his next goal with the new shoes.

solution. Receiving a new pair from DESC met a physical and emotional need for encouragement, too.

"The new boots will keep me safe at work, which takes a load off my mind, plus they're comfortable."

Stories like these are why DESC continues to invest in programs that meet practical needs first. Meeting these with a touch of dignity is often the spark that motivates our neighbors to take the next right step forward.



Since 2017, DESC supporter **Linda Ferrigno** has been leveraging the best wishes for her birthday to increase the inventory of DESC work boots. Described as "the best way to celebrate your birthday," her efforts to engage others in this endeavor have resulted in hundreds of men and women receiving a vote of confidence in the form of new boots. Thank you, Linda, for sharing your vision for a different kind of celebration!

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From Board Chair Debbie Pierson

Since I last wrote in this space, we celebrated a record-setting DESC Defenders event, said farewell to David Clark after eight years of dedicated service as Executive Director, and welcomed local nonprofit leader **Tina Wirth** as our interim Executive Director. We also welcomed **Duane Bunn** of VyStar Credit Union to our Board of Directors, and renovations are well underway at our future home on N. Liberty Street.

So much for the lazy days of summer! But we wouldn't have it any other way. This activity reflects an organization moving forward with an extraordinary team of staff and volunteers who share a common mission: proclaiming the love of Jesus Christ by meeting the needs of people in emergency situations or experiencing poverty.

DESC Defenders

You can read more about this year's outstanding DESC Defenders event on pages 4 and 5. Honorary Chairpersons **Melissa and Dick Lewis** assembled an exceptional Host Committee, and we're grateful for their leadership. Action News Jax Anchor **Tenikka Hughes** once again served as emcee, guiding guests through an engaging program that raised \$380,000 for DESC programs.

We're deeply grateful to the sponsors who made this success possible, including the Hall-Halliburton Foundation, the Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund and a DESC Angel.

Tina Wirth Leads DESC

The Board was fortunate to identify Tina Wirth as an ideal interim leader. Tina already knew DESC through her previous consulting work and brings long-standing relationships with many of our community partners, along with a deep understanding of our mission. Since stepping into leadership, Tina has kept the organization moving forward — completing several grant applications, participating actively in planning for our new building, and championing improvements to employee benefits. Eligible DESC employees now access to health care benefits, an important step in supporting the people who make our work possible.

New Board Member

We're also pleased to welcome Duane Bunn to the Board. Duane is Senior Vice President and Head of Commercial Banking for VyStar Credit Union, and a graduate of the University of North Florida, where he earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration.

Meanwhile, there's a constant hum of activity at our future home on N. Liberty Street. Our team is thinking carefully about how every square foot can best serve our clients. You can see the progress, along with highlights from our Blessings Built In event, on page 7.

Looking at all that has happened in recent months, and all that lies ahead, I'm confident that our beloved organization is in good hands and moving in the right direction. For the part you play in the greater DESC story, thank you for your faithfulness and steadfast support.

Welcome!



Tina Wirth
Interim Executive Director

Q: What's been the most interesting part of the job so far?

A: What surprised me most is the volunteer energy. From regulars who sort cans and fold clothes to church congregations leading donation drives, DESC's volunteer community is all about neighbors taking care of neighbors.



Duane Bunn, VyStar
DESC Board member

Q: What draws you to service at DESC?

A: From the moment I toured DESC, I felt compelled by the great need in the community and opportunity to help people. My mind was spinning with how much there was to learn.

Client Stories - This is What Hope Looks Like

“Every person has a different story with different circumstances. So, it's important to listen without judgment. Knowing that my work can bring someone a little relief, hope and stability during a stressful time is what makes my job so rewarding.

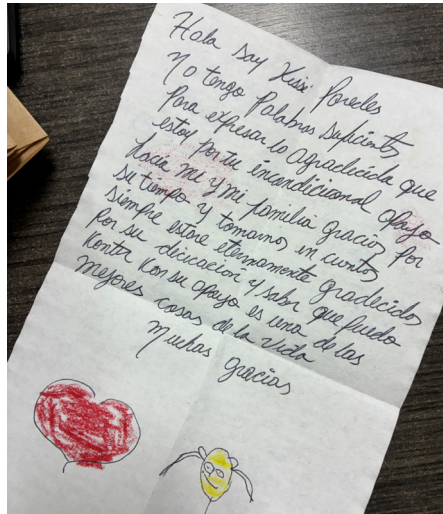
Shayla Hammonds, EFA Program Specialist

Standing in the Gap

In May 2026, DESC was introduced to Kari* through her neighbor, Gloria. Kari was caring for four children under 12 while managing a high-risk pregnancy — and doing it alone. Her husband had been detained months earlier, taking with him a vital source of income and support. Gloria and other community members stepped in to cover rent and utilities, but that kind of support couldn't hold indefinitely.

By July, the family faced eviction due to unpaid rent. DESC stepped in to resolve the shortfall, and Kari — now caring for newborn twins as well — kept her family in stable housing, with food and clothing needs met.

This is the **Emergency Financial Assistance program (EFA)** at its core: targeted help that keeps a hard situation from becoming a costly crisis. With support, a client can stay focused on the longer-term work of building stability.



I don't have enough words to express how grateful I am for your unconditional support toward me and my family. Thank you for your time and for always taking us into consideration. I am eternally grateful for your dedication, and knowing I can count on your support is one of the best things in life. Thank you so much. Kari

(*) Name changed to protect privacy



Richard sports his Veteran's hat as a symbol of pride.

Food and Friendship

Richard is a familiar face at DESC, stopping by regularly for encouragement and for groceries to stretch his limited household budget. “This place is different — you offer acceptance, and a volunteer always prays with me.” As a recipient of Social Security and VA benefits, Richard is proud that he's managed his own apartment in downtown Jacksonville for two years. “You can either be stressed or blessed. I'm choosing to be blessed.”

Want to volunteer or host a drive?
Reach out: beth.wilson@descjax.org

The Challenges of a Fresh Start

Krista* arrived at DESC in March with her four children, having relocated to Jacksonville to escape an unsafe situation. A fresh start brings hope — but it also brings expenses most families aren't prepared for.

She first asked for food and clothing which were provided. Following the initial intake process, she visited with **Kimberley Griffiths, DESC's Community Resource Manager** about the other challenges she was facing. High on the needs list was for bedding for the children

as they were sharing one air mattress. Through a growing network of partnerships under **Help Hub**, Kimberley identified a potential provider and assisted this motivated mom with the necessary paperwork.

Through this encounter, Krista began to trust Kimberley and the people at DESC so that when she encountered other barriers, she would proactively ask for help. For example, when she was concerned about having reliable transportation to and from her job, she simply

needed a gas card, which DESC provided. During this transition, there was also good news to share: the children's beds were being delivered!

Krista's path to stability wasn't a straight line, and it rarely is — systemic delays and shortages see to that. By prioritizing relationship building, Help Hub offers clients a consistent source of support and guidance that is needed to stay motivated and moving forward.

(*) Name changed to protect privacy



DESC DEFENDERS BREAKS RECORD

The annual DESC DEFENDERS event drew a capacity crowd to WJCT studios on June 11th, raising more than \$380,000 to support DESC's fight against poverty. Guests were guided through the interactive program by returning emcee and crowd favorite, Tenikka Hughes. Another highlight was the debut of the STAND

TOGETHER video, illustrating the power of a united community to bring hope to neighbors in need. Special thanks to the Hall-Halliburton Foundation for offering a matching gift for the FUND-A-NEED portion of the evening, supplying funding for DESC's Emergency Financial Assistance and Help Hub programs.

! SAVE THE DATE: DESC DEFENDERS
Thursday, June 10, 2027

“ Ben and I came away from the evening inspired. DESC is doing important work and seeing it up close made clear how they're meeting the needs of people in our city. We're grateful to support an organization that shows up for our neighbors in such a tangible way.

Laura Wuerffel



Special Thanks to the All-Star Host Committee



Melissa and Dick Lewis, Honorary Chairs

Jim Babcock
 Matt Carlucci
 Katie and Michael Fackler
 Steve and Anita Goyer
 Stuart and Mark Harbison
 Kae and Al Harding

Randle and Jodie Marchman
 Kayla and Eustachius Roberts
 Susan and Percy Rosenbloom
 Carolyn and Al Rutland
 Laura and Ben Wuerffel

THANK YOU SPONSORS FOR STANDING TOGETHER!



PRESENTING

Delores Barr Weaver ^{Legacy} Fund
established 2012

A DESC Angel

MISSION CHAMPIONS

AME Senior Housing Board

Melissa and Dick Lewis

PLATINUM

*Vince and Linda
Ferrigno*

*John and Jean
Grant-Dooley*

*Al and Kae
Harding*

*Randle and
Jodie Marchman*

*Ed and Jo
Pratt-Dannals*

GOLD

Jim Babcock, Judi and Brian Carney, Mary V. Collins, Nan and Gordon Davis, A DESC Angel, Debbie and Dave Pierson, VyStar Credit Union

SILVER

Advantis Wealth Partners, Julie and Neal Anderson, Tom Bush Family of Dealerships, Capital Analysts of Jacksonville, Fran and Ken Baker, Mary and Hank Coxe, Katie and Michael Fackler, Stuart and Mark Harbison
Legacy Interior Services, Tina Wirth and Carrie King

BRONZE

Arden Brugger, Daniel and Trista Carraher, The Church of Oakland, Heather and Chad Corbitt, Crabtree Construction Company, A DESC Angel, Judy Fackler, First Citizens Bank, Bob and Bobbie Gittings, John and Debbie Grisnik, Julie Handley, The Lord's Foundation, Inc., Ginger and John Manley, Mitch22 Foundation, Inc., Bud and Kathy Para, Lani and Mal Redington, Joe and Beth Reiney, Jack Richardson, Riverside Avenue Christian Church, Lesley Roberts, Paula and Steve Rosenbloom, Al Rutland CPA, PLLC, Luca and Carol Stocchi, Debbie and Jim Thompson, Matt and Karen Weaver, Sherrie and Warner Webb

COPPER

Carmina and Philipp Aldana, Mark and Beverly Alexander, John and Patti Anderson, Liz Bobeck, Jack and Claudia Calhoun, Matt Carlucci State Farm, David Clark, Bob and Valerie Dannals, Joe and Katie Eberly, Von and Calvin Fuller, Steve and Anita Goyer, Jessica and Chelsea Griffith, Mattox Hair, Jessie and Tim Hedrick, Alison Hill, David and Janice Martin, Elizabeth G. Meux, Janine and Steve Moore, Lee and Susan Norville, Norville Realty, Dottie Nutant, Jim and Connie Overton, Pamela and LeMorris Prier, Bill and Carol Proctor, Kellie and Drew Prusiecki, Larry and Pearl Roziers, Duncan R. Sawyer, Liz and Pat Williams

IN KIND

All About You Staffing, Dwayne Holden Touton Wine Selection, LTD Left Hand Brewing Co., Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, Super Sharp Events

“ This was my first year attending and I was impressed with the sense of community among the donors. Our church is very involved with DESC and takes pride in our involvement with this event. From my perspective, supporting DESC is one of the best ways we care for the world living outside of our front doors.

Pastor Andrew Guthrie
Riverside Avenue Christian Church

“ We have been supporting the DESC Defenders for many years because we believe in the mission and trust the staff and volunteers to engage those in need in a practical and meaningful way while maintaining their dignity.

Ed and Jo Pratt-Dannals

Gifts that Give Back

Behind every program at DESC are practical, every day items provided by a host of individuals and organizations showing up for their neighbors in need. Donations ranging from a single item to the results of a food drive are stocking the shelves, meeting immediate needs and freeing up resources for other parts of the work. Thank you!



David's birthday haul of donated diapers and wipes.

Party with a Purpose

"Several years ago, I worked at DESC and gained a deep appreciation for the hardships people were experiencing. Some would work two jobs while raising children yet still come up short in covering the basics. I love that DESC is there to help fill those gaps.

I've never forgotten the responses from the clients as we would

pass along food and clothing. The happiness on their faces was overwhelming to me.

Recalling that sense of purpose in meeting tangible needs, I decided to use my husband David's 70th birthday celebration as an opportunity to collect diapers and wipes for DESC. This twist on gift giving was a big hit with

our friends and family. Delivering stacks of baby supplies to the office was also a gift as we were reminded of the privilege of helping someone move from hardship to hope."

- Lisa Williams,
former DESC staff member.

Kids Love Undie Sundays

Mandarin United Methodist Church provided a large donation of brand new underwear and socks after a combined Undie Sunday and Vacation Bible School collection drive. "Kids get excited about helping DESC in this way because it's relatable. There's nothing abstract about socks and underwear," explains drive organizer and Board member **Gabrielle Bellamy**. **San Marco Presbyterian Church** also held a successful drive.

Socks and Shoes Galore

The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd held their first Fun Day Sunday Sock Drive. "There was great enthusiasm for this project," shared Board member **Duncan Sawyer**. Slightly more than 600 new pairs of socks, including specialty socks for diabetic patients, were collected.

More socks and personal supplies were donated by **Bartram Springs Elementary School**. Special thanks to **Principal Kimberly Wright** for leading the charge.

Another highlight was receiving a delivery of a van full of running shoes and shirts from **1st Place Sports**.

Food Drives Deliver

A variety of businesses and community groups helped to keep the pantry shelves stocked during the high demand summer. Special thanks to the **Winston Family YMCA**, the **Islamic Center of Northeast Florida**, **Wells (Building Systems)**, the **Baymeadows Islamic Center** and **Miller & Company Real Estate**, **St. Barnabas Anglican Church** for getting involved.

A Champion for Kids

Mitch22 Foundation President and DESC Board member **Larry Roziers** works to support elementary age children through a variety of projects, including organizing service opportunities. DESC is frequently the recipient of sock and underwear drives. "**Principal Kimberly Brown** at **Northwestern Legends Elementary School** really came through for us." Also on behalf of Mitch22, DESC received 75 new school backpacks loaded with supplies.

Promising Partnerships



Kayla and Kephren from **Safe Landing Solutions** learned about DESC from a family member who receives services and never forgot how well she was treated. "On her behalf, we wanted to give back and say thank you." Safe Landing Solutions works to find affordable housing for eligible clients.

Through **One More Child's new Compassion Center** in Jacksonville, DESC received food, drinks and sundries.

Vision is Priceless visits DESC every other month to meet with clients and conduct vision screenings. "We are always happy to be at DESC and work alongside your team," said **Morgan Schmidt**. As a bonus this summer, they also donated 50 bags of toiletries.

Waste Not Want Not continues to support DESC with donations of breads, baked goods and sweets.

Hidden In Plain Sight

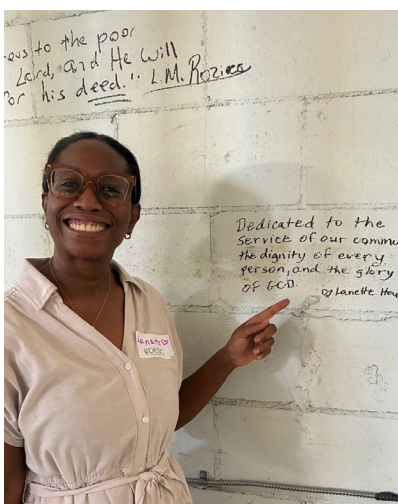
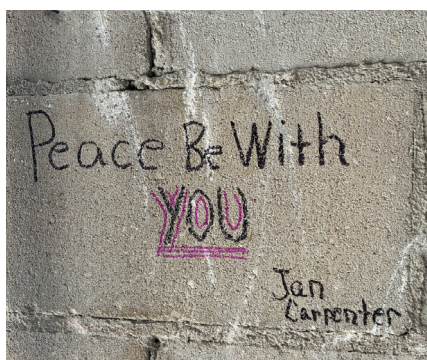
This summer before the drywall was installed, DESC Rising Capital Campaign donors joined Board members and staff for a special “Blessings Built In” event. With Sharpie markers in hand, guests inscribed their favorite Bible verse or inspirational quotes on the building’s interior walls. Riverside Presbyterian Church’s Rev. Dr. Brian Lays offered a prayer for the once-in-a-lifetime occasion that was hosted by **Debbie Pierson**, DESC Board Chair, and **Julie Handley**, Campaign Chair.

“ Writing Scripture on the actual walls was very meaningful, as if we laid the foundation for what we want to accomplish in the new building.

Von Fuller



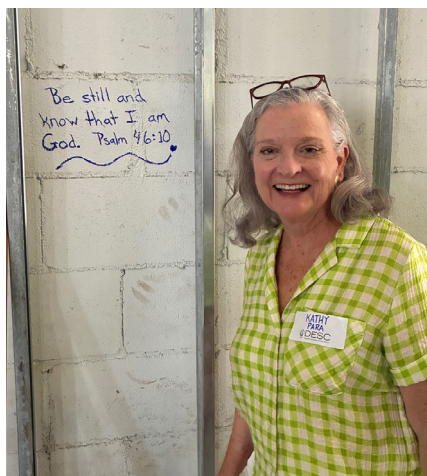
DESC Board members Von Fuller, left and Debbie Pierson.



Board member Lanette Hart highlighting “the dignity of every person.”



DESC Interim Executive Director Tina Wirth and Donor Vince Ferrigno, aka Superintendent of the N. Liberty Street Project.



“ My husband, Bud, and I supported the capital campaign because a significant space upgrade has been a longtime need. With the new facility, there will be a greater capacity to help those in need. The address may be changing, but the spirit behind DESC that serves others with dignity and respect remains the same!

Kathy Para

DESC Is Rising!



DESC’s future home on N. Liberty Street is buzzing with activity! Concrete and rebar secures the foundation on the exterior while the inside rooms are being further defined and designed. Look for a more detailed report on the building, including details on the actual move, later this fall.



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CURRENT NEEDS LIST

Here's what we're hoping to gather this season.

- ♥ New socks and underwear (all sizes)
- ♥ Backpacks, totes and suitcases
- ♥ Diapers and wipes
- ♥ Bibles
- ♥ Coats (all sizes)
- ♥ Men: pants (sizes 30-36), T-shirts, jeans (all sizes)
- ♥ Men's shoes (all sizes)
- ♥ Women: shirts (size large and up)
- ♥ Children: clothing for all elementary age sizes, shoes (all sizes)
- ♥ Toiletries like deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, razors, bar soap, shampoo and conditioner

You can find the updated list at
descjax.org/current_needs

DONATION CHANGES: As we prepare to move into our new facility, we are no longer accepting household goods, kitchen items, puzzles, games, toys or stuffed animals. Thank you for helping us stay focused on our primary mission.

DESC Welcomes Social Work Intern



Originally from New Jersey, **Nicollette Mendes** is a social work major at the University of North Florida. After completing her undergraduate studies, she aspires to be a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and work in the Career Services field.

Outside of school and the internship, you will most likely find Nicollette trying new restaurants with friends.

“During my time at DESC, I hope to gain more insight in how to advocate for underserved communities.”

What Makes a Great Volunteer?

- ✓ **Reliable:** Honors Commitments
- ✓ **Passion:** Cares Deeply about the Cause
- ✓ **Compassion:** Treats all People with Kindness

DESC Volunteers check all of the boxes!

Congratulations to the following Volunteers of the month!

May - Susan Humes
June - Mike Williams

July - Dana McKay
August - Sarah Sharp
September - Mary Ann Lindsey