



FALL 2025

NEWS FROM THE DESC

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Marcus' Next Step

Marcus* came to Jacksonville determined to rebuild his life. In Wisconsin, he once had stability — a steady job, a car and a comfortable apartment — but he left to escape the harsh winters.

A short, unsuccessful move to Louisiana left him unhoused. Encouraged by a cousin, he tried Florida and chose Jacksonville. He found shelter at The Salvation Army and started planning his fresh start.

More than anything, Marcus wanted steady full-time work. A staffing company placed him in a promising job, but there was one catch: steel-toed boots were required. "I wasn't going to let this opportunity pass me by, but I just didn't have the money for the boots," Marcus said.

Through DESC's work boot ministry, he was fitted for steel-toed boots and started right away.

For many clients, that first job after hardship is a crucial turning point. A sturdy pair of work boots or non-slip restaurant shoes can be the key to new opportunity. The right gear helps people start earning income, regain confidence and move toward lasting stability.

Every week, DESC helps people like Marcus prepare for work and take steps toward a brighter future.



Marcus showing off his new work boots and Bombas socks.

Now Marcus walks into his job equipped and confident. He's eager to prove himself and hopes to earn a permanent position soon. "This gave me the chance to show what I can do," he said.

Thanks to your generosity, Marcus is taking important steps toward self-sufficiency.

**name has been changed*

Lakisha's New Beginning

After years of couch surfing with friends and family, and a devastating eviction, **Lakisha***, a 35-year-old single mother of two, built the courage to step out on her own. She located an apartment, saved for the deposit and first month's rent and moved her family closer to stability.

The only barrier was an old utility bill from 2021 that kept her from turning on the lights and water. "I was so close," Lakisha said. "But without utilities, it would not be a safe home for my children."

Newly employed and focused on her future, Lakisha called United Way 211 and asked for DESC by name. DESC partnered with Lakisha to cover the past-due balance and assist with the deposit, completing what she had already worked hard to begin.

Today, Lakisha is working, exploring higher education and moving forward with determination, grateful for the boost she needed to keep going.

Thanks to you, Lakisha and her children now have lights, water and the foundation for a brighter future.

**name has been changed*

DESC DEFENDERS
GENERATIONS

Details on pages 4-5



From Board Chair Claude Moulton

As we approach the end of the year, I am delighted to get an early jump on the thanksgiving season as DESC has much to be grateful for.

We are so grateful to have such supportive foundations and corporations that provide us with incredibly generous grants. We are thrilled to receive our first grant from **The Jim Moran Foundation, Inc.** which will help fund emergency financial assistance. We are also grateful for an additional grant from **The Lucy Gooding Charitable Foundation Trust.** Both of these investments arrive at a critical time, as requests for rent and utility help continue to grow while other funding has become more volatile.

And that's only scratching the surface of our appreciation. With our DESC Defenders fundraiser, the power of generosity was on full display. Thanks to our returning Honorary Chairs, **Mary and Hank Coxe**, the Event Chair, **Lanette Hart**, and the hardworking committee members,

we surpassed \$330,000 in support for all our programs. Those gifts are already at work across every service DESC provides.

We are grateful for our partner churches, schools, corporations and volunteers who collect food, clothing and other resources. When our food pantry faces supply challenges, these drives step up big, keeping shelves stocked and helping DESC respond as holiday demand for food, clothing and financial assistance grows.

Volunteers are at the heart of DESC's mission, providing extra hands and steady leadership. We can always use more — drivers, pantry helpers, clothes sorters and church or community groups hosting creative drives such as Undie Sunday, peanut butter and jelly collections and toiletries. Every effort matters. If you would like to help, reach out to us at admin@descjax.org.

DESC is grateful for a small and mighty group of volunteers helping us raise funds for our Capital Campaign. We have run into some challenges, but our volunteers have not lost sight of our goal or faith that we will get there. You can read more about the changes to our plans on page 3.

We are excited to welcome two new members to our Board of Directors: **Alison Hill**, Quality Review Supervisor at the Florida Department of Children and Families and representative from Riverside Avenue Christian Church, and **Vance Walker**, Founder and Financial Advisor at Advantis Wealth. Each brings a fresh perspective and strong commitment to DESC.

Through the highs and lows, we continue to seek God's guidance and give thanks for the many hands and hearts that make DESC's mission possible.

Thank you for standing with us. With your support — and God's grace — DESC is meeting urgent needs while building hope for the future.

Want to volunteer or host a drive? Reach out! admin@descjax.org



Alison Hill



Vance Walker



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

Families receive care with dignity.

Thanks to generous donors and incredible volunteers and staff, neighbors facing hardship receive help with emergency financial assistance, groceries, clothing and case management.

Capital Campaign Update: The Mile That Got Longer

The road to DESC's new facility may be only one mile long, but it's going to take longer to get there than we thought.

As renovations were set to begin at 956 North Liberty Street, the project stalled in the city's permitting process. Despite having funds in hand to cover construction, DESC was told to return to the drawing board and make changes.

"While this was unexpected, it really isn't all that surprising," said **David Clark**, Executive Director. "Anyone working with permitting understands that codes and projects usually need some massaging to get everything on the same page."

Specifically, the city required additional upgrades to meet FEMA flood standards. The building will get reinforced exterior walls and flood-protection panels for doors, even the garage bay.

Additionally, the project requires a redesigned parking lot with landscaping and green space. To comply with the codes, the architectural team added structural and civil engineers to develop the best solutions.

"The result is an increase in our total campaign goal to \$3.6 million," said Capital Campaign Co-Chair **Julie Handley**. "The great news is that we've already raised \$2.24

million so only a little more than \$1.3 million remains."

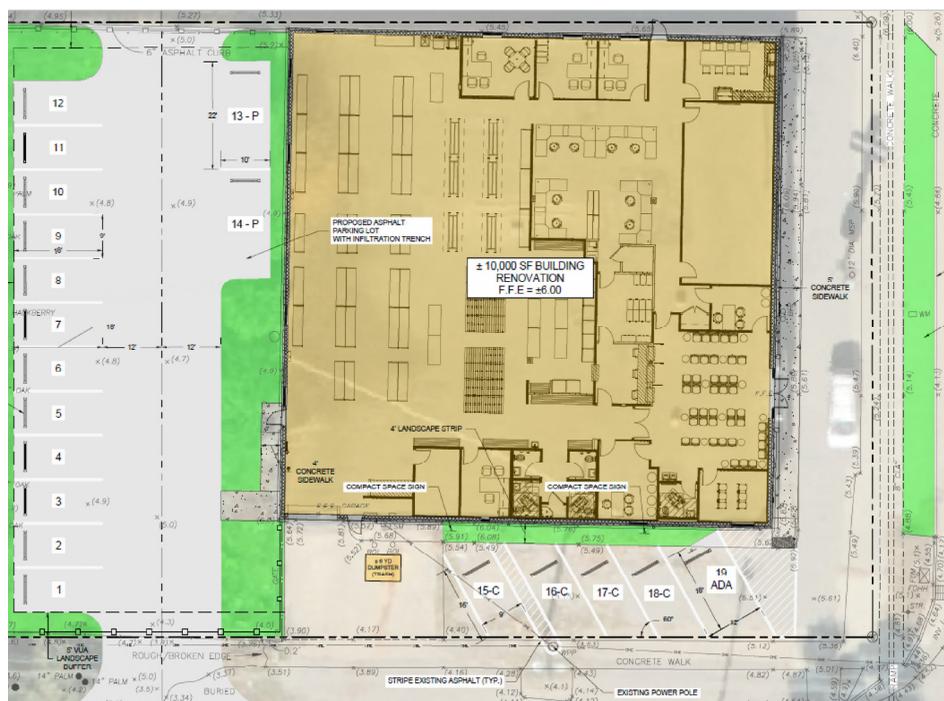
The city's permitting process has provided preliminary approvals for some crucial deviations, an early sign that the revised project is heading in the right direction. And if we're following that road to the new location – that would be due north.

"This isn't a setback in mission, it's an upgrade in stewardship," said Clark. "We hit a wall, adjusted our plans and kept going. If we let God lead us on this project, we will go exactly where He needs us to be."

When complete, the new center will deliver a street-level entrance, private counseling rooms, an ADA-compliant restroom, a community room for partners and a true warehouse with loading dock so food and clothing can move efficiently to families who need them.

"At the end of this project, we'll all be so excited – especially our clients," said Handley. "I just can't wait to have everyone in our wonderful new building! It's going to be such a great way to help those in need."

While the mile may feel longer, the destination is the same. With faith, stewardship and friends who believe in this work, we'll get there — and open a new place to serve those struggling with poverty.



A Gift With a Future

Some gifts don't arrive today — they arrive tomorrow, and keep arriving for years to come.

Planned giving includes adding DESC as a beneficiary to a retirement account, designating a percentage of your estate in your will, gifting a life insurance policy or making gifts of stock and IRA distributions. Some donors also consider charitable trusts, which can provide for both

loved ones and the causes they care about.

By naming DESC in your will, trust, retirement account or life insurance policy, you can also strengthen DESC's endowment. Planned gifts ensure long-term stability for our mission, sustaining food, clothing and emergency financial assistance today while securing DESC's future for generations.

"Planned giving isn't only for the wealthy," said **David Clark**, Executive Director. "It's about leaving a legacy of compassion that keeps changing lives long into the future."

If you've already included DESC in your plans, please let us know so we can thank you. And if you haven't yet, now is the perfect time to consider making DESC part of your legacy.

DESC DEFENDERS GENERATIONS

DESC Defenders: Generations raised more than \$330,000 to help fight poverty in Jacksonville.

Guests filled WJCT Studios with energy and generosity, inspired by stories of hope and compassion. Honorary Chairs Mary and Hank Coxe, Event Chair Lanette Hart and Emcee Tenikka Hughes of Action News Jax led an unforgettable evening.

Thanks to every sponsor, volunteer and guest, DESC can offer dignity, stability and hope to neighbors working to overcome poverty.



Honorary Chairs

Mary and Hank Coxe

Host Committee

Julie Handley
Richard and Melissa Lewis
Lesley Roberts
Katy Towers
Vance and Allison Walker



Hank and Mary Coxe, Honorary Chairs, with emcee, Tenikka Hughes.



Linda and Vince Ferrigno with Claude Moulton, Board Chair.



Event guest participating in the real-time survey of client needs.



Guests enjoying the evening's activities.



Fran Moulder and the table for the Hall-Halliburton Foundation applaud the event's success.



David Clark, Executive Director, addressing the wonderful audience.



Board member, Pam Prier, and husband LeMorris posed on arrival.

Presenting Sponsors



A DESC Angel

Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund
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*John and Jean
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*Ed and Jo
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Richard and Melissa Lewis • Debbie and Dave Pierson • Michael Ward

Silver

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Randle and Jodie Marchman • Julie and Michael McKenny

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Trista and Daniel Carraher • The Church of Oakland • Tom and Bonnie Dudley
Thad Eshelman/Eastern Quality Food • Judy Fackler • Bob and Bobbie Gittings • Julie Handley
Chuck and Sandra Hedrick • Tim and Jessie Hedrick • Historic Mt. Zion AME Church
Mary and Ron Littlepage • The Lord's Foundation • Mayo Clinic • Marc and Anne Mayo • Clay and Elizabeth Meux
Mitch22 Foundation, Inc. • Claude Moulton and Christine Whitney • Bud and Kathy Para
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Dottie Nutant • Connie and Jim Overton • LeMorris and Pam Prier • Bill and Carol Proctor
Kellie and Drew Prusiecki • Mal and Lani Redington • Larry Zenke

In-Kind

All About You Staffing • Bold City Brewery • Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits

Bernice's Joy

Bernice always has a smile on her face. Rain or shine, her joy is the first thing people notice.

Behind that smile is a life marked by resilience. She grew up in a large



Bernice ready to head home with her groceries and clothes.

family, learned how to adapt and care for others, and carried those lessons into her work as an early childhood educator and as a devoted mother of five.

After her divorce, Bernice raised her children on her own. She stretched every dollar and kept her focus on providing stability. When challenges arose, she turned to DESC, where she found not only groceries and clothing but also encouragement.

Her health challenges have been long-term and complicated, eventually forcing her into a wheelchair. Still, she continues to live independently in her own duplex. Bernice approaches each day with determination and a positive outlook. She enjoys her outings and appreciates the familiar faces who greet her when she visits DESC.

Through DESC, she receives healthy groceries that keep her pantry stocked and her meals balanced. Volunteers in DESC's clothing center thoughtfully select outfits that match

her needs and preferences, helping her feel confident and cared for.

Each visit reminds her that kindness still surrounds her, even on difficult days. The support she receives makes a real difference, easing her budget and adding comfort to her daily life.

"It makes me feel better when I'm dressed up," Bernice said. "It helped my children when they were growing up, and it still helps me today."

Bernice is proud of her children, all grown now and building lives of their own. She gives herself credit, too, for good humor and perseverance.

"I thank God DESC has been here to help me through it all," she said. "The way you all have always treated me with so much respect, I certainly appreciate it."

Bernice's gratitude is meant for DESC's supporters who bring dignity, encouragement and hope to all who visit.

Ronnie's Compassion

Ronnie's life has been marked by service and faith. For 16 years, he served in the Army's 82nd Airborne, working on tanks, helicopters and fueling stations.

He left the Army earlier than planned to help care for his parents and eventually made Jacksonville his home.

Today, Ronnie relies on DESC for food and clothing that help him get by each month and maintain his independence. "You care so much for people, so they don't go hungry and have clean clothes to wear," he said.

Faith and service continue to guide his days. He attends church regularly and sings in nursing homes twice a week.

Each month, before paying his rent, he sets aside money to buy

sandwiches and water, pedaling his bike downtown to share with those in need. He even spent several days living under a bridge so he could better understand the struggles of people experiencing homelessness.

"Empathy is learned," he said, quoting his mother. "No test, no testimony."

Ronnie grew up in Panama City in a family of 18 children. His chore was doing laundry for everyone — washing, ironing and keeping track of clothes. He laughs about those days now but credits them with teaching him responsibility and discipline.

"The people here are so sweet and welcoming and always have smiles on their faces," Ronnie said. "It is very inspirational to have a place like this to help people in emergencies, and I appreciate all you do."



Ronnie waits for his items outside of DESC.

Special Thanks for Special Donors

- ♥ **The Mitch22 Foundation, Larry Roziers and high school volunteers** collected, stuffed and donated 50 backpacks with school supplies.
- ♥ We're grateful for multiple food donations in response to our recent shortages! Thank you, **St. Barnabas Anglican Church** and **Carmen Baselice, United Community Outreach Ministry (UCOM)**, and **The LJD Jewish Family & Community Services** for ensuring our shelves and freezers were stocked.
- ♥ The **Riverside Presbyterian Church** bulletin board inspired an **Episcopal School** student to collect a large donation of children's clothing.
- ♥ Both the **Deermeadows Baptist Church** and **WeeTrade** donated loads of much-needed children's clothing leftover after their recent events.



WeeTrade and DESC volunteers.

- ♥ **Lakeside Church of Christ** donated another bag of adorable hand-sewn teddy bears that are placed in children's clothing bags.
- ♥ **Greater Grant Memorial AME Church (Maggie Pearl Women's Missionary Society)** and the **Jacksonville Bar Association** donated toiletry kits, individual toiletries, and new socks.
- ♥ The **Girl Scout Troop 74320** with leader, **Raven Jackson**, brought a car full of clothing and blankets and then volunteered to help put away food and clothing.



The girl scouts working in the DESC Clothing Center.

- ♥ We are so thankful to **1st Place Sports** for bringing another van full of race shoes and shirts.
- ♥ **South Jacksonville Presbyterian Church** and **Mandarin United Methodist Church**, organized by Board members **Lani Redington** and **Gabrielle Bellamy**, held "Undie Sundie" events to collect new socks and underwear for our clients.

- ♥ **Habitat for Humanity** employees and family members donated new toiletries, backpacks, clothing, socks and school supplies.
- ♥ **The Baymeadows Islamic Center** organized a women's and girls' clothing drive to help meet the needs of our newest Afghan refugee clients. Thanks to their efforts— and with the coordination and support of **Tutul Fazal** from Bank of America—we received four vanloads of women's clothing.
- ♥ Thank you to **Books A Go-Go** for delivering more children's books for our little clients.
- ♥ **Chris** and **Kevin Buckley** helped redesign and assemble new shelves for the Children's Clothing area to improve safety for our volunteers.
- ♥ We're grateful to have had **Jeslyn Huffenus** as our summer social work intern and high-schooler, **Tim Fairbanks**. Both provided so much support to help clients.
- ♥ We are so grateful to **Barbara London** who has been bringing collected items from **Riverside Avenue Christian Church** and helping with bread deliveries.
- ♥ We're also blessed for continual collections of clothing and food from **Riverside Avenue Christian Church, Riverside Presbyterian Church** and **South Jacksonville Presbyterian Church**.

Grant Highlight

DESC is overflowing with gratitude for the foundations, corporations and partners who have stepped forward with generous grants this season. Each gift is more than dollars — it is a declaration that our community cares about families struggling with poverty.

These investments strengthen our Emergency Financial Assistance, keep groceries and clothing on our shelves, and give us the stability to serve thousands of neighbors with dignity. Every grant listed here represents a partner who believes in DESC's mission and is willing to walk alongside us in faith and compassion.

We celebrate the trust these organizations place in our work, and we are eager to steward their resources with care. Their generosity fuels hope, sustains critical programs, and ensures that when someone comes to DESC in crisis, we are ready to respond.

To each of these partners, we say thank you — deeply, joyfully and sincerely. Your support reminds us daily that we are not alone in this mission.

- ♥ **Bank of America**
- ♥ **Baptist Health System**
- ♥ **Cavan Family Foundation**
- ♥ **City of Jacksonville Public Service Grant**
- ♥ **Florida Blue Foundation**
- ♥ **Hall-Halliburton Foundation, Inc.**
- ♥ **Jacksonville Jaguars Foundation, Inc.**
- ♥ **The Jim Moran Foundation Inc**
- ♥ **The Lord's Foundation, Inc.**
- ♥ **The Lucy Gooding Charitable Foundation Trust**
- ♥ **The Olive Tree Foundation**
- ♥ **THE PLAYERS Red Coats**
- ♥ **United Way of Northeast Florida**



215 N. Ocean Street
Jacksonville, FL 32202
(904) 358-7955

www.descjax.org
facebook.com/DESCJax
Instagram: @descjax

admin@descjax.org

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NEEDS LIST

Families always need the items below.

- ♥ New socks and underwear (all sizes)
- ♥ Backpacks, totes and suitcases
- ♥ Men's, women's and children's coats (all sizes)
- ♥ Men's pants (sizes 30-36), T-shirts, jeans and shoes (all sizes)
- ♥ Women's shirts (size large and up) and pants (size 14 and up)
- ♥ Children's clothing for all elementary age sizes
- ♥ Toiletries like deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, razors, bar soap, lotion, shampoos and conditioners

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



Season of Giving

As the holiday season draws near, excitement grows with every food collection, coat drive and stocking donation. Neighbors stop by to share a smile or drop off contributions, and support begins to arrive by mail too. These moments remind us how much our community cares for those with the greatest needs during this special season.

Your involvement makes a difference—join in the holiday spirit by reaching out to admin@descjax.org.