



FALL 2017

NEWS FROM THE DESC

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Stories That Lead to DESC



Sharing a Home...Losing a Friend

He was a gentle and proud elderly man who came to DESC for help with his rent. His only income was \$800.00 from Social Security. His apartment was small, yet the rent was \$485.00...over half of his income. It was his practice that whenever he cashed his Social Security check, he put the rent money in his Bible so he would not spend it. In spite of this meager income and simple home, he was willing for a friend in need to stay with him.

A couple of weeks ago, he let an old friend stay with him for a few nights. After returning from the grocery store, he found the Bible open, the rent money gone along with his TV set and, of course, his friend.

He didn't know what was worse – losing his money or losing his friend.



From Board President Clay Meux

were in our 2017 budget. We have been doing everything we can to insure that these new expenses will not affect our clients' needs.

We walked around DESC with a new critical eye as to other capital improvement needs DESC may have in the near future. It is our hope that someone will find a desire to assist us with redoing the lobby area at DESC (i.e., painting, new light fixtures, new furniture), the office area, (i.e., pull up the rugg, paint the floor, paint the walls, help us find new office furniture for the staff) and the food storage area (new lighting, new storage shelves, painting). We have gone many years without capital improvements to our space and it is DESC's responsibility to pay for the capital improvements to our area. I believe we need to honor our clients and our staff by providing them with a new and improved area which will enhance the experience of our clients, our volunteers and our staff. If anyone has any thoughts or any desire to help, please contact me and I would love to talk to you.

The Board finalized a job description for the new executive director and that job description has been posted. We have a search committee in place and we hope to begin interviews soon. It is our goal to make sure that we find the right fit for DESC because our mission is so important and as one Board member said at our last Board meeting, it is absolutely critical that the new executive director have a heart for our mission. Please keep DESC, our Board

members, and specifically our search committee in your prayers over the next several months as we work to find the "right fit" for the executive director position.

I am excited to report that we have added three new Board members. Marshall Faircloth, Chris Buckley and Tricia Todd have all joined our Board and as no one would be surprised all three immediately began contributing and helping us improve everything we do at DESC. I am very thankful that all three of them agreed to serve on the Board of DESC and ask all of you to welcome them to the Board. It is with a heavy heart that I report to you that **Reverend Hugh Chapman of St. Philip's Episcopal Church** has decided to take a call at a church in Tallahassee. He has been an incredible member of the Board who always added insightful thoughts and his wisdom and voice will be greatly missed by DESC, although we rejoice with him in his new position in Tallahassee. He has promised to help his church identify a new Board member from their church because we believe that their church is an important voice on the Board at DESC.

I am also thrilled to report that Bubba is back. I hope you look for Bubba around Jacksonville. We hope that you all will be able to join us on November 4th at the Haskell Building. It is a time to gather to celebrate the DESC mission.

Gratefully,
Clay Meux



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

We Are Going to Have a Feast Tonight!

It was going to be a new beginning. A beautiful young woman needed help with her rental deposit. She had just gotten a new job and was approved for HUD assistance. She and her three year old daughter were still living with her mother but the house was crowded and there really wasn't room for them. She was excited about her new job and home, but she just didn't have the money for the rental deposit. Our caseworker called the landlord and made arrangements for the rental security deposit. This is exactly the type of client DESC can help.

Meanwhile, our pantry volunteer soon realized that there were needs beyond the financial assistance and she quickly filled food bags with fresh produce, frozen meat, milk, bread, cereal and dairy products.

When the young lady saw the food, she started crying. She took out her phone and took a picture of the bags to send to her mother. She called her mother and said "We are going to have a feast tonight and I will soon be in a home of my own."



Work Boots... Jaguar Player #17 And Lindarella

Some of the best ideas of how to help our clients come from our volunteers. Last year, clothing volunteer Salli Solow brought attention to the critical need for work boots. When we shared her campaign in the last newsletter, it captured the imagination of our donors and friends.

One of our favorite work boot stories was when Jaguar Player Arrelious Benn toured DESC with his wife and children. When we showed him the empty bins that hold our men's work boots and explained that this was a barrier to getting a job, Arrelious said, "Just a minute please." A few minutes later, he returned carrying his brand new pair of shoes and a check to purchase 40 pairs of work boots. We smile every time we remember the excited client walking out in the shoes of Jaguar #17.

The "work boot magic" continued when DESC supporter Linda Ferrigno learned of this need. As she made plans to celebrate her 70th birthday, she decided that the best birthday present ever would be 365 pairs of work boots. And soon Lindarella's birthday campaign was underway. Armed with Facebook and email, Linda sent the following message:

One shoe can change a life and give me the best birthday present ever! A \$25.00 donation can change a life. How is that possible? Each donation will purchase a pair of work boots that enables a DESC client to get a job. I have been blessed with 70 amazing years and would like to help change a life by raising funds to purchase 365 pairs of work boots.



Beth Wilson with Arrelious and Mariel Benn and their daughters



Linda Ferrigno aka Lindarella

The Great Electric Emergency Lights Up 154 Houses!



It's a bird, it's a plane...NO! It is not Superman... It was Commander Current and Captain Underwear, the crazy and engaging superheroes for DESC. Avondale's Mellow Mushroom was all lit up for The Great Electric Emergency. Co-Chairs Theresa Bennett Hill and Shay Hill led the crowd in lighting up 154 houses for those about to lose their electric power. And the real fun was watching each donor and teams light up the house they sponsored.

Can you imagine going through our Jacksonville summer heat with no power...without even a fan or air conditioning. Life is very challenging for many of our DESC clients and every Monday morning we are overwhelmed with 200+ phone calls of people on the verge of losing their power. Thank goodness that DESC can help pay the electric bill for families with children, disabled members or the elderly. Our follow up surveys reflect that helping a family over a temporary electric bill crisis, is often the necessary measure that keeps them in their home. The bottom line is that for many this prevents homelessness.



Board Member Al Rutland and his granddaughter, Isabelle, with the Superheroes!!



Anna Moulder lights up 40 houses sponsored by the Hall-Halliburton Foundation.



Co-Chairs, Theresa Bennett Hill and Shay Hill



Clay Meux, Mattox Hair, Renee Steilberg



Captain Underwear (aka Robert Reid) and Commander Current (aka Sam Mitchell)

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Historic Mt. Zion AME Church

Prayer in the Waiting Room

It was a typical Tuesday morning at DESC, which means the clients arrived in a steady stream seeking emergency boxes and bags of food.

One thin young man, living on the streets, said he hoped he would be well enough soon to get a job and get back on his feet. Slowly, he told his story: he was recovering from major surgery for a chronic illness that had left him temporarily unable to work. He has lost his savings and home.

An older woman, resting before she tried to move her heavy bags of groceries up the stairs, looked up.

As he stood to go with his snack bag of food given to those without cooking facilities, she said "What's your name?"

"Mike." (Names have been changed for privacy.)
"Please come here, Mike, I'd like to pray for you."

The waiting room fell silent. She took Mike's hand and prayed for his recovery. When she finished (as listeners wiped their eyes) she said, "I'll keep praying for you. I hope things get better for you."



"Thank you," he said "I know they will."

His step seemed lighter and his smile brighter as he headed up the stairs.



A Brand New Dress For School

For many of us, the first day of school meant a brand new outfit, a lunchbox and a new backpack. This "back to school" ritual is just as important for the children coming to DESC. Fortunately, DESC has "Sewing For Hope," a talented team of 12 seamstresses who create the most adorable dresses for our little girls.

It was very special for the mothers of our clients to see their little girls in these brand new dresses. Our volunteers complete the outfits with "like new" sandals, hair bows, nail polish and school supplies.

Sewing For Hope for DESC is led by Sharon Meehan. This amazing volunteer not only leads the seamstresses, but gathers material, threads and whatever is needed to make the dresses. Her latest acquisition involved getting the donation of a commercial sewing machine from Sew Vac Direct. This "state of the art" sewing machine has all of the "bells and whistles" needed for production of these precious dresses.



Sharon Meehan, leader of the seamstresses, holds one of the reversible school dresses!

A Little Dab Will Do It

Life on the streets is challenging enough with little time to worry about hygiene. This is just one more struggle our clients regularly face. Thankfully DESC is often the beneficiary of "toiletry drives"! Volunteers gather our toiletry donations (travel size or larger containers of soaps, shampoos, conditioners, toothpaste and brushes, razors, deodorant and lotions) and assemble them in packs. Other items we need are washcloths, bug spray and sunblock. **Our clients never have enough of these when they are struggling for food and paying bills.** It is these little luxuries that bring a smile and a boost to their self-esteem.

The Jacksonville Bar Association, Fishweir Elementary School, Faith United Methodist Church and Lakeshore Methodist Church all held toiletry drives. When these popular items were delivered, the volunteers immediately

started stocking the toiletry bins. The word quickly spread and our clients were so grateful for these items.

When you travel, please remember DESC. The shampoo, soap and body lotion is always in demand along with deodorant, toothbrushes and toothpaste. These donations can be dropped off anytime. Once again, we would like to thank everyone who has helped us to help others in this very special way.



Bubba is on the Move Again!



*Kristin Swiercek, Tricia Todd and Elizabeth Meux
Bubba Co-Chairs*



*Jo and Ed Pratt-Dannals
Honorary Chairs*

Mark your calendar for Saturday, November 4th to celebrate "Where's Bubba?" Bubba, the Party Boss, will be on site at The Haskell Building for barbeque, bluegrass music, deejay, dancing and yes...virtual fishing. There's nothing more exciting than casting your fishing line from the stern of a boat in the Haskell lobby and watching the excitement as you reel in the big fish.

DESC is excited to announce the "Triple Threat"...Elizabeth Meux, Kristin Swiercek and Tricia Todd who are chairing this year's event. Hall-Halliburton is on board as the

Presenting Sponsor and Jo and Ed Pratt-Dannals are our honorary chairs.

This team is committed to helping those in need. "Where's Bubba?" is the biggest fundraiser for DESC. Typically, it raises 25% of our budget which last year went to help 12,187 families. That is no fish tale! This legendary fishing tournament is DESC's signature event that helps 163,746 households in Duval, Clay and Nassau counties living on the edge of poverty.



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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
- Men's work boots
- Men's large shirts and jeans
- Backpacks and Totes
- Toiletries like deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and shampoos and conditioners

You can see our updated Always Need List on our website at www.descjax.org/needs.

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Bubba's Back!
Save The Date
Saturday, Nov. 4, 2017

The Haskell Building
111 Riverside Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32202

Reception/Fishing 5:30 PM
Dinner 7PM

descjax.org/bubba

