

SPRING 2018

# NEWS FROM THE DESC

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## 'I got a job!'

One recent Wednesday, just minutes before closing, a gentleman walked into DESC and was greeted by Carolyn at the front desk.

The gentleman didn't hesitate to speak up, and with a broad smile, proclaimed, "I got a job!"



Andre gives Director of Operations, Beth Hood a hug, along with a thumbs up as he celebrates his new job.

As he was showered with congratulations, the staff learned more about his situation. His name is Andre, and at 40, he had been homeless for most of the past year. He was living at the Sulzbacher Center but had been coming to DESC for food and clothing during this difficult time in his life.

In fact, his shoes had been in such bad shape that he was thrilled when he got a "new" (gently used) pair from us. Andre said our help was what got him through the tough times.

Now gainfully employed at LCI Landscape Consultants, he asked for a bit of help. Actually, he asked if we "could show some compassion again" by giving him snacks to make a lunch for work. It turns out, Andre has to leave Sulzbacher at 5 a.m. for work and has no food until he gets back to the Center at 5 p.m.

We were happy to help with lunch and made sure to celebrate his success with hugs and photos too.

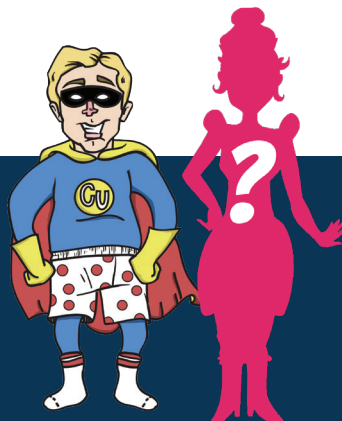
## Providing shoes means giving hope

Over the past year in the Clothing Center, we have seen a rise in the number of clients seeking work primarily in the areas of manual labor, landscaping, construction and demolition following Hurricane Irma.

Not only have we provided appropriate clothing and footwear for work, but we also have been given the opportunity to sit down for meaningful exchanges with our clients.

One of those clients is Shawn, who has had plenty of tough days in his life. For the last three years, he has been unable to work due to back issues, hernias and a melanoma.

*(continued on page 7)*



### LOOK INSIDE TO SEE WHO'S TEAMING UP WITH CAPTAIN UNDERWEAR!



## From Board President Clay Meux

After a successful 2017, the year began with the hire of a new Executive Director, David Clark. The Board of Directors hired David after a long and thoughtful search for the right person. David has brought new energy and ideas to DESC and I look forward to him leading DESC as our Executive Director. David will continue to build on a foundation which has been solidly laid by all the churches, staff, volunteers and friends who have been caring for the DESC mission for more than 30 years.

Prior to joining DESC, David worked at Children's Home Society as the Director of Development and as Regional Director of Philanthropy. David also ran his own public relations firm and worked with United Way of Northeast Florida as the Vice President of Communications. David is married and he and his wife are parents of two children.

DESC is proud to report that we fed 4,965 families, clothed 5,272 families and provided emergency financial support for 166 households. This resulted in the distribution of 109 tons of food and 126,373 items of clothing. Behind every single one of those numbers is a family which came to DESC in critical need of support.

The Board has asked David to evaluate new ways of fulfilling our mission. In the evaluation process, David identified a need to upgrade our computer system. We are in that process. We are also evaluating our safety and security measures. In addition, it has also been identified that DESC needs a vehicle to help with the pickup and deliveries of clothing and food. The vehicle needs to include a lift gate so that we will be able to haul multiple pallets of goods, food and clothing. Currently we use employee or volunteer vehicles and none of those vehicles has a lift gate. As always, we are trying to be good stewards of all the money and opportunities that are offered to DESC and at times, that means our going out to pick up certain items as opposed to having them delivered. If anyone has any thoughts or suggestions on how we can obtain a vehicle or you are willing to contribute, please contact David or me at your earliest convenience.

Lastly, we hope that you can participate in the Great Underwear Challenge that is already running online. Our event is scheduled April 24 at Mellow Mushroom in Avondale from 6 to 8 p.m. Please come celebrate DESC and help us raise money so that we can provide underwear for families in need.

## Special Thanks

- ♥ We are so grateful to the Edna Sproull Williams Foundation for continuing its annual support of DESC with a \$20,000 grant to help support our programs.
- ♥ Thank you to the Thomas M. and Irene B. Kirbo Charitable Foundation for its continued support of DESC with its most recent grant of \$20,000.
- ♥ Thank you to Carey and Brian Hepler for organizing a shoe drive around the Gate River Run. The brothers collected and donated more than 800 pairs of sneakers and shoes for our clients. We also had a great group of teen volunteers help clean and sort the shoes getting them ready to share.
- ♥ When the twice a year WeeTrade wraps up, they call DESC to share what didn't sell during the consignment event. We are very grateful to Pam Ellis and Jennifer Sheffield for their ongoing support.
- ♥ We are thankful that we were able to share Easter baskets to families coming into DESC thanks to the First United Methodist Church Acts Circle. The group donated 50 baskets along with some peanut butter, clothes and toiletries.



*Our waiting room is in bloom thanks to Art League of Jacksonville for our wonderful paintings in the lobby.*



By fulfilling Jesus' call for us to assist the poor and homeless, DESC, uplifts families and individuals in real-time crisis. Our dedicated staff and volunteers offer our neighbors a helping hand during hardship with emergency food, clothing and financial assistance.

### **We provide care with dignity.**

For more than 30 years, we have refined our process to serve thousands of individuals, almost 12,000 in 2017. Through strategic partnerships with key organizations and thoughtfully managed systems, we maximize our impact within the community while minimizing our costs.



## Princess Pantaloons joins Captain Underwear for the Great Underwear Challenge

Captain Underwear is getting help in his quest to bring new underwear and socks to the clients of DESC.

Princess Pantaloons is on the job ready to fight for dignity on behalf of the homeless and impoverished. Joining our superheroes is Salli Solow, Event Chair.

Together, they have been working to sign up Team Captains for our online fundraising drive with a goal of \$50,000! Thanks to The Hall-Halliburton Foundation, the first \$10,000 raised online will be matched dollar-for-dollar.

Salli has been volunteering with DESC for seven years leading our Facebook

page and helping in the clothing closet. She knows from experience how important new underwear and socks are to the clients we serve. With the \$50,000, we hope to give each client up to four new pairs of each.

"I hope everyone pitches in with gifts to help us hit our goal," Salli said. "Underwear and socks are a basic need that our clients cannot afford, but that will help them be healthier and live more comfortably."

The Great Underwater Challenge wraps up with a Celebration Event April 24 at Mellow Mushroom in Avondale from 6 to 8 p.m.



*Salli Solow joins our heroes as the Great Underwear Challenge Event Chair.*

## DESC introduces David Clark as new Executive Director

DESC is pleased to announce that David Clark started as the agency's new Executive Director at the beginning of the year.

"I am excited to work with such an incredible group of volunteers, staff, donors and clients in this ministry providing basic needs," David said. "It has been eye-opening and inspiring to see how much DESC accomplishes thanks to amazing volunteers and donors. It's hard to believe that in 2017, 109 tons of food and 130,000 articles of clothing came through this basement office and went back out to almost 12,000 clients."

David came to Jacksonville to work at United Way of Northeast Florida where he was Vice President of

Communications for several years in the 1990s. After opening and managing his public relations firm, he returned to mission-based work as the Development Director for Children's Home Society of Florida. David left there to work at DESC after 15 years, the last few as a regional director of philanthropy covering all of North Florida.

David earned his bachelor's in public relations from Auburn University and his master's in communication arts from The University of West Florida. He and his wife, Noeline, have twins, Madeline and Owen, in eighth grade. David attends St. Patrick's Catholic Church, and his wife and children attend First Presbyterian Church.



*David Clark started new year as new Executive Director.*



## Bubba visited Haskell with lots of fun

After weeks of asking "Where's Bubba?" and several sightings across town, Bubba was in full "swim" at the Haskell Building at DESC's Fall fundraiser on Nov. 4.

Honorary Co-Chairs, Jo and Ed Pratt-Dannals provided a warm welcome at the door for 200 guests who took part in a variety of activities from bluegrass music to a photo booth to after-dinner dancing and, of course, virtual fishing.

A highlight of the evening was DESC's new video. Riverside Presbyterian Day School generously provided support and talent to produce the video which shows the many ways DESC provides for the basic needs of food, clothing and financial assistance.

Thanks to all who supported and attended the event, DESC raised more than \$100,000! And thanks to the evening's co-chairs, Kristin Swiercek, Elizabeth Meux and Tricia Todd.

Hold your calendars for Nov. 10 for another Where's Bubba? event at the Haskell Building. More details to come.



*Left to Right - Kristin Swiercek, Elizabeth Meux and Tricia Todd receiving flowers from Board President, Clay Meux*



*Bill Cook and Alexandra Ni*



*Left to Right - Lyn Hay, Judy and Fred Woolsey, and Jack and Mary Ann Richardson*

## SPONSORS

### Fighting Hunger, Presenting Sponsors

Hall-Halliburton Foundation  
The Richard B. Salsbury Trust

### Clothing Those in Need

Jo & Ed Pratt-Dannals

### Sheltering Families

Jean & John Grant-Dooley  
Dorothy Rosenbloom

### Giving Thanks

Bettye Barnes  
Rolly & Hud Berrey  
Dan Carraher Golf  
Julie Handley  
Drs. Alfred & Katherine Harding  
Michael Harper  
Elizabeth & Clay Meux  
Rogers Towers Charitable Fund  
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Sherrie & Dr. Warner Webb

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Cavendish Partners, P.A.  
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Linda & Jim Pellot  
Mary Ann & Jack Richardson  
Al Rutland CPA, PLLC  
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### In-Kind Donors

Bold City Brewery  
Nancy Chamblin  
Cross Creek BBQ and Steakhouse  
The Dessert Brigade  
The Haskell Company  
Vic Micolucci  
Jeremy Paterno  
Jack Richardson  
Riverside Presbyterian Day School  
Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits  
Woods and Bridges



Left to Right - Lila Todd, Annie Adams, Dan Banks, Holland Gibbs, Will Allen and Janice Jordan



Left to Right - John and Harriet Lovejoy and Broward Milam



Honorary Chairs, Ed and Jo Pratt-Dannals, with the event's namesake.



## Mike and Sharon live a life of service to others

The smile comes instantly and with a bit of a chuckle.

"Because I love it," Sharon Williams says when asked why she keeps volunteering in the clothing department at DESC. "When a face lights up and someone says, 'This is exactly what I wanted,' that's what it's all about."

Sharon and her husband, Mike, have been lighting up faces for nine years as key volunteers helping match our donated clothes with the needs of the families who come to DESC. Almost every Wednesday and Friday, you can count on finding the pair who have been married 51 years in the basement of the First Presbyterian Church.

After a life of service, Mike as an ordained Presbyterian minister and Sharon as a teacher and librarian, the Williamses chose to spend retirement as they did in their careers – helping others. They selected DESC as one of their agencies because they knew Mary Spuhler, former Executive Director, and Dave Tuttle, Executive Director at Presbyterian Social Ministries. "It sort of feels like you're

part of a family," Mike says of his work with the other volunteers and staff.

Their effort requires hard work. Sharon gives her talents to the children's department filling orders, restocking shelves, helping with donations and making sure she gives the clients what they really want. Mike also helps with filling orders for the men and making sure everything is in order for a more effective operation.

"They are my rocks," said Beth Wilson, Director of Programs, referring to the pair's dependability and willingness to help year after year. She says the couple shows "a gentle and kind demeanor with the families and volunteers. Sharon is our prayer warrior sitting on the bench with anyone who needs some spiritual time."

Mike and Sharon were also spending two days a week at the Teacher Supply Depot, which recently closed. Now, they are turning their efforts toward their home community, Westminster Woods along Julington Creek.

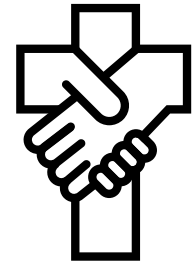
The two have a "fifth wheel" RV they use to travel extensively all over the U.S. and even Canada. They consider themselves bird watchers and bird listeners too.

They come back year after year to DESC because they love the work. But, Mike confessed that if he stopped coming, he's "afraid they'll mess up my system." Sharon said she keeps coming back because she knows "every day I'm going to make someone smile."

They agree that volunteering is critically important for them and for others who retire. They insist that when you retire, you need a plan to do something. "Nothing is better when you volunteer where it's a family affair," Mike said.

Mike and Sharon hope DESC can find even more volunteers to help. There are positions in the food and clothing programs and all around the office. Beth agrees the need for volunteers is never ending and especially critical in the summer months.

To volunteer, please email beth.hood@descjax.org.



# DESC

Downtown Ecumenical Services Council

## Volunteer Needs

Please join DESC in providing services to the homeless and impoverished in our community by helping with any of the following volunteer opportunities.

### Clothing Closet

*Monday, Wednesday, Friday*  
8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Pulling and bagging orders for clients

### Pantry

*Monday – Thursday*  
8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and 2 – 4:30 p.m.

Greet clients, prequalify them for services and assemble food bags

### Telephone

*Times Vary*

Answer primary line providing emotional support to clients as well as limited referrals

### Group Projects

- ♥ Fundraising Events on behalf of DESC
- ♥ Facility Cleanup (painting, cleaning, organizing, construction, repairs)
- ♥ Community Drives
  - ♥ Underwear & Socks
  - ♥ Diapers
  - ♥ Toiletries
  - ♥ Peanut butter and jelly
- ♥ Special Projects
- ♥ Professional Photography
- ♥ Fundraising/Event Committee(s)



## Shoes (cont.)

Shawn is waiting to hear the outcome on his application for disability, which could mean a big change in his circumstances. Until then, he remains homeless.

Being homeless means Shawn is unable to do the things he really enjoys like listening to music and playing video games. Instead, he walks "all day, every day."

Shawn says it has been more than three years since he had a new pair of shoes. Recently, he was caught in the rain and his shoes were full of holes. Receiving new clothes and shoes from

DESC means "That I don't have to walk around smelly and in shoes that are falling apart."

It is a privilege to share encouragement as many clients struggle with personal disappointment and deflation in everyday living situations. It's important that our clients leave DESC with more than some basic necessities, we want them to believe things can get better and we want them to have someone who listens and cares.

"I'd like to say my life will soon be on track," Shawn said. "Thank you."

# DESC becomes a United Way Agency

The new year brought a brand-new funding partner to DESC – United Way of Northeast Florida, which is providing \$25,000 for each of two years for our financial assistance program.

United Way  
of Northeast Florida



The increase in funding will allow DESC to increase the amount of funds we can provide families to help pay overdue utility bills and/or past due balances on rent. We can also provide deposits if that's the most critical need. The program helped 166 families last year.

DESC continues to be the number one charity for referrals from United Way's 2-1-1 referral line despite having limited funds available.

One family who recently came for help is Sandra and her three children, one of whom has severe ADHD. Unfortunately, Sandra was in an abusive relationship which recently ended in divorce. Her ex-husband no longer visits the children and sends no financial support.

Sandra works part-time at a fast food restaurant for minimum wage but is also about to start a new full-time job. Because of Jacksonville's record cold

and a poorly insulated apartment, her electric bills had just about doubled from last year, and she couldn't keep up with the increased costs that also led to being two months behind on her rent. When she came to DESC in January, her electricity had been off for two weeks. To keep warm, she and her children slept in the same bed all huddled up.

DESC's maximum amount of assistance fell far short of her needs. Stretching it a bit, DESC could help get her power reconnected but could not help with the rent. Complicating the situation, DESC couldn't pay for power if Sandra was going to be evicted.

Sandra said she had no one to turn to; no family except an elderly uncle, her friends were stretched financially and her boss had already given her a salary advance. Our team member, Nancy Chamblin, assured Sandra that if she could find a way to pay the rent, DESC would have her power turned back on by the end of the day. She left feeling helpless and hopeless.

She returned a couple hours later and was almost unrecognizable. She was standing straight, smiling and walking without a shuffle.

What we learned was that after she left DESC, Sandra walked up to her church. Her minister called her landlord and explained that

DESC could help with electricity and the church would help with rent. Together, they made arrangements to pay a portion of her rent until she could start her new job and ultimately, the landlord agreed to halt the eviction proceedings.

As often happens at DESC, there was a lot of crying, laughing and hugging.

Sandra is a shining example of how we can help each other fulfill Jesus' instruction to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and care for the emotionally imprisoned. DESC does not stand alone. There are many other agencies, churches, compassionate friends and even accommodating landlords willing to work together to care for those in need.



DESC staff members, Carolyn Rutland and Nancy Chamblin enjoy an embrace with Sandra who received financial assistance.



# DESC

Downtown Ecumenical Services Council

(904) 358-7955

[descjax.org](http://descjax.org)

[facebook.com/DESCjax](https://facebook.com/DESCjax)

[admin@descjax.org](mailto:admin@descjax.org)

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## OUR NEEDS LIST

We are always in need of the items below.

- ♥ New socks and underwear (all sizes)
- ♥ Men's large T-shirts, shorts and jeans
- ♥ Women's larger sizes
- ♥ Men's shoes
- ♥ Backpacks and totes
- ♥ Children's clothing for all elementary school age sizes
- ♥ Toiletries like deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, razors, shampoos and conditioners
- ♥ Canes/walking sticks

You can see our updated Current Needs List on our website at [www.descjax.org/current\\_needs/](http://www.descjax.org/current_needs/)

DESIGN SERVICES BY

  
elva  
marketing  
[elvamarketing.com](http://elvamarketing.com)



DESC, Captain Underwear and Princess Pantaloons need your help to provide clean underwear and socks to local families in crisis.

**Mellow Mushroom in Avondale**  
April 24, 6-8 p.m.

[greatunderwearchallenge.com](http://greatunderwearchallenge.com)