

SPRING 2019

# NEWS FROM THE DESC

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## Thankful to be alive

Dustin has packed a lot of life experiences and challenges into his 22 years. And, despite how hard those years have been, he remains thankful to God to be alive.

The staff and volunteers at DESC met Dustin recently when he visited our Clothing Center.



Dustin stays faithful and thankful while facing adversity.

Growing up in the Macclenny area, Dustin was made fun of because he has a club foot resulting in legs of two different lengths. Those heartbreaking experiences shaped his life, but he says he no longer cares what others think.

When his family moved to Indiana, Dustin went along too. But, eventually, he decided it would be best to part company, so he boarded a Greyhound bus back to Jacksonville. And, he has been homeless ever since.

Over that time, Dustin has spent five straight months outside and tried various shelters, but he didn't like the feeling of having to sleep with "one eye open."

Dustin's first visit to DESC was in August, and he returned six months later. Both times he received several items of clothing including pants, shirts, underwear and more. On this visit, Dustin was able to get a new pair of shoes too.

Dustin gets along day-to-day eating at the shelters, using the telephones and the Wi-Fi at the library and enjoying the warmer weather.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Layoff leads to emergency needs

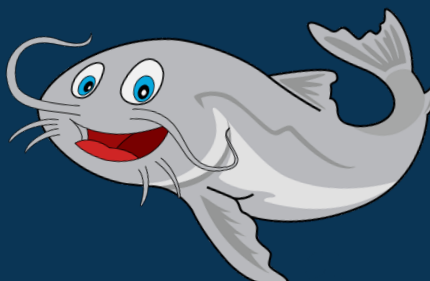
After a great holiday with his girlfriend and three children, Darnell got the bad news that he was laid off when his employer, a delivery company, lost a major contract.

Now, Darnell and his family are on an unexpected and challenging journey that has led them to places they never expected to go.

Darnell was employed all last year, so he and his girlfriend and their children, including a newborn, moved into a house in a safe neighborhood. But with his girlfriend out on maternity leave, the loss of Darnell's job meant the family had entered into a full-fledged emergency.

Darnell's girlfriend has returned to work but hasn't yet received a paycheck. With no income, their family is struggling to keep it all together and their bills up-to-date.

*Continued on Page 3*



## For highlights from Where's Bubba?

*Turn to Page 6-7*



## From Board President Rolly Berrey

As we closed out 2018, evidence of the rising need for services was confirmed in our final tally of the year. We served more than 13,500 families in all our programs.

Put into percentage growth, DESC served 15 percent more in 2018. Driving that growth was primarily our Food Pantry, which means we distributed more than 116 tons. It means our lobby was that much busier every day. And it means that our volunteers and staff were pressed to keep up the pace with that many more clients.

For the first part of 2019, the numbers are continuing the upward trend with an increase of more than 20 percent so far suggesting another year of staggering numbers. Thankfully, our volunteers and staff stepped up to tackle the challenges last year, and they're ready to do so again for 2019.

Gratefully, we had very successful events in 2018. Both the Great Underwear Challenge and Where's Bubba? events helped offset the rising

costs (see pages 6 and 7 for more details). But two events put a strain on our small army of volunteers and staff and lead to potential duplicate requests as we seek support from our incredibly generous donors. To better manage those challenges, DESC is streamlining our events for 2019.

To that end, DESC will host one fundraiser this year. We believe a singular event in the fall will make it easier to maintain the services for our families and honor the amazing work and contributions of volunteers, staff and donors. Be on the lookout for more details soon!

DESC's growth this past year is one of many aspects that the DESC Board of Directors and staff leadership are examining as we embark on our latest strategic planning process. Thanks to a grant from The Community Foundation, we are on our way to crystalizing a vision for the next few years.

This is an exciting process and is renewing the faith and commitment of the Board of Directors to fulfill God's call to help the poor. We will continue to meet to build consensus and will share that with all of you once ready. I am proud that each Board member is bringing his or her talents and dedication to ensure success for families for years to come.

Thank you to all reading this newsletter and who support DESC. We are fortunate to have you as members of the DESC family.



Laurie Price (front, left) joins the Board of Directors and staff at the second strategic planning session.

## Thankful (cont.)

"I just love the outdoors, except for when it's really cold," he said. Currently, he sleeps with a group of people he has come to trust and feels comfortable with under a bridge.

Dustin's club foot has had a long-lasting impact. Both of his knees are misshapen, and he experiences significant pain in his legs, knees, hips and spine, when walking and even resting. He has never had the benefit of special shoes, nor the money for corrective surgeries. He often wakes in the middle of the night in tears from pain and frustration. He has been unable to get disability assistance because of problems relating to obtaining medical records.

"Even though I'm only 22, I have the mindset of a 40-year-old man," Dustin said. "Most people haven't been through half as much as I have."

Despite a situation that could make many people sad or angry, Dustin isn't either of those things. In fact, he appears upbeat and faithful. It's his personality that draws people in and makes it easy to talk to him.

When asked how he stays so positive, Dustin exclaimed, "A lot of people didn't wake up this morning. I'm alive. God wakes me up every morning and I am thankful! I thank him that He gave me legs, and I am able to walk with them."



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

### Families receive care with dignity.

Thanks to extremely generous donors, more than 13,500 families found hope in 2018. Through strategic partnerships with key organizations and thoughtfully managed systems, we maximize our impact within the community while minimizing our costs.

# DESC team grows

With such a small staff, DESC has been blessed to increase our labor force without increasing our costs.

The National Caucus & Center on Black Aging, Inc. (NCBA) has been a partner of DESC for a few years, and DESC currently has two wonderful employees assigned to our team – Clifford Turner and Robert Jones. Both Clifford and Robert help in all aspects of our work but are focused on our Food Pantry doing stock, inventory and upkeep. They each work 20 hours a week at DESC but are paid by the NCBA.

In addition, DESC welcomed its first public relations intern this semester – Kady Smaglis. Kady is helping all over the organization but her main concentration is media relations, social media and community outreach. She is a senior studying public relations at the University of North Florida.

All three are wonderful with the families who come in for assistance. Clifford often works a window in the Food Pantry and both he and Robert help families carry out the food they just received. Kady conducted surveys



*(From left to right) Robert Jones, Kady Smaglis and Clifford Turner take a break from working hard to help families in need.*

with the families in preparation for our strategic planning and is helping write testimonials to share with our program partners.

“We are so happy to have Clifford, Robert and Kady on our team,” said David Clark, Executive Director. “All three help DESC meet increased demand, but equally important, they fit in with our team and are such wonderful people.”

The three join a team of one full-time Executive Director and five part-time staff members.

## Layoff (cont.)

Several times Darnell has taken the two older children to eat dinner at the Sulzbacher Center, and he has visited several food banks to keep groceries in the house. Darnell struggles with his new role – he has always been the person in his family that others came to for help. That identity crisis is keeping him from asking his family for loans because he wants them to see him as self-sufficient.



*Darnell worked with Nancy Chamblin to finalize a plan for financial assistance.*

Darnell’s landlord said she wants to help. She describes the family as nice and says they have usually paid the rent on time. She doesn’t want to evict them and feels that Darnell will “make good” on his debts.

The landlord agreed to accept DESC’s financial support for this month and will work with Darnell on the remainder owed. To show she’s committed to the family, the landlord also agreed to forgive the late fees that have accumulated.

The good news is that Darnell has a couple of delivery job possibilities on the horizon. He is confident that one of those jobs will be his soon, and he promised to come back to show DESC his paystub.

# Special Thanks

- ♥ We are so grateful for all our generous donors. Some recent grants include gifts from the Herb and Ann Rowe Charitable Foundation, The Lord’s Foundation, Edna Sproull Williams Foundation, The Community Foundation, Cavan Family Foundation, CW & Dorothy G. Love Foundation and The Woman’s Club of Jacksonville. Thank you all so much!
- ♥ Thank you to the employees at Deloitte who collected toiletries for us to share with families. We also appreciate the Walmart gift card that we used to buy more toothbrushes!
- ♥ We thank the employees at Miller Electric Company who pitched in for a huge food drive in the fall. The extra food via United Way of Northeast Florida was critically needed to meet increased demand.
- ♥ Thanks again to United Way for sharing extra resources during the MLK Week of Service. We loved having helpful volunteers from TD Bank and the hundreds of toiletry kits assembled and donated by the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority.
- ♥ Thank you to Lake Shore Presbyterian Church for hosting a “Souper Bowl Sunday” and collecting soup. Also, the Alive Credit Union held a clothing drive and the Garden Club of Jacksonville hosted a “garage” sale and sent the leftover clothing to DESC.
- ♥ We’d like to thank the Riverside Avenue Christian Church for all of its support and sharing your lovely space for our strategic planning meetings. The congregants also hosted a “Souper Bowl Sunday” collecting much-needed funds for DESC. Thanks, too, for having a “love boat” to collect items to help families in need.



*Riverside Avenue Christian Church’s “love boat” is full again with items for DESC.*

# Life challenges create emergency needs



*Becky embraces Beth Wilson as a sign of appreciation for the support she received at DESC.*

On an extremely busy Thursday in February, Becky\* came back to DESC for just her third time ever.

Each trip to DESC has been marked by serious life challenges that put Becky dangerously on the edge of catastrophe.

On this visit, Becky opened up about her life and the obstacles she's faced over the past few years. Her first visit to DESC was in 2016, after Becky's husband passed away. Alone, and grieving, Becky had to manage all the finances alone for the first time in her life. And, it wasn't easy. As she fell farther behind, she reached out to DESC for financial assistance for her overdue electric bill. While meeting with the case manager, Becky also received groceries to help stretch her limited income a little more.

Becky came in again last year for food assistance after chronic problems with eye pressure caused temporary vision loss. As a result of the blindness, Becky ended up in the hospital for most of the second half of 2018.

Back home, and alone, Becky must depend on others to get around town. Add to that her ongoing battles

*\* name changed at client's request.*

with glaucoma, diabetes, hypertension, congestive heart failure and asthma, and you can understand how stressful life has been for Becky.

So now, after several agonizing days worried about paying her medical bills while staying on top of all of the house bills and maintenance, Becky admitted that some assistance with food could help her get back on her feet.

"I am beyond grateful for DESC and the help in a tough time," Becky said. "DESC has always been compassionate and kind towards me and the other customers."

But it's clear Becky is a fighter, willing to do whatever it takes to overcome her current struggles. This month, 20 years ago, Becky suffered an aneurism and was rushed into surgery.

The doctor told Becky that she would need speech and physical therapy after surgery. However, Becky defied the odds and didn't need either therapy, as she recovered her full range of speech and motion after the operation. She believes her faith in God and prayers saw her through in good health.

It's clear that the same faith and prayers are still helping Becky today.

DESC's Food Pantry assists thousands of families every year with emergency groceries. The four to five days of food helps families stretch dollars allowing them to make ends meet while they work with the affects of material poverty, food insecurity and unemployment or underemployment.

# Amazing partners

The Food Pantry at DESC would not exist without an expansive group of partners, donors and volunteers. We are grateful for all who are committed to tackle food insecurity in our community and glad to be a resource for families struggling with hunger.

Our program is thankful for the generosity of the Lucy Gooding Charitable Foundation Trust, which provides significant funding along with many other private donors.

Our food partners keep the supplies coming either for free or at greatly reduced costs. DESC is proud of the partnership with Feeding Northeast Florida and Farm Share (which includes the distribution of USDA food).

We also work with Waste Not Want Not, Inc. and Forgotten Fruit.

Others host food drives too, including Riverside Presbyterian Day School, Miller Electric Company, the Duval Retired Teachers Association and many, many more.

And, of course, there is a small army we call the Food Acquisition Team led by Judy Davis. This group brings in more than 116 tons of food to DESC and then sorts and redistributes to our families.



# How to host a drive to help families

We would love it if your company, church, neighborhood, family or civic organization wants to host a food drive.

First, call us at 359-0809 to let us know your interest. We can tell you what our greatest need is at that time. For

example, sometimes a soup drive is perfect for us, but other times it may be peanut butter and jelly. Of course, we are happy to accept any food donations.

We'd also love to help promote your effort using our Facebook page. You

can always promote it yourself and add the hashtag #DESCJax or tag @DESC.

Some other options for drives include diapers, toiletries, shoes, feminine products, underwear or socks.

# One, big event coming fall 2019

DESC events had a great year in 2018, so you may be wondering why change things.

The answer is to simply do the best we can to steward our donors' gifts as well as staff and volunteer's time.

"We love both the 'Great' event and the 'Where's Bubba?' event," said Al Rutland, DESC Fundraising Chair. "But to avoid duplication of effort and multiple requests for help, we feel we can streamline the process for all involved and create one, big, exciting event for 2019."



Board members and other volunteers are joining with the staff and donors to explore the best way to continue putting the "fun" in the DESC fundraiser. A streamlined approach will allow volunteers and staff to stay focused on the real work of DESC – helping families in need. And, it will allow for the same level of excitement DESC supporters have enjoyed for years – even if it's been reimagined.

To that end, DESC will hold one fundraising event later in the fall. The singular event will still carry the expectation to be a major contributor to the overall agency budget.

If you are interested in planning the event or sponsoring, please call David Clark at 904-704-4819. Stay tuned for more details.



## Urban Rest Stop opens for homeless

A partnership of the City of Jacksonville, Sulzbacher Center, Mental Health Resource Center (MHRC) and several other homeless services, including DESC, joined together for the grand opening of the new Urban Rest Stop on Valentine's Day.

The new area at the Sulzbacher Center offers relief for the homeless from the outside elements and provides showers and laundry facilities. Additionally, those coming to the Urban Rest Stop can visit MHRC to access critical services such as arranging for mental health counseling and getting IDs.

DESC staff and volunteers took a field trip a few days after the opening to see the new facilities and to better understand how to help clients looking for assistance.

"The new Urban Rest Stop offers wonderful services for those living on the street," said Beth Wilson, DESC Director of Programs. "We will be encouraging our clients to take advantage of all of the services available to them through the new center."

While at the Urban Rest Stop, guests can visit the other services provided

by Sulzbacher including health care and dental services as well as the employment services of Goodwill. Of course, they can also eat lunch and dinner.

"We will continue to work with the Mayor's Downtown Homelessness Prevention Task Force to help bring services to this vulnerable population," said David Clark, DESC Executive Director. "I'm glad DESC has a seat at the table as we explore the best approach to care for our neighbors in need."



*Left to Right – Christian, Peter, Kelly and Fran Moulder*



*Left to Right – Al Rutland, Shay Hill, David Clark, Julie Handley and Vince and Linda Ferrigno*

## Where's Bubba? was the BIG CATCH

There was virtual splishing and splashing mixed with large servings of generosity. When you weigh all the big catches from the event, Downtown Ecumenical Services Council's "Where's Bubba?" event, on November 17, was the biggest one ever raising more than \$125,000!

Thanks to our Honorary Chairs, Ron and Mary Littlepage, and all of the couples on our Host Committee, returning and new sponsors showed their commitment to helping families in need. Thanks to Julie Handley, event chair, for her tireless efforts to pull off another smashing success.



*Honorary Chairs,  
Ron and Mary Littlepage*



*Jessie and Tim Hedrick*



*WJXT Channel 4 was well represented by  
Cary Johnson, Corley Peel (emcee) and  
Mai and Lani Redington*

## PRESENTING SPONSORS

**H  
H**  
HALL-HALLIBURTON  
FOUNDATION

*Mary  
Virginia  
Terry*



*Mary Virginia Terry showing off her handful of flashing rings*



*Mary Alice Phelan, Jake Godbold and Martha Barrett*



*Bobby Martin and Lesley Roberts*



*Charlie and Ellen Reid dressed up to represent our work boots and financial assistance programs*



*Left to Right – Jeanne Shober, Pat Gurley and Julianne Stratmann enjoyed the dancing*

### SHELTERING FAMILIES

A DESC Angel  
Mrs. Russell B. Newton, Jr.  
Ed & Jo Pratt-Dannals  
Dorothy Rosenbloom

### PROVIDING WARMTH

Hud & Rolly Berrey  
John & Jean Grant-Dooley  
Ron & Mary Littlepage

### GIVING THANKS

Bettye Barnes  
A Friend of DESC  
Bob & Bobbie Gittings  
Hairpeace  
Julie Handley  
Tim & Jessie Hedrick  
Clay & Elizabeth Meux  
Rogers Towers Foundation  
Pamela Y. Paul  
Mal & Lani Redington  
Al Rutland CPA, PLLC  
Delores Barr Weaver Fund  
Dr. Warner & Sherrie Webb

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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)



## Volunteers make it work

DESC could not exist without our wonderful volunteers! We have an amazing army of volunteers including our Board of Directors, Food Pantry coordinators, Food Acquisition Team, Clothing Center helpers, Sewing Hope, prayer volunteers and volunteer receptionists.

If you're interested in learning more, please call Beth Hood at 904-358-3935.

