



611 Business Park Blvd., Suite 101
Winter Garden, FL 34787

FALL 2021



MOVING Forward



FALL 2021



He was once blind...



but now can see!



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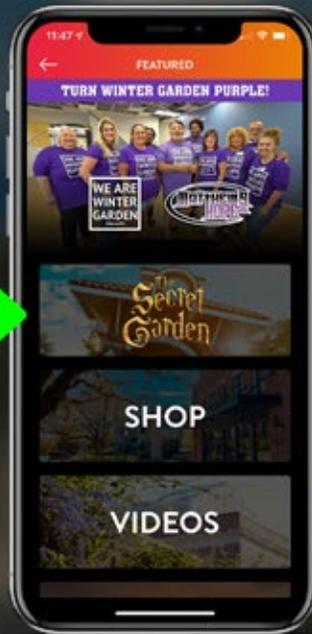
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MISSION STATEMENT

Matthew's Hope fosters the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of the homeless men, women and children of our community by meeting basic needs, developing skills and restoring dignity and independence.



COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARNIVAL

By Scott Billue

We are blessed to live in a community that is very generous during the holiday season. Churches, businesses, civic groups, schools, families, etc., all desire to provide for those less fortunate. This is admirable yet can be challenging as well since quite often we replicate our efforts. One family may end up with a huge Christmas while another may end up with almost nothing. This can also be a waste of precious resources, especially in these uncertain times.

In my early days of pastoring, I recall going door-to-door checking on people asking for help only to discover that in many of the homes I was visiting, there was an over-abundance of donated Christmas toys. Many weren't age appropriate and, more importantly, weren't what the child truly desired to receive from Santa. (Yes, I do believe!) Even more significantly, I real-

ized we were enabling a behavior across the income and structurally challenged community that others would provide for them regardless of their personal commitment to the process. I believe this not only creates a behavior we are looking to discourage but this also strips one of the dignity of personally providing a holiday experience for their child or family.

I knew there had to be a better approach. One that would allow for the generosity of the community to host a beautiful holiday experience yet sustain the dignity of those receiving that generosity. One that would speak to the hearts of the givers and receivers and, most importantly, bring the joy of Christmas and Santa Claus to children. Hence the Community Christmas Carnival. This was a way for us to come together as a community and serve not only

Matthew's Hope families, but all those who needed our support. On a very practical level, doing this together as a community allows us to leverage our resources. Together we can do more than any one of us can do alone.

The Community Christmas Carnival is a joyous and fun filled event. Kids experience an old-time carnival-like atmosphere, playing games and winning prizes while snacking on delicious carnival themed foods. Churches, businesses, civic groups, clubs, schools, families, etc., set up carnivals booths and entertain the children while they await the arrival of Santa and Mrs. Claus on their "sleigh," courtesy of the Winter Garden Fire Department. The jolly couple will head into the Matthew's Hope Outreach Center, where the children will be escorted by an "elf" through a maze of donated toys. This very attentive elf

notes what items are of interest to the child and carefully listens to their conversation with Santa. Their hopes and desires are captured just as if they were visiting with the jolly old man at the mall!

To keep the spirit and tradition of Christmas alive, adults return after the Carnival and select toys for their children using the list prepared by the elves. They are provided a budget, wrapping paper and a selection of ribbons and bows. The parent has control over what items are selected and the presentation of the gift. A community fellowship is established, and dignity is maintained. It is an amazing experience.

To learn more about the Community Christmas Carnival contact Sharlene@matthewshopeministries.org or call 407-905-9500.





Fall brings its own unique brand of anticipation to Matthew's Hope. Temperatures become a bit more livable as the souls we serve receive a much-needed

break from the hot, humid, rainy season. We are excited to be able to bring back our annual fundraiser—The Harvest of Hope Garden Party—which is just a great and fun event! The table themes and costuming allow for some unexpected surprises, extending the merriment of the evening's purpose. We are also excited to bring back our Community Christmas Carnival which was also canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic. This year both events promise to be better than ever!

This issue of Moving Forward is one of my favorites as we get the opportunity to celebrate our friend Hector. A true success story

of the ministry, Hector represents why we do what we do. As busy and distracted as I have often found myself during this pandemic with just trying to keep our doors open, Hector's story has grounded me, reminding me of our purpose and to re-embrace our mission in moving people forward toward a life of independence and self-sustainability. The success of Matthew's Hope has largely been due to always embracing the understanding that "success" can look vastly different for each person we have the God given privilege of working with, but this one, this one is truly special.

This issue also features the fruition of my longtime dream of a Matthew's Hope Community Medical Home. Since day one nearly 12 years ago, I have been praying, dreaming, and scheming on how we as a ministry could see those we care for be able to receive a better continuum of care than what has been available in our community. For decades Homeless persons have been denied equal ac-

cess to medical care and have suffered significant healthcare inequities. However, through the relentless commitment of our staff, and the unwavering support of our donors and partners, we have established this Medical Home. I am proud of what a small team with a powerful backing has been able to create and I hope you will enjoy learning about this new venture. We strive to do all things with excellence, and I think you will agree, we are doing that once again in our approach to caring for the least of these.

Many blessings to you as we enter these final weeks of 2021.



SEEING IS BELIEVING

By Marc Jablon

When I decided to write the story about Hector, I quickly realized the story was about more than just a blind homeless man's journey. Hector was forced to live on the streets with numerous illnesses including advanced glaucoma which required cataract surgery to cure his blindness.

The real story is about the team at Matthew's Hope who rallied together to give Hector the love and support which helped him go from darkness to light. The team is led by Scott Billue, the CEO of Matthew's Hope Ministries, who despite being exhausted from running a homeless ministry that services thousands of homeless guests, Scott took the time to give Hector the tough love necessary for him to get the surgery.

Hector refused to go to the doctor's office to treat the open wounds on his feet that were infected.

Scott said, "Hector, I'll make it real easy for you. You can take over your medical care from here and by the way you're not going to get your eye surgery because if that poison goes through your system, you're going to lose your leg".

At that point Hector said, "OK Pastor Scott, I'll go". When Hector got to the hospital, they said if the infection went another day without being treated, it could have cost Hector his leg and perhaps his life. As a result of Scott's persistence and tough love, Hector not only has his leg, but can now see with 20/50 vision.

Hector's story is about Dr. Gupta who is volunteering his services to Matthew's Hope in his retirement. In his first two weeks he heard story after story that would "break his heart, he was either very angry or crying".

Getting help for Hector was no easy task. Dr. Gupta went to two different organizations which wanted to get Hector's "stimulus check" for outpatient work before paying for his cataract surgery.

Finally, Dr. Gupta found a caring doctor through his connections with Advent Health CHIP committee. Dr. Wang, of the Florida Eye Institute, agreed to perform surgery without any cost. Thanks to Dr. Gupta and Dr. Wang, there were no physicians' fees, no facility charge, and no anesthesia charges.

Daniel, another dedicated staff member at Matthew's Hope, has been assisting Hector for the last 18 months. Daniel has been transporting Hector to and from where he's been living on the streets. He helps him on and off the bus. Daniel cares for Hector like family. Hector calls Daniel "My Son". It is heartwarming to see their bond.

"This is a relationship that was built by a man who couldn't see anything, and by another man who didn't care (that he couldn't see). All he cared about was how could I care for him and love him as Christ loves him" stated Scott Billue.

The story continues with Pastor Frankie. Pastor Frankie would help bath Hector. Hector couldn't see, reach for his clothes, find the soap. We can only imagine the level of trust and compassion that is required for one adult male to allow another to wash him. They joked, "Hector you can now see who's been washing your butt".

Nurse Linda was responsible for coordinating the care. Linda arranged transportation to and from doctor appointments, got Hector his prescription drugs and eye drops. Hector got admitted to a rehab facility to take care of his





other medical conditions before surgery could be done. Hector stayed at the rehab facility for a month.

“I just wanted to give Hector a hug” Linda said.

Hector’s surgery was done successfully on one eye. His vision was restored and now he can walk and do daily routines without assistance. Hector is planning on cooking Chinese food for Matthew’s Hope.

For months, I’ve been hearing about Hector’s story from the team at Matthew’s Hope. It didn’t matter whether I was speaking with Scott, Nancy, Shelly, or Sharlene, our conversation somehow ended with Hector and his journey. I knew our team at Minion Media Group had to cover the story.

So many people look at Matthew’s Hope as “a place to drop off donations”. A place to drop off cans of food and used clothing. Unfortunately, beyond “it’s the right thing to do”, they don’t know why. In November, they will be having their Garden Party. This Matthew’s Hope event is lots of fun and another opportunity for us to make the much needed donations to benefit the

thousands of homeless men and women in our community. Hector’s story is our “Why”.

On the day Minion Media came to film Hector’s first meeting with the Matthew’s Hope staff since he regained his vision, I witnessed Scott get very emotional. As the tears rolled down his cheek, he said “I feel like I can finally come up for air. It’s like I’ve been holding my breath for the last year and a half”.

As a small business consultant for more than 20 years, I’ve seen that emotion before. I knew Scott’s wave of emotion was not just about Hector. It was about the thousands of “Hectors”. It was about the daily pressures of running a homeless ministry during COVID...and yes the one moment where Scott was able to witness his whole team come together and help a blind man see. So when Hector says “I see you Pastor Scott”, their is a realization that his many sleepless nights are worth it. The team at Matthew’s Hope continues to amaze me every day. If you haven’t had the opportunity to take a tour, you must. It will change your life. Each homeless guest at Matthew’s Hope has a story, we just have to be willing to open our eyes and see it.

WHAT IS A LEAD ADVOCATE?

By Nancy Deskins



ANDREA PUMAR

The Lead Advocate role at Matthew's Hope is a foundational position for the success of our ministry. It is the Lead Advocate's responsibility to formally establish the Guest relationship within the ministry. This means that the Advocate engages to understand what drove the Guest into homelessness. This is not always an easy discussion and one that must be managed with care and respect.

Matthew's Hope is blessed to have Andrea Pumar as our Lead Advocate. Andrea came to our ministry after a position as a sign language interpreter just prior to six years of service in the Navy as an air traffic controller. After her Naval career, Andrea transitioned into a role as a 911 call-taker/dispatcher. This unique job experience positioned her an ideal candidate as an Advocate at Matthew's Hope!

Andrea's role is challenging. Beyond understanding what it was that drove the Guest into homelessness, Andrea assists the Guests in creating a plan that helps to move them forward. She helps them to set realistic, attainable goals, monitors progress and holds the Guests accountable to those goals. "Guests have to want to succeed. They need to want it for themselves---even more than I want it for them," says Andrea.

And yes, sometimes there is disappointment. "Not everyone succeeds to a life of full independence and self-sustainability," says Andrea, "but I know they are better for having engaged the ministry. They may have received their identification, food stamps, a phone or even clean clothing and hygiene. For some that is monumental."

"At Matthew's Hope, we meet people where they are in life, understand their pain and vices and create the opportunity for them to change their situation," says Scott Billue. "Andrea has exactly the right personality for this position. She requires that each Guest be accountable for their actions but couples that demand with a kind heart."

Recently, Matthew's Hope also appointed Sharlene Dewitz to the position of Mobile Advocate in addition to her Community Relations responsibilities. Sharlene is the liaison between the Guests in the field and the Outreach Center in Winter Garden. A significant aspect of her position involves identifying the newly homeless persons in our community. Lately she has led the expansion of our Mobile Team into Apopka which is a community experiencing an explosion of homeless persons.

"I am excited to have Shar-

lene in this new role," Scott Billue said. "She truly has a heart for service and an uncanny ability to connect with the homeless population. She is able to build trust and help assist in the initial steps to move them forward into a life of independence and sustainability."

Dewitz's legacy of service began as President of Just 1 Book, a non-profit that ensured every child had "a book in hand and a smile on their face." She served as President of East Orange Kiwanis and Lieutenant Governor of Division 10 Florida Kiwanis. She was Co-Chair of the Kiwanis Centennial Playground project and District Chair for Just 1 Book Florida Kiwanis, a state-wide project.

"I am honored and excited to have the opportunity to work alongside Scott as our ministry grows. The need is great, and I love the hands-on aspect of my new role," Dewitz said. "There has not been a day in several months that the Mobile Team hasn't identified some new soul in need."

At Matthew's Hope, the Advocate role is a trust-based position and be it at our facility or on the mobile team, it takes unique skills to build that trust for the betterment of our Guests.



SHARLENE DEWITZ

ASK PASTOR SCOTT



Q. Why don't you take Government funds? Isn't there a lot of money available and aren't you just making it harder for you to stay open especially during the pandemic?

A. Yes, there is funding available for organizations that serve the homeless but more often than not, those funds are very restricted in how we go about our mission and the contracts require onerous reporting. We are a small ministry with a large impact. The cost/benefit of hiring resources to manage government grants is simply not reasonable for an organization of our size but it is something we will consider as we continue to grow. An interesting aspect of the decision to be 100% donor supported is that when the pandemic hit, Matthew's Hope was able to quickly pivot and continue to serve our community. Many organizations with restricted government funds were not able to be as nimble. They could not shift funds to support mobile efforts as we did and for many, they were unable to continue to operate.

Facebook Live Every Friday @ 1:00pm



EXPERIENCING JOY

By Shelley Bradford, Executive Director

This ministry is just plain hard. We see things. We experience things no “regular” people get to experience. It’s humbling. It’s overwhelming. It’s sad and can sometimes be hurtful. Especially when you look someone in the eyes and the hurt you see looking back at you is something you can’t fix on the spot. Which is hard when you are a “fixer.” Yet, ironically, it’s joyful. In our last issue, I shared what brought me to Matthew’s Hope. In this issue I’d like to share what keeps me here.

It’s the joy.

I know that may seem weird, but I find joy daily in my job as Executive Director. I feel the joy with those I encounter—the donors, volunteers, employees but,

most especially, our homeless guests. For every stereotypical homeless person one envisions, I encounter tens of grateful souls who are thankful and appreciative of the services we offer. I see the impact and yes, the joy, we bring to others. I experience it daily. If someone walks away any day better than they were when they came, it’s a good day.

Label me a “weirdo” or overly sentimental, but for all the work we do with the limited resources we have, I find joy at the end of every day. What a gift! So, call me a weirdo for finding joy amongst the homeless. I’m okay with that, because I believe I was made for this, it is in my DNA! I challenge you to experience that weird joy too.





SHANNON, A NEW BEGINNING

By Scott Billue



To persevere is to continue in a course of action even in the face of difficulty or with little or no prospect of success.

That definition describes the journey of Shannon at Matthew's Hope Ministries. When I met Shannon, she was but a shadow of the vibrant and engaging woman she is today. Despite her commitment to climb out of the pit of addiction, Shannon was withdrawn, quiet, and rarely made eye contact or smiled. Her journey has been lengthy and spattered with challenges. At times Shannon fought the structure of our Moving Forward program. She sometimes battled her

advisors (I am pretty sure that on occasion, she even hated me a bit). There were times too that when Shannon tried to move forward, she was pushed back, blocked by her past. But her journey has been nothing short of inspirational. Shannon persevered. She continued to stay focused even when success seemed against all odds with little prospect of success. However, Shannon persevered. She kept driving forward and I am excited to share that not only has she recently graduated from our Moving Forward program, I asked her to join our staff. In a year full of so many challenges, her success has brought me great personal joy as

I watched her battle, fight the good fight, and blossom into an incredible young lady. The icing on the cake was when, with tear filled eyes, I had the privilege of presenting her with her staff shirt. That is what will make you get up, keep fighting, and do it all over again!

Shannon has only started this next chapter of her life and I cannot wait to see what she will accomplish next. The remainder of her story has yet to be told. Shannon, we celebrate you!



IN MY OWN WORDS

By Shannon Mickler

My journey has been long and difficult. It includes many things of which I am not particularly proud. What it also includes are numerous examples of how I have turned my life around and continue to move forward.

My story, like so many others, began as a child in a single parent home. My mother struggled to be able to provide for her three children. We lived in poverty. I dropped out of high school and got a job to help contribute to the family. I married at 16 and had three children by the time I was 23. My husband left me, and life got exponentially harder. Regardless I was able to get my GED and eventually begin college.

In 2014, during my first semester, with the stress of having a full-time job, three children and schoolwork to maintain, I fell hard into addiction. I spiraled downward. Fast. I soon stopped going to school. I lost my job and house and custody of my children. I was homeless for several years. I also accumulated significant medical bills. I wallowed in addiction and self-pity but eventually realized that there had to be more to life than what I was experiencing. I had lost everything.

I made a decision to get clean and sober. Even though I was rejected from multiple treatment programs, I found my way to Alcoholics Anonymous. I completed 90 meetings in 90

days. I got a sponsor and continue to this day to work the steps in my day-to-day life. I also got a counselor to help me cope with life and to dig deeper to the route of my internal issues.

Today I am a different person. I'm a new person. I live independently. I maintain a full-time job. I am active in a ministry that helps the homeless. I have worked my way out of debt. I have rebuilt my relationship with my children. I am confident that I will be able to ensure a positive future for my children and me.

One day I hope to receive my college degree. Not a single person in my family has ever completed high school let alone attend college. I want to be able to make my mother and children

proud. I want to break the cycle. I don't want to be just another statistic. I believe in the importance of education and a good foundation for later on in life. I want to be able to instill that in my children and have them do the same for theirs and theirs after, as well. I want to be successful in life. I will be successful in life. I am determined.

I believe people who have a "harder" home life, or "colorful back story" try harder. It's not always easy. Small attainable goals are key for me. I work for my recovery every day. I made it out of homelessness. I strive to be a better mom tomorrow than I was yesterday. I will persevere!!!



HOPE IN ACTION IMAGES



VALUE ADDED VOLUNTEERS

By Nancy Deskins

Nobody ever really wants to coordinate volunteers. Why? Because for the most part they are fickle. They want to do what they want to do, when they want to do it, and be celebrated because they did it.

Or at least that was my thought when I was asked to coordinate volunteers at the ministry. Ugh!!

But Matthew's Hope is different. We embrace volunteers differently. First, we get it. We are working professionals with families and lives and other commitments. We understand the desire to serve doesn't always equate to the ability to serve due to all the other demands of life. Then there's the COVID issue. That complicates everything. So, what do we do?

We embrace the reality of life. We embrace the impacts of COVID. We strive to communicate that volunteering and positive impact doesn't require physical, on-site presence.

So, what can one do? Plenty!!

You can make a difference in numerous ways. Let's discuss the physical, on-site opportunities

first. Most activities occur at the 611 Business Park Blvd. location. These are our main offices. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday we are prepping for our Tuesday and Thursday Outreach days by sorting donations, stocking our pantry, cleaning, and doing the "heavy lifting" of our operations. This is the non-glamorous yet desperately needed days for volunteers to support. Without volunteers on these days, Outreach is impossible. Tuesdays and Thursdays are Outreach days. These are fast-paced, intense days during which we serve our homeless guests. Yes, it's gratifying to serve the homeless directly, but it can be challenging and raw. It's also selfishly satisfying because you reap the immediate impact of your experience. There's nothing wrong with that. In fact, it can be amazing. For others it can be off putting. Only through experiencing both can one decide what is best for them.

Another option is to volunteer at the Matthew's Hope Chest Store and Boutique. If you have great retail and people experience, we'd love your support! And even if you don't have that experience, well—we'd still love

your support! This outlet is where we feature the fine work of our homeless artisans. Every penny of sales returns to the Ministry. You can make a difference and be the face of Matthew's Hope to the community. That's powerful!

So, what can you do if you can't be on site? What if your kid needs Bright Futures or volunteer hours? What if you lead a crazy life yet still want to give back?

WE HAVE OPTIONS!

Time and situation challenged folks are some of my favorite volunteers. They are trying to figure out how to make it all work. Having been that person in the past, I'm completely committed to helping this community of people be successful volunteers. How great is that?

At Matthew's Hope we will figure out how to tailor a volunteer experience that will provide positive impact to the ministry and be attainable for the "average" volunteer. For instance, a quarter drive is a wholly do-able activity for young people. We use quarters to do laundry for homeless persons. Every quarter counts! Other ideas include small food or hygiene drives.

Love to bake? Our homeless guests love homemade cookies or breads. Your baking passion can be an impactful volunteering effort! My absolute favorite area of opportunity involves the parents of high school children. Let's face it. High school boys grow fast, and their clothes are barely worn before they are into the next size. Our homeless men are generally thin from malnutrition. The waist sizes we need most are 28-32. In my experience, those clothes are likely on the floor of the average teen in our community. Do a drive! Collect those clothes! It's simple yet powerful to our ministry.

These are only a few ideas. At Matthew's Hope we pride ourselves in tailoring our services to support our homeless guests. Our approach is the same with our volunteers. If you want to help us, we will figure out how to make that happen. No contribution is too small.

Want to engage? Just call me, Nancy, at the office and I will work with you to figure out how you can answer God's call to support the ministry.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

JOANNE GROSSO

By Nancy Deskins

“A volunteer is a little pencil in the hand of God, who is writing a love letter to the world.” Mother Teresa

Joanne Grosso is a part of the love letter that is penned by God to the world. “Certainly, without Joanne, Matthew’s Hope would not function nearly as robustly as it currently does,” stated Nancy Deskins, Volunteer Coordinator, “She is a foundation stone in our volunteer operation and valued for both her insight and impact.”

Joanne learned about Matthew’s Hope through a friend two years ago. She saw information about the ministry on her friend’s Facebook page and, as a Central Florida Women’s League board member, she was aware of their support of the ministry. Joanne became intrigued and began volunteering on Outreach day by working in “Fulfillment” which is the area where Guests select their most needed clothing and hygiene items. “I like to help people. I enjoy interacting with them and treating them the way I would like to be treated,” says Joanne, “So often the homeless become invisible to others. I like connecting with them on a personal level and having them feel good about their experience with our ministry.”

For Joanne, the rewards from her volunteer experience are many. First, she genuinely believes that her work at Matthew’s Hope makes our community a better place. With so many homeless persons in our area, she believes that the need is great but sees that the impact of the ministry is even greater. Joanne also enjoys “shopping” for Guests. “It may seem silly to others but help-

ing someone find a pair of shoes that fit them correctly or selecting a shirt that they like makes me happy,” shared Joanne, “I almost feel selfish for feeling good about the work but the common joy between us is so uplifting! Plus, I get to see the success stories. I know that I have played a part—no matter how small—in helping someone move forward.” Not every Guest succeeds, which can be heartbreaking, but affecting someone like Hector (featured in this edition of Moving Forward) is incredibly rewarding.

Joanne also has experienced the challenges of volunteering during COVID. “This pandemic has been tough. Just a handful of us stayed on to help keep the operations going. My single day of volunteering became five long days. And we still have not fully recovered the volunteer team,” stated Joanne. The pandemic required Joanne to adjust her role in Fulfillment by supporting the Mobile Team on the road. This required her to equip a van with as many items as possible to serve those homeless unable to travel to the Outreach center in Winter Garden. “It was a difficult adjustment, but we made it work,” said Joanne. The bright spot was that I was able to connect with so many people and assign faces to names. Now back to two days a week with the ministry, Joanne looks back on the long days with a sense of camaraderie and satisfaction. “It was worth it,” says Joanne, “Now I just need to help bring in more volunteers. We’re tired!”

For information about volunteering, please contact Nancy at nancy@matthewshopenministries.org



ASK PASTOR SCOTT

Q. Why does Matthew's Hope prefer to receive travel size hygiene items?

A. Although it may seem more fiscally responsible to get the larger sizes, we ask for the Travel Size (not hotel size) as they fit easily into a backpack. Also, travel size items have no true street value and can't be used to trade for alcohol or illegal drugs. But more importantly, we are trying to create a regular interface with our Guests and this size will last the few days between our Outreach days. Small sized items encourage their return and as we build trust between us so that we might help them move forward toward a life of independence and self-sustainability.

Facebook Live Every Friday @ 1:00pm



MEDICAL HOME

Matthew's Hope is currently serving over 1,000 homeless souls and facilitating over 300 visits weekly.



WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT?

We're **the only** non-profit homeless outreach organization to

- Serve West Orange County exclusively
- Provide transportation to and from all medical appointments, specialists included!
- Help fill and deliver prescriptions
- Offer a recovery facility
- Offer a medical home for those we service, allowing them continuous, consistent care with the same staff.

OUR SERVICES COVER OUR COMMUNITY

THAT MEANS: WINTER GARDEN, OCOEE, OAKLAND, APOPKA, DR. PHILLIPS, WINDERMERE, GOTHA, PINE HILLS, HORIZON WEST, SOUTHWEST ORLANDO, CLERMONT & MINNEOLA!

THIS IS YOUR COMMUNITY.
THESE ARE YOUR NEIGHBORS.

YOU CAN HELP!

REACH OUT TO US

FIRM FOUNDATION

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This is a secure site for giving

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF FOOD AND PERSONAL ITEMS NEEDED, VISIT MATTHEWSHOPEMINISTRIES.ORG

MATTHEW'S HOPE MINISTRIES MEDICAL HOME

By Nancy Deskins

The Matthew's Hope "Medical Home" is the realization of a dream for Scott Billue and the Matthew's Hope Team. Created for homeless men, women and children who are uninsured or under-insured in West Orange County communities, a medical home is a "hub" or "home base" where a patient's medical history is known, and their medical care is coordinated. Patients have an ongoing and personal relationship with their medical team and an identified place to turn for their healthcare needs. Up until now, medical support was delivered roadside or in makeshift areas. Privacy was almost non-existent and the environment was challenging at best.

Prevention, early detection, and continuity of care are crucial in the management of disease and mental health issues. These interventions could also drastically reduce the costs associated with healthcare. The goal is to provide preventive, routine and triage care from a consistent, interdisciplinary medical team that will ensure proper diagnosis, treatment, specialist referral and/or resolution of both medical and mental health issues. Another key goal of this program is to impact and reduce the inappropriate use of emergency rooms and urgent care facilities for non-crisis situations.

The Matthew's Hope Ministries Medical Home is not an in-patient program. Homeless individuals, "Guests", requiring medical care will be transported directly from their living situation to our Outreach facility in Winter Garden and returned to their location of origin that same day. Matthew's Hope Ministries will also provide transportation to specialists and coordinate telehealth links between the Guests and medical and mental health professionals as needed. Matthew's Hope Ministries will, if necessary, also provide temporary housing (-1-2 weeks) with medical oversight, to include medication management, in our transitional homes. Once stabilized and recovered, Guest patients will be returned to their location of origin unless other suitable arrangements can be secured.

A unique feature of this Medical Home program is that unlike many clinics, a consistent team of medical professionals will deliver services in the new Medical Home

Annex which is adjacent to our Outreach Center. Each patient's medical history will be known, tracked, and managed ensuring a consistent continuum of care. Services that cannot be delivered on-site (e.g., eye surgery, heart conditions, etc.) will be coordinated with external providers as necessary.

The Matthew's Hope Ministries Medical Home aspires to leverage and expand our successful outreach program and create a Culture of Health across the homeless community and close the medical services gap. A comprehensive and thoughtful program under the direction of Matthew's Hope Ministries newly appointed Medical Services Officer, Dr. Salil Gupta, will ensure that both continuity of care and the medical "care team" are cooperatively involved in ongoing health care management and education.

The Need:

- Most homeless have little to no method for transporting themselves to service locations and, once arrived, likely no return method. Public transit options (e.g., Lynx) are also limited and routes do not provide the coverage necessary for the homeless. Travel after dark into camps is dangerous. The difficulty the homeless individuals experience traveling to and from these providers in hopes of securing an appointment often results in the homeless person abandoning these resources in lieu of a trip to the local emergency room or urgent care facility---a much easier and accessible option for them.
- Most homeless persons are emerging out of camps and make-shift living options. Hygiene issues are abundant, and many homeless persons are simply not welcome nor treated with dignity and respect in professional waiting rooms and clinics.

The Population Served:

"Homeless" is the only audience criteria and all individuals, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, economic status, disease/diagnosis, or employment will be served.

Matthew's Hope Ministries serves the homeless of West Orange County. The eastern boundary includes the West Colonial/

Pine Hills area up to Hastings Rd.; the western boundary reaches The Lake County line and includes Clermont/Minneola; the northern boundary includes Apopka and its rural areas; the southwest boundary includes the Hamlin and Lake Buena Vista communities.

Based on the current service levels of approximately 300 Guest touch points per week and recent expansion into Apopka and other West Orange County communities, the number of unique individuals directly impacted by this fully comprehensive program which includes educational, nutritional, direct health assessments, etc. is expected to increase upwards of 400 touch points weekly by year end 2021.

Florida has the fastest growing homeless population in the United States with Central Florida leading the state relative to all other areas. This fact does not include the expected tsunami of homeless persons that will be driven to the streets once the eviction moratoriums are fully lifted.



YEAR IN REVIEW

By Scott Billue

I think we can agree that the nearly two years of this pandemic have seemed like scenes from a science fiction movie or simply a bad dream. I must admit, my faith has been tested. There have been times that I have just wanted to throw my hands up and run away. If not for my faith, I am sure I would have, but even in the darkest of days during which friends lost their lives to COVID, many volunteers stayed away due to pandemic fears, and donors pulled back due to personal circumstances. However, God has continued to show up. By His grace we continue to fight the good fight, moving forward on the mission we are called to answer.

As we come to the end of another year, I am reaching out to our supporters to ask that as you plan your year-end giving and think about your support for 2022, that you please prayerfully consider the mission of Matthew's Hope. In 2020 the

number of weekly guest visits jumped more than 300%. Unbelievably, 2021 has been another year of crazy growth in that at the time of this writing, we've seen an additional 32% increase in weekly visits. We are currently approaching 180 visits per outreach day, burning through roughly \$11,000 in food, hygiene items, and clothing per Outreach event. Yet we are still here while other nonprofits have gone dormant and, in many cases, closed altogether. Despite the challenges, we have had some exciting high points.

Although our average donation amount has been down during the pandemic, our donor base doubled and provided the resources needed to move our mission forward. We need to continue to build a solid foundation that we can count on for the future. In 2021 we returned our makeshift mobile pantry back into a transport bus, then added a second transport vehicle while

also introducing two new Mobile Outreach Units providing services throughout our community. We launched our new Medical Home, offering more medical assistance than we ever dreamed possible. We literally witnessed a blind man regain his sight, disabled men get safely off the streets for the first time in many years, and a heroin addict celebrate her break from addiction, she reconnected with her children, and graduate from our Moving Forward Program into a life of independence and self-sustainability just to name a few.

This was all accomplished because you, our donors, supporters, and community partners who have entrusted us to be good stewards of your gifts. This is a responsibility we do not take lightly. We know that to continue, we need you to continue to walk along-side with us. And so, I ask won't you please continue supporting us in 2022 with a one-time year-end gift and/or by

becoming a Sustaining Donor through committing to a regular ongoing monthly or quarterly gift? We know that many have had to tighten their belts, and that there are many needs around the world and lots of options in how to share your blessings. We are grateful that you might even consider partnering with us who deliver the Lord's blessings to those in need right here in your own community. We promise to continue in full transparency and use your gifts for the betterment of the homeless men, women, and children we serve.

May you have a joy filled Holiday Season and may your 2022 be a year full of unexpected blessings!

Blessings in Christ



PASTOR BUCKS

By Scott Billue

In the 11+ years since I founded Matthew's Hope, I have received a fair amount of grief for discouraging people from giving money to panhandlers. My reason for this is simple. Most of the people who are panhandling are not actually homeless and are running a scam. And those who are truly homeless will likely not use your well-intended handout appropriately. I have occasionally received pushback for my position with responses such as, "Well, I am giving the needy person money and whatever happens is between them and God." So let me ask you this. If your good intention ended up killing that person because they were able to purchase drugs or alcohol, what role did you play in their death? If you knew your handout caused a situation in which that person injured or killed another, how would that make you feel? Probably not as good as the handout did the day or two prior.

I know this may sound harsh. After all, I'm a Pastor who

loves and cares for the homeless. It is my mission to help them. But I promise you, a few dollars are more than enough to score a hit of heroin or buy some cheap alcohol. It is rare that the person you are trying to help will take that \$5.00 and go to McDonald's or Wawa. I know this to be true. It's my job to know this and it is the harsh reality of homelessness.

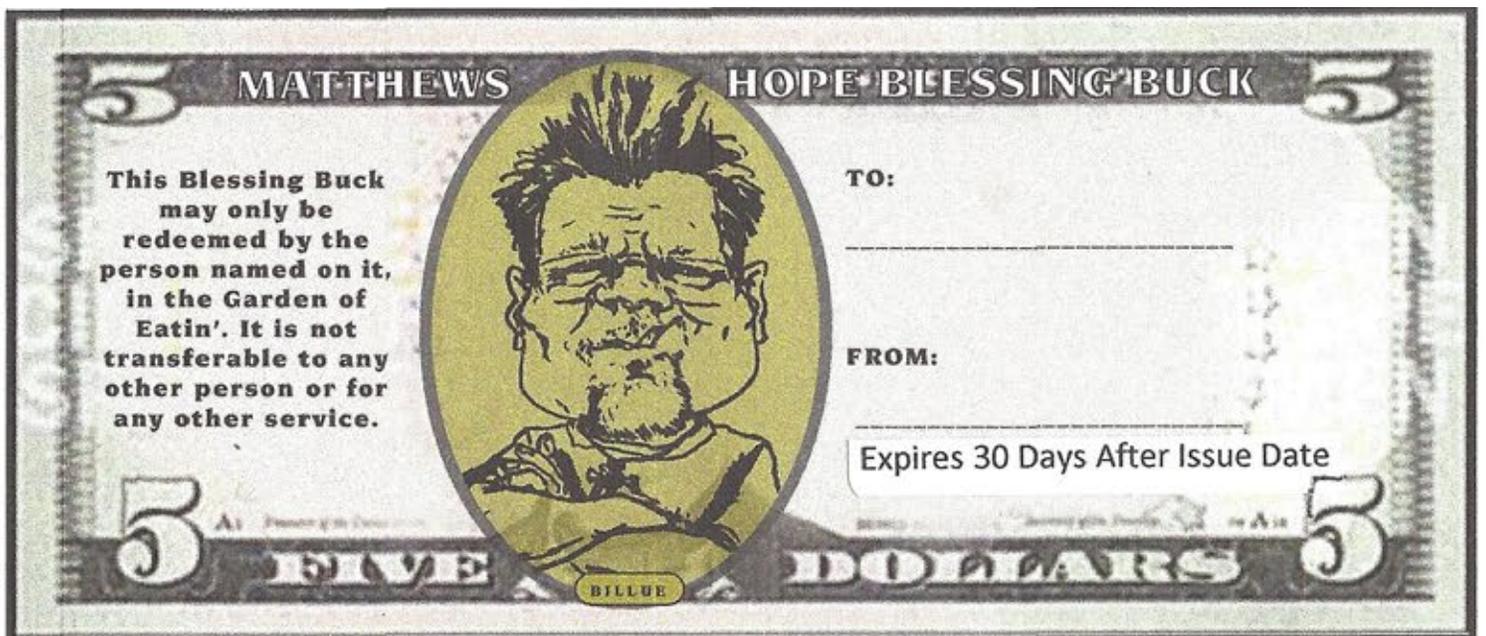
Matthew's Hope is all about opportunity, accountability, and responsibility. I needed a way for people earnestly seeking opportunity to advance their positive, personal interests yet protect them from perpetuating the negative situations that crippled them from moving forward. As I contemplated the challenge, I recalled from a long-ago history class learning about the concept of a company store with company script instead of cash. I believed that a version of this concept, backed with actual cash, would foster good money management behaviors, and build accountability and responsibility. I

developed that same basic concept and into a program called Pastor Bucks.

The Pastor Bucks program is a points-based system that enables a homeless Guest to earn currency—or Bucks—to purchase needed items. Work is compensated with points at equivalent market pricing. Guests who visit our Outreach Center are awarded 10 Pastor Bucks to spend as they wish in our food pantry. It's their "money" and their choice. Additional Pastor Bucks can be earned and applied as needed to help that Guest Move Forward towards a life of independence and sustainability. For instance, we have transferred points into dollars to pay child support thus reuniting a parent and child; restored a smile with new dentures; created a foundation for educational success with a new computer for school; purchased bicycles for transportation to work; and, yes, we have even bought cars! The entire Pastor Bucks program focuses on one's own desire to ad-

vance themselves and their ability to articulate what is needed for them to move forward.

So, the next time you feel compelled to reach into your pocket and pull out some cash for that sad, homeless person, I ask you to consider another option: Offer them Pastor Buck's and refer them to Matthew's Hope. We are available to help their true need. Pastor Bucks are available in \$5.00 and \$10.00 denominations. They are easily carried in your wallet. A person who needs help, will take the Pastor Bucks. Those who are not well intended, will turn them away. No matter the outcome, your donation for the Pastor Bucks stays within the ministry to help those who wish to help themselves. The experience will be life changing—and maybe even life saving—for you and, the homeless person you engage.





WELCOME BACK TO SCHOOL

By Meagan Galamback, *Preschool Director*

Matthew's Hope Firm Foundation Preschool entered its sixth school year! Our teachers have extensive backgrounds working with children with special needs and combined have over 75 years of working with young children in a learning environment. We are committed to providing early childhood educators who share in a passion and commitment to working with children in a way that helps them achieve their God-given potential.

At Firm Foundation Preschool, each child has their own academic goals set for the school year, which includes social/emo-

tional growth and development. Children learn at their own pace and our environment is designed to promote this growth with a stress-free approach.

Our early childhood educators have all received specialized training to work with children who have been exposed to trauma in their early years. By using trauma-informed care in our preschool setting, we can help a child feel safe, build trust, and have a voice and choices in our classrooms, all of which support healthy coping and promote resilience following exposure to trauma.

Our Daily Learning

The children in our program will be introduced to a curriculum through a variety of hands-on activities such as:

- Practical Life
- Cognitive Skills
- Motor Skills
- Language Skills
- Sensorial Skills
- Science
- Geography
- Math
- Art
- Music
- Stories of the Bible Stories

and can't wait for all the exciting things to come! We want to thank our community and families for your support in helping us build a firm foundation in the lives of young children!

For more information about our preschool or to inquire about preschool availability, please feel free to contact Meagan@MatthewsHopeMinistries.org.

In Christ,

Meagan Galamback
Preschool Director

We look forward to a safe, healthy school year together

MEET OUR NEW TEACHERS



MS. NADIA JARQUIN – Co-Teacher Pre-K3/4

Ms. Nadia graduated from the University of Central Florida with a Bachelor's Degree in Art-Animation. Ms. Nadia currently holds a Child Development Associate certificate in preschool and a PreK-3rd grade Florida teaching certification. She has been working in early childhood since 2015 and is so excited to continue her journey at with Matthew's Hope Firm Foundation Preschool. Ms. Nadia is engaged to a wonderful man named Patrick. They are excitedly planning their wedding for 2022. When Ms. Nadia is not working or wedding planning, she can be found painting, drawing, reading, or at Walt Disney World.



MRS. SANDRA DAVIDSON – Toddler Co-Teacher

Ms. Sandra brings over 30 years of early childhood experience to our preschool both from the United States and Scotland, where she was born and raised. Sandra and her husband Hamish, an attorney, have been married for 30 years and have a daughter Hailey who is a professional golfer. Ms. Sandra is currently working towards her Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate. Ms. Sandra finds so much joy in helping nurture a child's early learning years and she considers it a privilege and blessings to share in this time in children's lives. When Ms. Sandra has down time away from school she enjoys Scottish history and anything British.



MS. KRISTINA JARQUIN – Extended Care Teacher

Ms. Kristina is a true Floridian and was born and raised in Orlando. Kristina started working as a Sunday school teacher at a local church in 2006 and has continued to work with children through her college career, at the University of Central Florida. She worked as a vacation Bible school counselor and early childhood teacher working with infants through elementary students. Kristina graduated with her Bachelor's Degree in Photography and a minor in Mass Communication, she also has a certification in Digital Marketing. Kristina is also working on her 45-hour certification in early childhood education. In her free time, Kristina loves to keep healthy by working out and challenging her mind and body through physical activity. She also enjoys capturing special moments of families and friends through her photography.

NEW EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

By Nancy Deskins

REBEKAH FANA – Medical Team Assistant



Rebekah Fana joined Matthew's Hope as Medical Team Assistant to support our new Medical Home. Degreed in Nuclear Medical Technology, Rebekah's deep medical background includes experience in hospitals, medical offices, clinics, and psychiatric units. Her expertise in electronic medical records will greatly impact the efficiency and operations of the Medical Home and enable us to effectively track patients and medical outcomes.

A member of New City Church in Orlando, Rebekah initially learned about Matthew's Hope through Pastor Adam Barcott, a Matthew's Hope Board Member. As part of her church volunteer service group, Rebekah helped in the Matthew's Harvest of Hope Garden and supported supply drives to benefit the Guests. Encouraged by Pastor Adam to explore this career change, Rebekah knew the role was somewhat undefined. "I'm excited to make this position my

own and shape it to benefit this unique community," says Rebekah.

Raised in Maine, Rebekah moved to Florida in 2000 and married her husband, Joe the following year. Together they are parents to daughter, Libby. Currently pursuing her degree in Nursing at Valencia College, Rebekah loves to travel. She is actually a true "world traveler" having once circumnavigated the globe!

ROBIN SADDLER



Recently Robin and his wife, Rebecca, went shopping for a unique dresser for their home and found themselves at the Matthew's Hope Chest Store & Boutique in Winter Garden. Much to his surprise, Robin encountered Hope Chest Manager, Dawn West, a former colleague of his at Universal Studios. Dawn shared the Matthew's Hope mission and Robin thought the ministry was incredible. Upon learning the ministry was in need of a driver,

Robin met with Pastor Scott. He knew he belonged at the ministry.

Robin is the lead driver for the Pine Hills Mobile Team. He encounters some of the more "hardcore" homeless. "I drive the souls that others look at as scum or as being worthless. They are living in horrible conditions," says Robin. "And I absolutely love it. These people are real. They are grateful."

When not at Matthew's Hope, Robin enjoys painting

and drawing. An admirer of the works of Salvadore Dali and Rene' Magritte, Robin enjoys practicing in abstract and surrealism art and hopes to one day exhibit his work. He has even passed along his love of drawing to his son, Emmett.

Robin resides in Ocoee with Rebecca and Emmitt. They indulge his many interests to include aviation, music, and muscle cars

ASK PASTOR SCOTT



Q. Why do you prefer to distribute white socks and not black socks? Don't white socks get dirty faster?

A. Yes, white socks get dirty faster but they also do not contain dyes that can cause infections. Diabetic ulcers, cuts and scrapes are not uncommon amongst the homeless. White socks are preferred for optimal foot health as dyes in dark socks can leach into the wounds and cause infections.

Facebook Live Every Friday @ 1:00pm

IGNORING THE HOMELESS

By Marc Jablon

It's easy to ignore the homeless when we picture the man on the exit of the turnpike with the cardboard sign. We justify it with thoughts of "he should just get a job, there are plenty of jobs out there. He's just going to use the money for drugs or alcohol". However, the problem is much harder to ignore if we thought about the waitress in your favorite breakfast café, the theme park worker, the teacher, or even your child's friend.



The waitress is working two jobs and still can't make ends meet. She left her alcoholic husband who beat the crap out of her and the kids, but we're upset because she brought us toast when we clearly asked for an English Muffin. And really Sweet N Low, I asked for Equal. Everyone knows Sweet N Low has saccharine. I just can't have it. The minimum wage for servers in Florida is \$5.54 per hour. We sat in her booth for an hour, asked for 3 coffee refills and tipped her \$2.00. I've actually been to Chamber of Commerce Networking meetings where people bring their own coffee and tip nothing.

Many of the Disney Cast members were recruited down to Florida on the Disney College Program. They fell in love with the magic of Disney and left the security of home for the "Happiest Place on Earth". They were lured by the hopes of rising up the corporate ladder and free theme park tickets. Their whole

identity is now "my son who works for Disney". His friends and family come down once per month to play in the parks. Even though he's not on vacation, he feels obligated to get them in the parks and play with them. Unfortunately, at \$15 per hour, he can't afford rent, his car lease, utilities, food and monthly trips to the parks (even with free admission). His credit card bills are mounting and now he has to make a choice between his rent or his car. He did just receive free movie tickets for a job well done.

The average teacher in Florida makes \$49,102. Florida ranks the third lowest among the 50 states. Your child's teacher gets up early to watch our kids and often stays late to tutor. Then she has to go home and grade papers or prepare for the next days lessons. We fail to even think for a second that Ms. Jones has her own complex story. We're just upset because she still hasn't entered the grades from Wednesday's test. "What's wrong with her! I need to know if Billy's grade went from a 'B' to an 'A' so I can post on Facebook how proud I am of him and get 27 Likes and 8 Great Job Billy comments". Well Ms. Jones recently lost her husband in a car crash. Unfortunately, they had no life insurance and they were living in a house in Winter Garden that they could barely afford on two incomes, let alone one. They have two kids and now Ms. Jones has to figure out where they are going to live. Her monthly expenses are just too high and did I mention that she is often forced to buy her own school supplies.

Most of us don't even want to imagine that there are homeless kids at our schools. But there are, it may even be one of your

kids friends. Bobby is the smelly kid at school. Nobody wants to sit with him since...he smells. He is bullied and the kids make fun of him because...he smells. Your son comes home and tells you about Bobby and your response is "his parents should make him take a shower". Unfortunately, Bobby is living in a car with his mother who is working two jobs. Bobby stays in school all day because that's his only safe place. He relies on school to get his meals.

One bedroom apartments in Winter Garden are averaging \$1500 per month. When you add in a car payment, gas, utilities, and food, total monthly expenses are around \$2,750. At \$15 per hour after tax take home pay is \$2144. The working poor is already running a deficit of \$600 per month. This is before adding on any form of entertainment. The credit card companies know this which is why they charge such high interest rates. Matthew's Hope has a Moving Forward Program which provides the working poor career support, money management guidance, and meetings with Financial Planners.



The Moving Forward Program starts with helping the homeless guests meet their basic needs with food, clothing, and hygiene and ends with them matching \$1000 that their guest has put into savings so they can achieve independent living. I have two "asks" in writing this

article. My first is for all of us to do a better job of demonstrating compassion for the working poor.



Please understand that there are people walking among us everyday who are dealing with issues. The homeless population does not just consist of men and women on the side of the street with a cardboard sign, but men, women, and children who are working everyday to serve us. My second ask is that you support Matthew's Hope and their Moving Forward Program. For more information and to make a donation, please visit www.matthewshopenministries.org/moving-forward-program.



REPURPOSE. REBUILD. RESTORE. FURNITURE, FAMILY AND LIVES.

By Nancy Deskins

It's a simple concept. Keep idle hands busy, build a skill, and, hopefully, build lives. Yet the reality is so much more impactful. The Hope Chest shop concept was birthed through a desire to create an active and safe environment for homeless persons to gather and experience success through woodworking. Initially it was simple restoration and repairs. The reality was an impact beyond what anyone may have hoped or imagined. What actually occurred for many was a restoration of the soul.

The "Repurpose. Rebuild. Restore." motto actually more aptly describes the journey of the homeless guest. Through the years we have witnessed the restorative nature of woodworking.

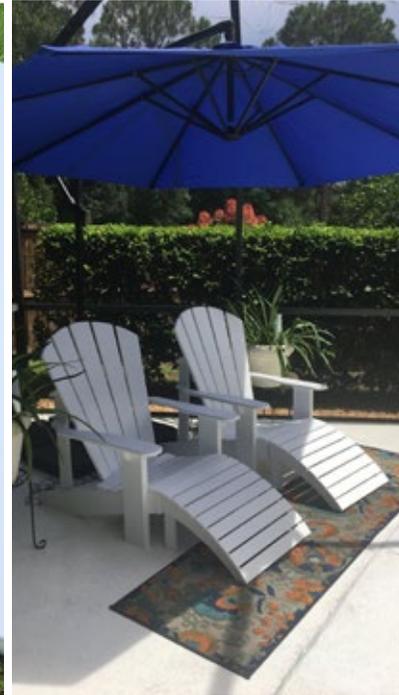
We have seen the pride and the elevation of one's spirit as they enhance their skills and exploit their creative talents. It has rebuilt confidence and created a foundation of success for guests desiring to move forward into a life of independence and self-sustainability. They repurpose this success into confidence which enables them to pursue opportunity.

Woodworking.

A simple concept.

Repurpose. Rebuild. Restore.

Furniture, Family and Lives.



A BOUTIQUE. NOT A THRIFT STORE.

By Nancy Deskins

Pretty much every day we get asked about our “thrift” store.” Yes, we have a store. And yes, there’s a small area where some high end, but mostly new, donated clothing and accessories are offered for sale. But the entirety of the store cannot compare to that of a traditional thrift shop.

The Matthew’s Hope Chest Store & Boutique is a unique retail outlet that offers fine creations and restorations of furniture plus accessories and gifts created by

our homeless artisans. Furniture is restored or repurposed to please the most discriminating of buyers. Delightful and interesting gifts are available to purchase or special order. Now is the time shop if you desire something personalized. Perhaps a Hometown Sign or lighted Nativity scene? We can create something amazing for you to give or display.

Happy Holidays!!



BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

By Nancy Deskins

VENNIA FRANCOIS

Vennia Francois was born and raised in Orlando, Florida. One of nine children, she is a first generation American. Vennia's parents immigrated to the United States from the Bahamas in 1971 with little more than an unshakeable faith in the promise of America and a determination to work hard. They earned their way into the middle class working multiple jobs, and eventually became small business owners.

Vennia attended Edgewater High School in Orlando and, after graduation, matriculated at the University of Florida, where she worked with the College Republicans on several Republican campaigns throughout the state. Vennia then transferred to Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee, where she graduated with a degree in biology, becoming the first member of her family to graduate from college.

Although she originally planned to apply to medical school after college, Vennia found her calling volunteering on political campaigns and performing community service during her undergraduate years. She ultimately chose to pursue law rather than medicine so that she would be better equipped to effect community and political change and earned her law degree from Florida A&M in 2007. To pay her way through

law school, Vennia worked for Michael and Steve Maher as an intake coordinator for the medical and nursing home malpractice division of The Maher Law Firm, one of Central Florida's preeminent law firms.

Vennia has devoted virtually her entire career to public service. In 2005, while still in law school, she was appointed by Orange County Mayor Richard Crotty to the county's Minority & Women's Business Enterprise Committee (MWBE). That same year, Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer appointed her to the Certification Appeals Board of Orlando, where she conducted hearings ensuring the integrity of the MWBE program. She held both positions for nearly two years. Vennia also interned for Florida Republican Congressman John Mica and Florida Republican Senator Mel Martinez.

After graduating from law school, Vennia joined Senator Martinez's staff full time as a policy advisor. After Senator Martinez's retirement, Vennia continued in this role for his successor, Republican Senator George LeMieux. She developed expertise in a wide range of policy issues affecting Floridians, including education, banking, labor, and transportation.

In 2011, Vennia moved to the private sector, where she remained for two years before re-

turning to public service in 2013 as a contract attorney for Lockheed Martin. Lockheed assigned her to the United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), where she worked in the Enforcement Division, helping to protect the public from fraudulent and deceptive financial practices. Among other things, she was an integral part of a team prosecuting several high-profile court cases and enforcement actions. She remained at the SEC through November 2017.

Vennia has also worked on several Republican presidential campaigns. In 2012, she volunteered as a state strategy room operator, local liaison, and rapid response team member for Lawyers for Romney. In 2016, Vennia was named as an African American National Steering Committee Ambassador for Jeb Bush's presidential campaign, assisting the campaign with African-American voter engagement.

Vennia is currently an attorney at Bogin, Munns & Munns law firm. She is a member of the Florida Bar, District of Columbia Bar, the United States Supreme Court, Orange County Bar Association, Federal Bar Association, the Federalist Society, Republican National Lawyers Association, the National Federation of Republican Women, AEI Leadership Net-

work and the Junior League. In addition, Vennia is an advisory council board member to the Civil Rights Study Alliance, and United Abolitionist, the leading anti-trafficking agency in Central Florida. In her free time, she enjoys music, tennis, and golf (which she is terrible at but continues to work on). She is also a die-hard Florida Gators fan. Vennia grew up singing with her sisters at their church, Calvary Assembly of Winter Park, Florida, where she and her family have been members for over 40 years. While at Lee University, she sang with the Lee Singers, the University's premier vocal ensemble. Vennia traveled extensively with the ensemble as an Ambassador for the University, performing nationwide and abroad.



VENNIA FRANCOIS

ASK PASTOR SCOTT



Q. Is it true that homeless guests prefer Old Spice body wash and deodorant?

A. Yes, they do. Our guest community has learned that there is an ingredient in Old Spice that deters mosquitos. We aren't sure exactly what it is but respect the feedback that we receive from our guest community.

Facebook Live Every Friday @ 1:00pm

BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

By Nancy Deskins

KELLI KEITH



Kelli is a fifth generation Florida Native with an extensive background in the performing arts and public speaking. Kelli was an Equity performer with the Walt Disney Company for 13 years as the lead performer in the Voyage of the Little Mermaid, Beauty & the Beast and Cinderella's Surprise Celebration stage shows at Walt Disney World Orlando. Her background includes training in public speaking, various type of dance, voice, piano and acting, which helped her capture the coveted title of Miss Florida 1999! She competed in the 2000 Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City. Kelli earned a bachelor's degree in Radio/TV Communications from The University of Central Florida in 2000.

Kelli's passion for giving to others is evident in her volunteerism through several civic and charitable organizations such as

the West Orange Junior Service League. She is an active leader in her professional association, NAIFA Florida, (National Assoc for Insurance and Financial Advisors) where she has been awarded the President's Award for exemplary leadership as a local President, has served in numerous leadership capacities at the local and State level, is a Quality Award winner for her service to her customers, and she is a graduate of the Leadership in Life Institute to name a few of her professional accolades.

Licensed since 2009, she has been in the financial services industry as an Independent insurance agent. Kelli is the founder and owner of Central Florida Insurance Advisors. She has a background in pharmaceutical sales which has helped her in her insurance career maneuver the health insurance and Medicare markets. Her primary scope of

business has been in the Medicare and Health and Employee Benefit Market but she also enjoys many other facets particularly life insurance.

Kelli's small agency has earned big accolades in the Marion County community as her agency Central Florida Insurance Advisors won Ocala Star Banner's Best of the Best Award for two consecutive years 2016 and 2017. Kelli splits her time in Winter Garden, the Villages and Ocala where she has branch offices but still calls Winter Garden home. She resides here with her husband Scott, and her fur babies: Sir Thomas, Maylee and Toby Keith.

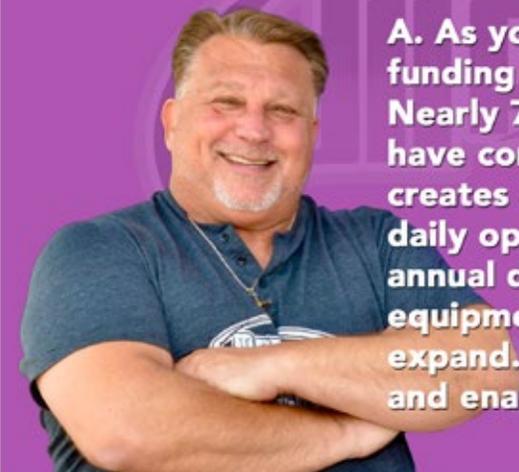
Kelli is excited to be involved with Matthew's Hope to bring her diverse professional and personal experiences to such a meaningful organization.

ASK PASTOR SCOTT

Q. Why does Matthew's Hope encourage donors to become Sustaining Partners in the ministry?

A. As you know, Matthew's Hope takes ZERO Government funding and relies 100% on community partners for support. Nearly 70% of all funding comes from individuals, many whom have committed to an ongoing monthly or quarterly gift. This creates a solid financial foundation upon which we conduct daily operations. In December we receive 30-35% of our annual donations. These monies are then used to upgrade equipment, close needed gaps, and hopefully grow and expand. Our Sustaining Partners help us keep the doors open and enable us to offer our full services 365 days a year.

Facebook Live Every Friday @ 1:00pm





**2ND ANNUAL
GIVING ON THE GREEN GOLF TOURNAMENT**

April 4th, 2022 | West Orange Country Club

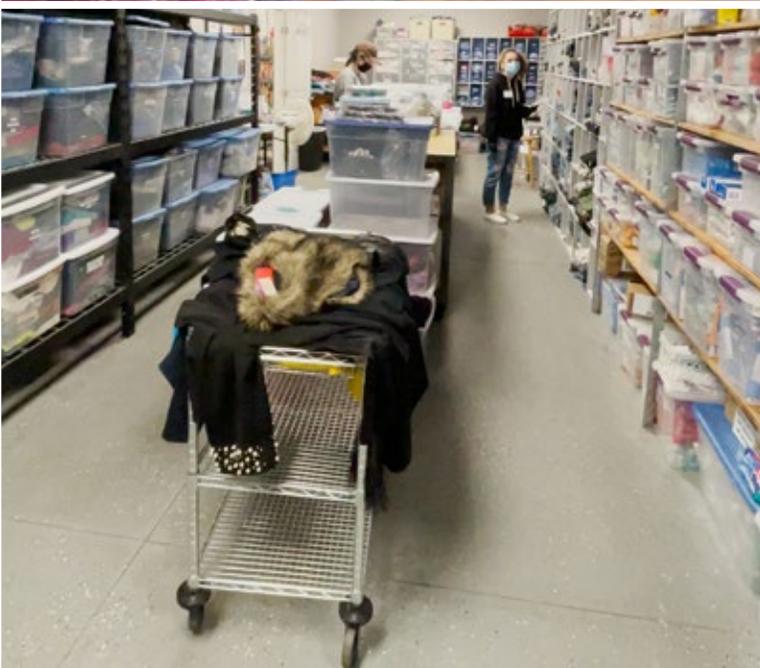
Scan the QR Code to secure
your foursome with a \$250
non-refundable deposit



For information on sponsorships please contact Nancy Deskins at nancy@matthewshopeministries.org

THE DONATION DILEMMA

By Nancy Deskins



Halloween costumes. Broken toys. Prom dresses. Home décor. Ski poles.

Every day at Matthew's Hope we face a challenge. We are an organization that is very dependent upon the generosity of our donor community for items like food, clothing and hygiene. We rejoice when we see a box of clean and folded t-shirts or a bag of canned food. However, the majority of what we receive from well-intended donors is unusable for our Guests or, quite simply, trash. Our challenge is that we are beyond grateful for the items we do need and overwhelmed with those we don't. Yes, overwhelmed.

When I started at Matthew's Hope as a volunteer, I supported the donation receiving area. It is important to us that each donor be greeted kindly and we had a policy to not turn anything away. But the pandemic drove people to clean out their homes and garages. Our little operation was inundated with donations. Unfortunately, we didn't need broken vacuums, soiled bed linens or tap shoes. We needed very specific items for our Guests. So, we began to turn items away. And then we got skewered on social media for being ungrateful.

I thought this concern was solely ours until I began seeing articles from Salvation Army, Goodwill and even other smaller non-profits like us facing this same challenge. One of the common issues we face is the cost of sorting through the donations and disposing of or "re-donation"

of items we don't need to other non-profits. It takes hundreds of donor and employee hours to sort through donations to locate those needed shirts or running shoes or other desired items. The time spent to do that sorting should truly be spent in the service of our Guests. The reality is that in 2021 alone, we expect to sort and re-donate 2,500 55-gallon bags of clothing, hygiene and other unneeded items to partner ministries. That does not include items that are taken directly to the dumpster because they are soiled, broken or unusable. What we actually retain is only a small percentage of what is donated.

At Matthew's Hope we experience the dilemma of how to communicate what we need without jeopardizing our reputation or appearing to be picky or thankless. Our needs are simple and significant to the community we serve. We post to our Facebook page exactly what we need and what is most urgent each week. My advice is that if you have a question about the appropriateness of a donation, then call. We recognize that you are trying to help us and prefer to have a positive impact rather than burden us.

Each day we count our blessings for our donors. The Scout troops, the schools and churches, the sweet family that runs the donation drive in their community and many more. Each of you have partnered with us to understand what our Guests need. We cannot thank you enough.



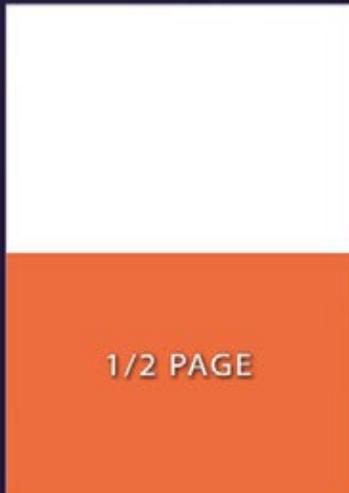
MOVING Matthew's HOPE²⁵ Forward



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IN MEMORY OF LYNDA JONES ALDRIDGE

By Nancy Deskins

Lynda Jones Aldridge, 68, was welcomed into the arms of Jesus on September 12, 2021, after a valiant fight against complications from COVID. She was born on July 1, 1953, in Orangeburg, South Carolina, to Wade Thomas Jones and Mary Lineback Jones, who both preceded her into eternity. Left to cherish her legacy of love and faith are her children, Wade Aldridge and Leah (Jofred) Mercado; brother, Stephen (Llewelyn) Jones; sister, Beth Herndon; grandchildren Zachary Hunt and Maryana Aldridge; granddogs Stella Mercado and Jake Aldridge; her blonde bonus daughter, Shelley Bradford (Darren); and her godsons, Thomas and Meyer Bradford.

Lynda graduated from East Carolina University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts. She was very proud of her service in the United States Navy; she was active 1978–1982, and remained in the reserves until 1993.

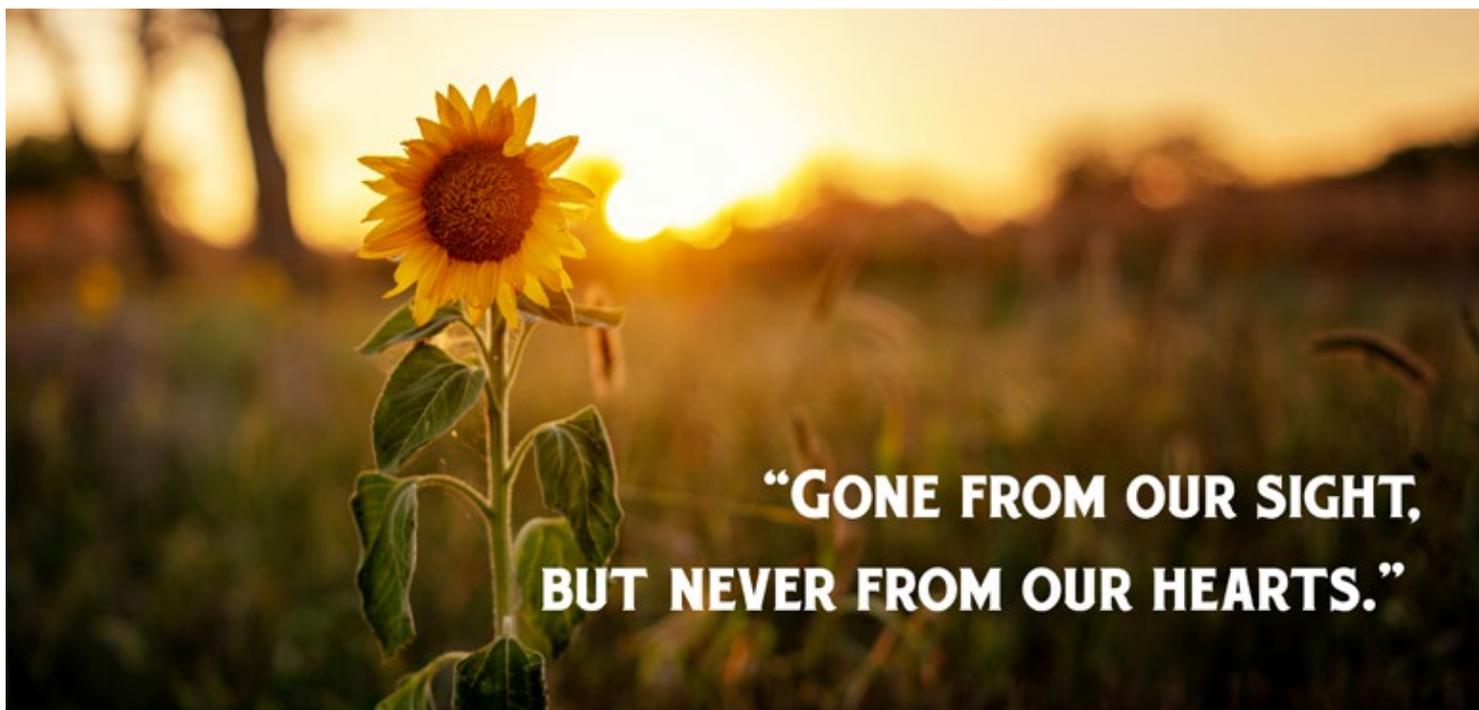
Lynda lived out her testimony by sharing the love of God with everyone she met through encouragement, prayer, and deeds. She was kind, selfless, and generous in all facets of her life. When someone would make the comment “Who knows?” Lynda would always answer, “God.”

Lynda enjoyed her diversified career from an upstart business in “offsite” administrative support (well before its time, such as working from home today) to HD Supply. She finished her career at First Baptist Church of Orlando (FBCO) children’s ministry. Her mission and outreach extended beyond any clock.

Lynda worshipped as a member at FBCO for more than 40 years and enjoyed serving on the creative arts stage management team, where she brought balance and peace to any situation. In the past few years she was introduced to Matthew’s Hope, a local homeless ministry, where she served in any area

needed, always wanting to know people’s stories, from guests to staff members. Lynda preferred being behind the scenes, and she called herself an elf.

Those who had the privilege of knowing Lynda found her a loyal friend. She was smart, funny, and joyfully dedicated to serving others. Her love for the word of God and turning any situation “spiritual, never judgmental” was a gift that would leave those around her in awe. Lynda regularly handed out Bibles, and when she found a book that blessed her (most recently *Threadbare Prayer*), she bought copies in bulk to share. Her love for watermelon (which she called “birthday cake”) was well known to those who knew her. She walked through this life with outstretched arms and a gentle touch of grace, and even now she continues to bring people together.



**“GONE FROM OUR SIGHT,
BUT NEVER FROM OUR HEARTS.”**