



Faith in Action Since 1986

February 2021



Maryland Oaks musicians
tuning in to culture 2

Index

Mercy House	2
How to help	2
Executive Director	3
Staff profile	3
GNO/ECHO	4
Pantry	4

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR.....

Collaboration critical to our mission's success

Greetings! Glory be to God. It is He who continues to provide and bless the ministries of Good News Outreach.

On the heels of one of the most turbulent years in recent history, GNO remains steadfast in its endeavors to make a difference in our community by giving a hand-up rather than simply a hand-out.



Linda Barineau

As you read through this Newsletter you will see how He is working in the lives of so many needy people and families through the four outreach ministries: the Senior Services & Food Pantry, Maryland Oaks Crossing community, and Mercy House. The work of these four programs reduces hunger, isolationism, homelessness and the rate of recidivism.

Our volunteer and partnership bases continue to increase and work alongside the dedicated and unwavering staff. It's the collaboration of these three groups that provide the expanding opportunities to the clients and residents associated with GNO programs.

If you are reading this message it is because you have been connected to Good News Outreach in some way! Whether your continued support of Good News Outreach is through program involvement, financial giving, spiritual uplifting, or all three, please know that it is not taken for granted and is greatly valued.

The basket is being lifted so that our light is brightly shining, but we still have much work to be done. Please help spread the word about Good News - its ministries and its many needs.

It is an honor to serve alongside the board and staff of GNO. If you would like to join this dynamic, diverse and committed group by serving on the Board of Directors, please contact me at 850-933-0377.

It is a privilege to know that you keep all those involved in your daily prayers. Stay healthy and help share with others the important work done by Good News Outreach!

Blessings,

Linda Barineau
Romans 8:28
Jeremiah 29:11

Tallahassee Youth Orchestras lifting Maryland Oaks' spirits with lessons

The Tallahassee Youth Orchestras didn't stop giving after playing the final notes of a live Christmas concert at Maryland Oaks Crossing.

The organization now teaches youngsters at Good News Outreach's rental community on Sunday afternoons.

Dr. Allyson Royal (left) leads violin lessons for Caitlyn Robinson, Jamie Neloms, Chelsea Martin and Ja'mya Anderson.

Dr. Christina Lai teaches piano to Jadya Fennell, Jamie Neloms and Heaven Paramount.

Housing Director Daryl Jaquette and TYO treasurer Robin Fennema hatched the plan when they met at the holiday concert.

Thanks, community resident Amy McKenzie, for taking this photo.

And, thanks, Tallahassee Community Orchestras, for sharing the gift of music.



Re-entry symposium

Dale White, director of Mercy House, is scheduled to be a featured speaker April 10 at "Coming Home: Life in Tallahassee After Incarceration."



This public and free online symposium is being planned by the Mercy & Justice committee at Good Shepherd Catholic Church.

It will include a Q&A with experts, personal accounts of re-entry, and suggestions for people who want to help.

Leon County Sheriff Walter McNeil will be the keynote speaker. Check www.goodnewsoutreach.org and the March newsletter for updates.

Mercy House, a ministry of Good News Outreach, marked 2020 with nine men completing its residential program that begins as soon as successful applicants are released from prison.

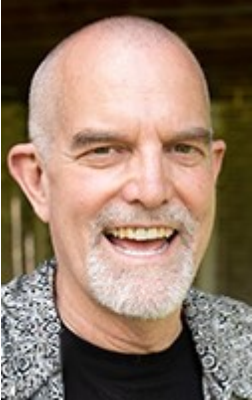
How to help

Good News Outreach is entering its 35th year of service to the Leon County area. Your support will make 2021 one of the best yet. If you'd like to tour our program sites or test drive a volunteer activity, contact us at (850) 412-0016, email info@goodnewsoutreach.org or visit www.goodnewsoutreach.org to donate.

A letter from the executive director

Volunteers, interns boost February efforts

It is hard to believe that February is upon us! We are continuing to experience God's blessings in each of our programs. Our Food Pantry continues to provide desperately needed groceries to people in need every Wednesday and Thursday at our 548 E. Bradford Road headquarters. Senior Program volunteers deliver groceries to over 400 low-income households. Mercy House is at full occupancy with men seeking new lives after returning home from incarceration. Families have safe and affordable housing at Maryland Oaks Crossing.



Here are a few highlights: Two master of social work interns from Florida State University have joined Good News for the Spring semester. Olivia Hitchcock is working with Dale White, Mercy House program director and our new Program and Volunteer Coordinator Fundra Hart to review our men's reentry program. Based on that review, we are considering the possibility of offering a women's re-entry program. Olivia also works closely with ECHO Program Director Kescia Pride to provide case management to our Mercy House men.

Career development is a key component in the reentry process.

Mercy House alumnus Donald C. recently completed his first semester at Tallahassee Community College and earned a spot on the President's List with a perfect 4.0 grade point average. Current resident Glenn H. graduated from [Refire Culinary](#) and is now employed at a local restaurant.

Mallory Adams is completing her internship at Maryland Oaks Crossing. Mallory is collaborating with Maryland Oaks Housing Manager Daryl Jaquette and Fundra Hart to assess our programs for adults and children.

Thomas University BSW interns Michael Peaden and Malia Beermann are now in their second semester serving our residents.

On Jan. 28, six Maryland Oaks residents graduated from the "Getting Ahead in the Workplace" 15-week class. ECHO's Kescia Pride and Kia Troupe facilitated the class. Participants learned how to better take charge of their lives, completed a review of their own resources and made plans to build on them. We are very proud of our first Getting Ahead! graduates!

We are grateful for the many volunteers and supporters who make the work of Good News Outreach possible. Lives are being changed because of you. We look forward to new challenges and opportunities in 2021.

May God bless you and yours,

Donald

Donald Parks,
Executive Director
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Galatians 3:3

Fundra Hart diving into programs, expanding the ranks of volunteers

By Hannah Pai
Communications intern

Here at GNO, we're excited to have a new coordinator for programs and volunteers.

Meet Fundra Hart!

Fundra came to know about Good News Outreach through years of referring clients for assistance with food and housing needs. Fundra is excited to join the staff because of the difference she wants to make among the Maryland Oaks volunteers who guide the residents to self-sufficiency and a better life for their families. She's also inspired by the support that GNO receives from the community as shown during the yearly Prayer Breakfast fundraiser.

"Fundra Hart brings an entirely new dimension of service to Good News Outreach. With over 35 years of case management experience across a whole range of populations, she will help us improve our already strong programs in affordable housing, prison reentry and senior programs," said GNO Executive Director Donald Parks. "Welcome aboard, Fundra!"

Fundra also wants to add more people of color as volunteers at Maryland Oaks.

Video about community support: <https://www.goodnewsoutreach.org/fundrahart>

"My goal is to cater to more individuals and churches getting involved and adopting a family. And not just giving them help, but helping them to help themselves and to see the fruit of their efforts," Fundra said.

This is the perfect time, despite the pandemic, for individuals to take an inventory and get ready to make a significant comeback. She wants to connect those in need with those who can help in whatever capacity they are willing to share. Volunteers want to help, sometimes they just don't know where and how. Fundra looks forward to closing this gap for MOC's adult residents and their children by educating, enlightening, and empowering them.



Fundra was born, reared and educated in Jacksonville, where she graduated in 1977 from William Raines High School. She furthered her education by earning an associate of arts degree from the former Florida Community College at Jacksonville. Illness derailed her studies at Florida State University, so she returned to Jacksonville and earned her bachelor's in psychology from

the University of North Florida.

Fundra's initial desire was to become a probation/parole officer and eventually retire as an FBI agent. However, her interest in human services and social work was stoked by positions she held as a volunteer. She was introduced to helping others better their lives through the now-defunct University Year for Action Program (replaced by the VISTA Program).

She spent several years working as a social worker's assistant with the old Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (now DCF).

Her background is heavy in case management with teens, families, pregnant women, homeless individuals, medically indigent and those in recovery programs.

She has served in several administrative capacities including family services program director and child welfare safety management coordinator with ECHO Inc.

Partnership gives clients more service

By Kennedy Smith
Communications intern

Two years ago, on Dec. 1, 2019, Good News Outreach and Emergency Care Help Organization, partnered up in hopes of better serving the Tallahassee community. The two ministries are now co-located at Bradford Road in midtown Tallahassee.

GNO and ECHO have served the community for a combined 74 years. Together they manage eight different programs dedicated to relieving stresses such as homelessness, food insecurity, job fulfillment and lack of furniture.

As a result of this partnership, GNO and ECHO, believe that they create synergy, allowing the ministries to be stronger to-

gether than if they were to exist separately.

Donald Parks, executive director of GNO, used the biblical phrase, "there's wisdom in a multitude of counselors," to describe the joining of the two agencies.

Freddy Branham, executive director of ECHO, said that since the partnership began, it's helped ECHO to offer more of a broad range of services to their clients, due to the work and services being offered at GNO. "We're an ideal fit," Branham said.

Parks expressed that this partnership isn't one sided, but instead each agency brings out the best in one another.

"Being able to interact on a daily basis with Freddy Branham, and interfacing with their case managers, helps both programs. It gives ECHO a clientele that they can meet with on a regular basis so they can see results, it combines the resources of those agencies to make a more powerful impact on those clients," Parks said.

Although the global pandemic has slowed

down their efforts, Parks said he believes this partnership will have a lasting effect on the people they serve as a result of the case management provided by ECHO.

"We are going to have a deep, sustained and transformative impact on the lives of our clients. The men at Mercy House [the men's prison reentry program] coming out of prison, should not only get a job, they can now build a career because of the case management and counseling they receive from ECHO," Parks said.

Not only do the agencies mesh well together, but also, both executive directors spoke highly of each other. Branham described Parks as a visionary and Parks called Branham "a man of wisdom."

There is a lot to look forward to regarding the future of GNO and ECHO. In the next coming months, supporters can be on the lookout for a new initiative that will focus on helping women and their families.

Flexibility key to pantry's pandemic adjustments

By Isabella Pfeiffer
Communications intern

Tumultuous times call for fortified efforts, and the Good News Outreach Food Pantry responded in kind to the pandemic's demands.

Rebecca Howard, GNO's director of operations, manages the pantry. She notes that despite the challenges, the pantry never ran out of food.

Yet as a result of the pandemic and the ensuing economic hardships of 2020, the pantry is providing for more families than it ever has. The pantry delivered more than 123 tons of food from Second Harvest of the Big Bend. All told, 8,211 bags of food were handed out at the pantry and by the senior service drivers. All those groceries and supplies helped 17,743 people.

Covid-19 changed the dynamics of food distribution in the Leon County area as sources of help tried to accommodate the challenges posed by quarantining, social distancing and trying to feed large crowds at a single time. How did GNO fortify itself to meet that challenge?

It's a difficult question, especially considering that many clients and volunteers are at a high-risk with the virus. Some churches and soup kitchens had no choice but to close. That forced them to help their clients find a new source to supply their food and basic necessities. The GNO Food Pantry became that site of referral, relentlessly pushing out food and supplies to meet the increased demand, which went from 535 bags delivered in March to 1,210 in April.

Through 2020, the pantry went from being open once a week, to twice a week, and on to five days a week through April and May to alleviate some of the strain put upon these individuals.

Most of the consistent volunteers were above 50 years of age, so an entire turnover of help occurred to replace those who locked down. The pantry had to move outdoors to ensure physical distancing. Stocks of essential supplies such as masks, hand sanitizer and cleaning agents for the safety of both client and volunteer were built up.

Far more people who are new to GNO's system, who have never come to a food pantry before, needed these resources. Unfortunately, this demand is only expected to increase. Even though the pantry has already surpassed unprecedented amounts of distribution, more volunteers and more resources are needed to handle requests for help in 2021.

Drivers to transport the groceries, hands to help with compiling supplies, and people to pack grocery bags are all absolutely necessary to keep up this year. It's difficult to focus on your dreams when your plate is empty and how to secure food becomes your biggest priority. Through the work of the Good News Outreach Food Pantry, everyone can use what they get and they get what they need.

If you'd like to help the food pantry satisfy the needs of the hungry in 2021, contact Program and Volunteer Coordinator Fundra Hart at 850-412-0016 or email us at <mailto:info@goodnewsoutreach.org>.

