Employees Serving Our Community in 2016

A question was posed about how our office can serve the citizens of Pinellas County. We decided since it was the beginning of the school year, we would adopt a class to make donations of school supplies. Our office was fortunate to adopt a 4th grade class from Fairmount Park Elementary School. Over the past five months our employees and the students have become pen pals. Their teacher, Ms. Farris, has made letter writing part of their curriculum.

Several of our employees spent a day off in October with the students. We had a pizza party and they had a chance to meet Sassy, Lisa Boling’s pet pig.

In December, we were able to also spread some Christmas cheer with presents for the students and their teacher.

This has been a very rewarding endeavor for our employees. When I walk onto the school campus and see the children’s faces light up, it makes it all worthwhile. We plan to continue the relationship with our class for the rest of the school year and are working on ways to keep in contact with them during the next school year.

We want to help motivate and encourage this great group of kids to be all they can be and to know that we care.

Participants include Wanda Bryant, Elizabeth Chapman, Lisa Boling, Marsha Ouellette, Tawana Cooks, Gail Stewart, Kathy Abner, Joel Weaver, Cathy Tilman, Steven Hessling, Allicia Gonzalez, Patricia Clark, Gina Callahan, Marie Ruiz, Holli Sattel, Dennis O’Neil, Maryann Londo, Monica Williams, and Traci McPherson (St. Petersburg Office Branch, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller).
30th Annual Christmas Bike Drive

Photos courtesy of Marketing & Communications

The yearly Christmas Bike Drive brings employees together from all the departments and Appointing Authorities in the giving spirit of the season. Led by Human Services and Real Estate Management, this year’s drive was a brilliant success providing bikes and helmets to 96 children. Employee contributions totaled $7,790 topping last year’s by $1,300. Here are a few sentiments—for you—from the families:

Thank you and bless you all!

We would like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Your generosity has brightened my children’s lives and for that I am forever grateful.

Thank you very much for your generous and thoughtful Christmas bikes for my boys. We are very grateful and appreciate your kind hearts.

Thank you so much ... means the world to my family. Thank you for helping them to have a Christmas!

View a video from Marketing & Communications showing the bike roll out.

The Detention Division of Real Estate Management raised $560 for the Bike Drive to give a child an opportunity to ride a bike and to spread cheer to all. “It is our commitment to give back to the community.”
Beat Hunger? Can Do!
Contributed by Deborah Fulton and Kimberly Addison

There is a need for food collections year round but we tend to take up collections during the holidays.

In May of 2012, I saw an article that the Tampa Bay Network was working with the County to end hunger. The project is called Beat Hunger? Can Do! I inquired about the project and asked for permission to set up containers on all six floors of the downtown Utilities building (14 S. Fort Harrison Avenue in Clearwater).

It’s been a success and with combined efforts from the Clerk’s Office and the BCC departments in our building. I am proud of our accomplishments in helping to feed those in need throughout our community.

Religious Community Services (RCS) received 902 pounds of non-perishables in 2016. The cumulative total is 3,194 pounds since July 2012.

After another more recent donation from the building, another 487 pounds of food was delivered. Debbie Fulton said, “The warehouse manager couldn’t thank me enough.”

Holiday Food Drive
Contributed by Vanessa Castrogiovanni

As the shelves run low during the end of the year, restocking them before and after the holiday season is a goal the Clerk’s Office works towards every year.

In the spirit of holiday giving, the entire Clerk’s Office participated in donating needed items for the St. Petersburg Free Clinic’s Food Bank. An abundance of items were donated to those that need it the most in our community. With every drive we conducted, an impressive number of boxes filled to the rim was distributed.

2016 Solid Waste Holiday Food Drive
Contributed by Carlee Ward

It’s an annual tradition at Solid Waste so between December 5-16, 2016, we collected 143 pounds of food for RCS Clearwater and St. Pete Free Clinic Food Pantries.

Employees’ Advisory Council

Christmas Wish Foundation
Written by the EAC Chair, Lisa Arispe

Many thanks to all who donated and to the couriers that made sure we got the donation to the charity. We passed last year’s total! Last year was $950. This year with your generosity we collected $1,625 ... $675 more than last year! Yay! We put a smile on some needy family’s faces this Christmas. I am so proud to work with such kind and generous co-workers. We can always make a difference ...

Did you know ... in 2016, Pinellas County employee blood donations may have saved up to 258 lives?
Pinellas County Golf Tournaments

Contributed by Becky Batten

Started in January 2014, the Pinellas County Golf Scrambles are held twice a year. The tournaments are organized by BTS employees and the Wellness Program because of the physical, mental, and emotional health benefits of playing golf. The tournaments are fun and perfect for all skill levels. They average 120 participants, which include Pinellas County employees, their families and friends, as well as teams from local businesses and municipalities. All proceeds from raffle ticket sales and 50% of 50/50 ticket and putting green contest sales are donated to First Tee of Clearwater / Chi Chi Rodriguez Foundation. In 2016, the total donated was $2,200.

Event organizers include Becky Batten, Justin Taylor, Jonathan Ferguson, Steve Clark, Chris Labiak, Melissa Reyes, Crystal Capone, and Mary Sault.

Did you know ... there are 48 golf courses in Pinellas County?

Jeans Because We Care

Contributed by Brenna Haggar

Giving back to our community always ranks high in importance to our team members. Since time and resources are limited, our EAC team came up with “Jeans Because We Care” days. They occur every other non-pay day Friday all through the year. Team members donate $3 so they can wear jeans that day. The funds are donated to the charity or charities selected at the beginning of the year.

In 2016, Tax Collector team members donated $4,645 to the Suncoast Hospice and the Shriner’s Hospital for Children.

Operation Gratitude

Contributed by Debra Brown

Employees at the North County Branch Clerk’s Office put together several care kits containing toiletries to be included in the care packages for our military men and women.

E-mail: employee.communications@pinellascounty.org

The Pen
Serving Our Community

EDITOR: Mary L. Sault

A special publication by the Pinellas County Human Resources Department

Cathy Meile, Chad Totten, Stephanie Summers, Jennifer DeJesus, Theo Tsakonas. Unavailable for photo: Debra Brown.
**Domestic Violence Shelter Donation Drive**

*Contributed by Vanessa Castrogiovanni*

Every year, the Clerk’s Office does their best to help victims of domestic violence. As part of the Clerk’s initiative to recognize October as Domestic Violence Awareness month, the entire office donated many items to local domestic violence shelters.

With every drive we conducted, an impressive number of boxes filled to the brim were distributed to Community Action Stops Abuse (CASA) and The Haven.

The Clerk’s Tyrone Branch also collected clothes and toiletries for CASA clients.

**CASA (Community Action Stops Abuse) Adopt-a-Family Holiday Gift Program**

*Contributed by Jim Bennett*

In years past, we’ve contributed to the County’s annual Bike Drive. This year, we decided that in addition to that we could provide a little Christmas cheer to a family in need. CASA was contacted and we were provided with a family. We were then ready to collect and contribute through their Adopt-a-Family Holiday Program!

The office adopted a family of four – a mother and three children ages nine, seven, and 17 months. County Attorney staff very generously contributed and not only were we able to provide the family with all the gifts the mother suggested, we collected enough extra to provide the family with a sizeable Walmart gift certificate.

**Angel Tags for Foster Kids**

*Contributed by Sandy Tuller*

Clerk of Court, Records Management, Civil/Probate Office

We were given a supply of “Angel Tags”, each of which displayed the name/age of a foster child, along with the item which he/she wished they would receive for Christmas. We are happy to report that we were able to brighten the holiday season for a number of these children by providing the item (which was sometimes a gift card) that they wanted.

**Did you know ...**

Pinellas County is the second smallest yet most densely populated county in Florida with 3,347 people per square mile?

**Adopt a Family**

*Contributed by Sandy Tuller*

Clerk of Court Records Management, 49th Street Office

We were able to brighten the holiday season for a deserving family by presenting an assortment of gifts and a generous supply of gift cards to a single mom of three special needs children.
Pinellas County Foster Parents Association Angel Tree

Contributed by Karen Davis

Business Technology Services worked with the Pinellas County Foster Parents Association and provided presents for 25 foster children living in Pinellas County. The association provides tags with the name, age and wish of children in foster care. Most of the foster children are teenagers that wish for gift cards to fast food restaurants that they rarely get to go to, shoes and video games. This year all wishes were fulfilled thanks to our employees. We have been working with the association for the last 10 years.

Red Nose Day ...
Silly for a Good Cause

Contributed by Vanessa Castrogiovanni

Red Nose Day is a campaign dedicated to helping children and having fun.

Proceeds benefit children and young people in the U.S. and in some of the poorest communities in the world. Several departments in the Clerk’s Office participated in the national campaign and got silly for a good cause.

Economic Development Food Barrel Drive

Contributed by Stacey Swank

At Economic Development this year, we had a very successful food barrel drive for Religious Community Services (RCS). Becky Wills organized the drive for us, and it was a fun, productive and thoughtful project for the holidays.

Did you know ...

there are at least 70 charities active in Pinellas County?
Pro Bono Legal Services and Assistance for the Community

Contributed by Christy Pemberton

We recognize and appreciate that people and entities within Pinellas County who cannot afford to pay for legal assistance still need help in gaining access to civil legal justice. Throughout the year County Attorney staff have:

- Raised money to provide pro bono legal services within Pinellas County
- Helped dependent children get guardians ad litem and foster parents
- Helped at-risk members of our community get assistance with completing and filing necessary legal documentation
- Located low or no-cost attorneys and clients received timely redress
- Provided legal advice to non-profit entities

Participants include Carl Brody, Chelsea Hardy, Nicole Johnson, Nancy Meyer, Christy Pemberton, Jack Powell and Jewel White.

Lending a Hand to Our Pawed Friends

Contributed by Jason Latimer

The Supervisor of Elections Office joined hands to help our pawed friends in need by collecting donations for the Humane Society.

Did you know ...

that, according to the U.S. Census, over 90,000 veterans live in Pinellas County?

HR Hosts “Fill the Barrel for RCS” Food Drives

Contributed by Joni Valliere

Human Resources filled two Religious Community Services (RCS) 55-gallon food barrels for Easter and nearly four more for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

In 2015, the RCS Food Bank served over 2.5 million meals, its warehouse served nearly 64,000 people and supported over 60 sub-distribution sites which served 300,000 people in our community.

Over 50% of RCS Food Bank recipients are children under 18 years of age.
SPCA 3K Dog Walk Bake Sale
Contributed by Pam Reddy

The love of animals prompted seven employees from the Clerk’s Office in the Criminal Justice Center to bake and to walk to raise money for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. This past October, Pam Reddy, Karen Hamilton, Linda Brian, Martha Simpson, Natasha Kinsley, Kimberly Jacobson, and Mona Budaszewski raised $1,700.

Collecting for Abandoned Animals
Contributed by Linda Brian

Employees from Criminal Court Records collected pet supplies during the holidays for the SPCA and for the Humane Society. They collected much needed pet food, bedding, cleaning supplies and money. Those involved included Pam Reddy, Karen Hamilton, Linda Brian, Martha Simpson, and Natasha Kinsley.

Teddys for Ted Bear Drive
Contributed by Jennifer Gundel

In honor of an employee’s deceased husband, Ted, a teacher who loved and cherished children, Civil Court Records and Mail Services/Couriers partnered to provide teddy bears to children of Partners in Care (a palliative care support service) and Hospice. A total of 318 bears were collected for the children of hospice, not only from the Clerk’s Office, but other agencies and even as far away as Michigan!

People involved in the project included Jane Tsardoulas, Aubrey Kanoski, and Rod Tabler.

Did you know ...

at Animal Services, you can volunteer to walk dogs, foster kittens, and more! Call (727) 582-2636.
**Adopt a Family**  
*Contributed by Andrea Gammon*

Employees of the Ambulance Billing and Financial Services Department (Safety and Emergency Services) work together to provide families with back-to-school supplies including clothing, Thanksgiving food boxes, and meals for Christmas. Organized by Andrea in memory of her husband, they hope to be a blessing to people who need a little assistance in providing for their families.

**“Stuff the Bus” in August**  
*Contributed by Jason Latimer*

Employees of the Supervisor of Elections Office participated in this event by chipping in to “Stuff the Bus”, providing Pinellas County students with the tools they need to be successful as they returned to school.

**Collection for CASA Clients**  
*Contributed by Vanessa Collins*

To help others in need, employees in the Tyrone Branch of the Clerk’s Office collected clothes, toiletries, and other necessary supplies for the clients of Community Action Stops Abuse (CASA).

**Elves for Elders**  
*Contributed by Constance Daniels*

Many seniors may not have family nearby who they can count on for assistance. The “Elves for Elders” program is a grass roots community effort that connects gift givers (elves) with less fortunate seniors (elders) during the holiday season. These elders have very limited funds to purchase items and rarely receive gifts during the holidays.

The Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller Administration/ Court & Operational Services staff donated several blankets, snacks, calendars and stuffed animals, among other items, to help brighten the holidays for those who may have otherwise been forgotten.

**Ronald McDonald House Christmas Fundraiser and Collection**  
*Contributed by Cynthia Haumann*

To help others in the community during the holidays, Clerk’s Office employees at the Pinellas County Justice Center collected household items, gift cards, gifts, etc. for the families who stay at the Ronald McDonald House.

**Angel Tags for Foster Kids**  
*Contributed by Sandy Tuller*

Out of a desire to spread holiday cheer to local children in need, Records Management (BCC Office) employees received “Angel Tags”, each of which displayed the name/age of a foster child, along with the item which he/she wished they would receive for Christmas. They also helped to bring joy to local children by participating in the annual Bike Drive.

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The Smart Ride

Contributed by Steve Hessling

With the fundraising support of the St. Petersburg Clerk’s Office, Steve participated in this event in honor of friends who had or have been diagnosed with HIV, and in memory of his partner who had wanted to do this ride but passed away from cancer. Steve raised over $2,000 and the event overall raised over $1 million. Beneficiaries included The Broward House, Children’s Diagnostic and Treatment Centers, Metro Health and Wellness, Pridelines, Compass Community Center and others.

Steve at the finish line.

Spreading Hope – Response to the Pulse Nightclub Shooting in Orlando

Contributed by Jennifer Gundel

In response to the horrendous tragedy that unfolded in the Orlando Pulse Nightclub on June 11, 2016, many Clerk employees took the opportunity to help those in need.

The Civil Court Records crew in Clearwater joined forces and collectively raised $306 along with much needed supplies, such as cases of water, snacks, and other items. Charlie Diamond, along with his wife Britt and son Charlie, personally delivered the donations on June 14.

With the cash collected, $150 went towards purchasing additional provisions including water, deli platters (one contributed by the Deli Manager herself), bushels of oranges/bananas, bags of chips and cookies, plates and napkins, and cases of cheese/peanut butter and crackers. The remaining amount was donated via the GoFundMe site to help support victims of Pulse shooting.

At each of the locations they visited, the staff, volunteers, and law enforcement were all very friendly and appreciative. In conjunction with the Salvation Army, Charlie and his family were able to distribute the donated goods to the blood donors standing in the long lines, as well as to those working at the center. In addition, there were several areas scattered around the Pulse Nightclub section of Orange Avenue which were designated donation and distribution centers. They unloaded the remaining donations at one such location with the assistance of some of the thousands of caring and selfless volunteers.

Charlie, along with his wife and son, were truly appreciative of the opportunity to represent the office in such a special way. Needless to say everyone was truly grateful for the assistance. Playing even a minor role in someone’s recovery gives one a sense of humility and hope that the path ahead is paved with progress and a light that will never go out.

Holiday Adopt-A-Family, R’Club

Contributed by Kimberly Addison

As part of an annual tradition, the Finance Division of the Clerk’s Office donated to R’Club money and age-appropriate gifts and clothes in sizes for children and adults, along with gift wrapping materials and gift cards for each child.
Tampa Bay Heart Walk

Many departments participated in 2016’s Tampa Bay Heart Walk at the Raymond James Stadium. Here are some teams that sent in submissions.

Team Finance

Contributed by Deborah Fulton

Team Finance with members from Utilities Customer Service, the Clerk’s Office, Business Technology Services and the Tax Collector’s Office raised $1,595 in 2016. Team Captain Debbie Fulton writes, “It is now one of my passions to spread the word about heart disease and stroke. They are the silent killers that we can prevent by eating healthy and walking.” Debbie and company have raised close to $30,000 in the past 17 years. Team members in 2016 were Debbie Fulton (Captain), Essie McClendon, Patti O’Neil, Alicia Booth, Karen Davis, Megan Henry, Stan Pasek, and Merry Celeste.

Sam’s Klub

Contributed by Carmen Perez

Clerk’s Office employees from the Criminal Justice Center on 49th Street formed a team they named “Sam’s Klub” in honor of a coworker with heart disease.

Lost in Pace

The Human Resources team had a blast.

“Alone we can do so little:
Together we can do so much.”
– Helen Keller

The last page is a mosaic of photos of employees during “awareness” days where we dress in a certain color, such as pink, blue, red, or orange, to raise awareness for a cause.