



“Volunteering is heart work”

GuideWell’s Volunteer of the Year is also the City of Palatka’s Unsung Hero.

Lalita Thomas’ heart is so generous she is a hard woman to keep track of these days because she’s so busy giving back to her community.

Working to end hunger

Not only is Thomas the vice president of Calvary Missionary Baptist Church’s board of directors, she also supports their mission to end hunger through their food pantry. Twice a month, she leads food collection and distribution in their community.

Thomas, who is an IT manager at Florida Blue, also helps with the Family Life Center at Calvary as the assistant building manager and event planner.

Empowering the next generation

Giving back is her way to empower her community—especially young people. It’s why she serves as the president of the basketball booster program for Palatka High School Basketball and the executive director for the Palatka Police Athletic League (PPAL). Under her leadership, the basketball players at PPAL have been able to attend the Florida Classic for multiple years in a row.

Through PPAL, Thomas coordinated her community’s largest-ever back-to-school event, which helped provide backpacks, school supplies, food, and clothing to children.

In addition to her work supporting youth sports and fighting hunger, she also volunteers as chair of the technology committee for the Palm Coast Flagler County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority’s mentorship program, which mentors young girls and women.

Arts and culture

Her passion for expanding culture and arts prompted her to serve as the current financial secretary for the African American Cultural Arts Council of Putnam County. Thomas says volunteering is “heart work” and encourages people interested in volunteering to start small and find an organization they’re passionate about.

Thomas’s impact by the numbers

Individual service hours in 2022	350
Lives impacted in 2022	1,000+
Funds raised in 2022	\$75,000
Volunteers mobilized in 2022	45

It’s clear why Destination Putnam magazine featured Thomas as one of Palatka’s unsung heroes!

As GuideWell’s Volunteer of the Year, Thomas will receive a \$5,000 grant to donate to the nonprofit of her choice. She has chosen to direct the funds to the Palatka Police Athletic League.