

St. Vincent de Paul

Society of St. Vincent de Paul - Rogue Valley District Council

A Quarterly Newsletter ■ Volume 4, Issue 2

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Scheduled Events

Sunday, May 24 - Coffee and donuts at Sacred Heart Church provided by Social Services

Sunday, May 31 - Collection at Sacred Heart Church for Social Services

Saturday, June 6 - Dinner / Auction - "Colors of the Rainbow"

Editors: Patrick Wilson and Dianne Erickson

Helping Those in Need

It's no secret that this has been a tough winter for many of our local residents and nobody at Saint Vincent de Paul sees that impact more clearly than our Social Service counselors. To give you a glimpse into their world, here is an interview of two of our counselors, **Phyllis Douglas** and **Phil Seoane**.

What attracted you to Social Services?

Phyllis: I've always felt so blessed and consequently developed a strong need to give back. Besides working here I also work at the Talent Food Pantry.

Phil: I was retired and getting bored. I met Nola and she put me right to work. So here I am three years later.

What prepared you to be a counselor in Social Services?

Phyllis: Perri Johnson was my trainer and her kindness and

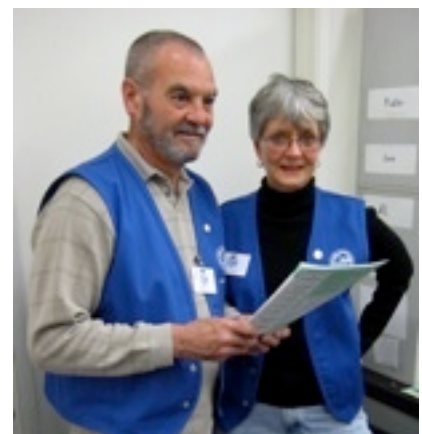
patience really impressed upon me the importance of being non-judgmental. Many who work with the poor believe it is their fault that they are poor...I can't see it that way. I remember to always work to see Christ. Seek to be a friend, to be helpful, not to act superior.

Phil: I worked in the court system for 35 years and had much experience with children and families in difficulty. This gave me a fairly good feeling for the problems out in the community. Nola emphasizes taking our time so we can truly understand. Some people are hesitant to talk and it takes time for them to open up.

What has been the biggest surprise about being a counselor here?

Phyllis: We are getting a whole new group of people. They are humiliated about asking for help but don't

know what else to do. Many people are concerned that they not take too much or more than they need. They are concerned that others who have needs will be left without.



Phil and Phyllis discussing a case.

Phil: In spite of my background, I had no idea of how desperate the need was. I expected to see the scope of these problems in a big city but not in a more rural area. In another *Helping*, continued on page 7

LETTER FROM THE
PRESIDENT

**Dear fellow
volunteers and
supporters of our
St. Vincent de Paul
Council,**

As we go into the 2009 spring season, we continue to find greater numbers of people in our Valley that are significantly impacted by our shrinking economy. The weaker economy is reducing peoples' ability to provide for their basic living needs. My expectation is that current trends will continue for some time to come.

Fortunately, we are able to continue to help with emergency needs for rent, utilities, prescription drug costs, food clothing and shelter relief. Some of the requests for these services are 35% higher than in previous periods. Our Free Dental Program for the needy is available once or twice a month through the support of volunteer dentists and hygienists from the Valley, along with funds from the Greater Medford Rotary. During the first Quarter of 2009, we opened St. Vincent's Urban Rest Stop and are averaging about 100 free showers per month to the homeless, in addition to the free clothing and haircuts we provide.

I express my sincere thanks our volunteers and to the community support we receive through monetary donations and purchases from our Thrift Store. Please continue to help St. Vincent's help those who can't completely help themselves.

Thank you and God Bless you,

Len Hebert

Volunteer Profile

Bob Hammer Elected President of the Thrift Store

Like many of our volunteers who are asked to serve in leadership roles, Bob plans to continue many of his former duties...filling in as cashier at least one day a week and being the Day Manager on Tuesdays. He is enthusiastic about working with Karen McNeilley, the Store Manager, to ensure the store is a great place to shop and a vital part of the community. "I believe a good Thrift Store helps make a good community," Bob comments.

Thinking about relations with the other Conferences, Bob says, "We've seen considerable improvement over the past several years. We have lots of involvement and support from the other conference volunteers for all our major events, such as the Collectables Sale and our recent Customer Appreciation Sale that offered bags of clothes for \$5 each. Without this great support the job of the Store would certainly be much tougher." Bob also noted, "We've seen a significant increase in the number of people coming into the

Store with these tough economic times and many of these folks are new customers. I'd love to also see more of our own volunteers check out what we have to offer. Every volunteer is entitled to a 20% discount on their purchases."

Two major things occupy Bob's attention nowadays. The large storage area behind receiving is undergoing a major reorganization to better accommodate sleeping bags, seasonal items and other goods that still need processed after heavy donation periods.

The objective is to make the area much more accessible and make everybody's job in the receiving and sorting area easier. The second challenge is Bob recently had knee surgery. "I'm struggling with how I'll manage the long recuperation period and still keep things going at the Store." He said he would consider the idea of placing him on a large Lazy Suzan turn table in the center of the Store, but he recognized that the period of limited mobility would be challenging for him and his family.

Best of luck to Bob in his new role and a swift recovery from his surgery. •

Student Nurses Include SVDP in Education

Oregon Health Science University will soon be having seven of their current class of student nurses periodically visit St Vincent to augment their education. The nurses are being trained in the practice of community and public health nursing. We expect them to spend time with the Social Services, Home Visit, Pantry, Rest Stop, Med Assist and Shelter Conference volunteers to better understanding the folks we serve and the challenges the poor and needy in this area face.

The current program runs from April 1 through June 4, and at the end of this session the effectiveness of this internship will be evaluated. If you have additional questions contact Kathy Morgan or her sister Linda Spencer. Both are serving as our interface liaisons with the program. •



Don Zimmerer

The Metal Shed

Have you noticed that all of our buildings have generic names and most are focused on the service provided within...the Thrift Store, Dining Room, Pantry, Dental Van, etc. Given this, the Metal Shed is almost shrouded in mystery. It's time to part the curtains.

The Metal Shed was constructed almost immediately after the new Thrift Store was completed. We realized early on that we didn't have enough space for all the items that were needed to support the store and our Voucher Program. Today the shed is managed by Don Zimmerer and is used to store the large items, mostly furniture, earmarked for vouchers. Also located there are donated retail goods awaiting our periodic dinner/auctions, Pantry overflow (like goodies from Bear Creek), and donated dog food for street people with animals.

Don manages all this inventory and provides the items to be given away to anybody presenting a voucher from Social Services. "That is important to know," says Don, "because some well intentioned volunteers send people to the shed not realizing they must first visit one of our counselors for approval." Besides managing the shed's inventory, Don spends a good deal of time doing minor repairs to the furniture we receive. Much of it doesn't qualify for resale in the store and many pieces need attention from Don before he is comfortable letting it go out the door. Besides the furniture, Don repairs bicycles received from the Medford Police Department, sending some to the store and distributing some on vouchers. Lastly, Don watches over all the retail goods received for the dinner/auctions.

Speaking about the people who come to him, Don says, "I was really impressed by one young girl, probably in her teens, who showed up for furniture. It seems that three families, consisting of about eight people, had somehow managed to find a place to live but didn't have a stick of furniture. This young girl had gotten them all to come to Saint Vincent de Paul, pushing them to get qualified for help. They hauled off several loads under her supervision. I was struck by her drive given her youth." Don is always glad when he can help people, people who have lost nearly everything but somehow remain hopeful. "When they receive some of the basics...tables and chairs for eating, a couch for relaxing and beds for sleeping...they begin to feel optimistic again," says Don. "It feels good to help get them back on their feet." •

IN PASSING

Bill Howe 1923 – 2009

William J. "Bill" Howe died March 7, 2009, at age eighty-five from Parkinson's disease. Bill and his wife Lil moved to Medford in 1964, when Bill was appointed Branch Manager of Commerce Mortgage Company. He and Lil founded Saint Vincent de Paul in Medford in 1982. Bill considered this their greatest life achievement. It is the largest council on the West Coast and is exclusively volunteer-based without any paid staff.

Bill and Lil demonstrated their faith by serving those less fortunate than themselves. This generosity and tireless public service was perhaps their greatest legacy. Bill was a gentle, kind and generous man, very active in his church and community. He will be missed by all who knew him. He is survived by four sons and three daughters, as well as by his ten grandchildren.

Our Council is eternally grateful for their work and sacrifice. •

Taken from the March 13, 2009 issue of the Mail Tribune.

SVDP Hours

Office (772-3828) & Social Services:

Monday-Friday, 10 to 2

Thrift Store (779-364):

Mon-Sat, 10 to 4

Dining Room: Mon-Sat, 11 to 1

Pantry: Last 2 Fridays of each month, 10 to 1

Large furniture pickup available in Ashland, Talent, Phoenix on Wed; Medford, Central Point on Tues; first floor only. Call store for appt. •

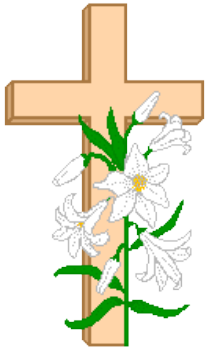


Photo Album: Volunteer Recognition Dinner



Can You Help?

St. Vincent de Paul is staffed solely by volunteers of many faiths. We have no paid staff. All profits received go directly to help those in need. We are looking for cashiers to work in the Thrift Store in three hour shifts, a driver for pick up and deliveries, and other positions depending on your skills. Join our core of helpers so we can continue to help others, and make some new friends. Contact Volunteer Coordinator Cheryle Tatman for more information, 899-9343. ♦



Volunteers Supply Easter Activities for the Poor and Needy

The preteens (grades four, five and six) at **Shepherd of the Valley School** voted to give up their snack money for Lent and used the money (and more) to make Easter Baskets for the St. Vincent de Paul homeless shelter patrons. Baskets were left at each door for children and adults alike. What a great idea!

Easter Brunch for the poor and needy was served on Easter Sunday, April 12 by a group of our **Kitchen Volunteers**.

The **First Presbyterian Church of Central Point** served an Easter Season Lunch for the poor and needy on April 26.



Hundreds of low-income kids in the Rogue Valley got a special visit from the Easter Bunny on Saturday, April 11. That's when the **Free Bird Motorcycle Group of Southern Oregon** is had their **Second Annual Easter Basket Run**. The Easter Bunny rode on one of the more than 150 Harley-Davidsons that participate in this annual event. The parade of motorcycles arrived at St. Vincent de Paul around 11 a.m. The dining room was open for lunch and for guests to receive a free Easter basket.



Request Donations for a "Unique Experience"

In September we will be having our first "Signature Event," an event to thank our major donors who provided support for our Capital Improvement drive and continue to support us year after year. We will also be using this event for raising funds to help support the dramatic increase in need we anticipate in 2009–2010.

To make this event truly special, we are planning to have a "Unique Experience" auction and perhaps you can help. Do you or your circle of family and friends have something that could be donated, that could be seen as a "Unique Experience"?



This could be a fishing trip to a favorite spot or a stay-over at your family retreat; a dinner for eight provided by an accomplished chef; a guided balloon ride; a light plane tour of a beautiful natural wonder. You get the idea...be creative, and talk to Len, Patrick or Kathy about your ideas, or email Patrick at patrickwilson3@q.com. •

Mass at St. Vincent de Paul

Each month Father Jim Clifford conducts an 8:30 am Mass at St. Vincent de Paul in the SVDP Conference Room (or Dining Room if there is a larger group). Dates for the Mass are as follows: Thursday, April 23; Wednesday, May 27; Friday, June 26; Tuesday, July 14; and Thursday, August 20.

Mark your calender and show up for some spiritual nourishment. •



IN PASSING

A Volunteer Angel

Perri Johnson passed away on February 17, 2009, a loss felt throughout our community of volunteers serving the poor at St. Vincent de Paul. Numerous people who knew and worked with Perri gave only praise to her positive spirit and devotion to serving the poor and needy. Not one could remember a harsh word or moment of anger during the many years she worked to support those who turned to her for help.

Perri was born in Canada and both of her parents died while Perri and her eight brothers and sisters were quite young. Because of the lack of family to step in and support all the siblings, they were cared for by an orphanage in Quebec. Years later Perri would tell people how lucky she was that she had that 'wonderful opportunity' to gain a solid education and build her faith. After the orphanage, she attended nursing school. Shortly thereafter she left Canada to work in the U.S. Initially she spoke only French but she doggedly taught herself English, exhibiting one of her distinctive traits...determination. Working first in Los Angeles and then in Medford, she eventually became the Surgical Head Nurse at what is now Providence hospital. During this time she also married Earl Johnson, a retired dentist and the love of her

life. Unfortunately Earl died about five years after their marriage. She always spoke lovingly of him and his impact on her life.

While most of her siblings remained in Canada, Perri always stayed close to her family. Earl's family from Portland and her stepchildren also remained important to her. Perri gathered a wide circle of friends around her and constantly nurtured all these relationships. This and her contribution to St. Vincent de Paul were obvious when you saw the throng of people who attended her funeral.

Lil Howe, one of our founders, was a major influence in bringing Perri to St. Vincent. They worked together in the early days when the offices and services were in the old Sacred Heart rectory. Perri's primary function was always in Social Services, where she served as Vice President and then President for over six years. In spite of her focus on the task at hand, Perri could always be counted on to help set up and run the dinner/auctions, or in the Pantry or Thrift Store, particularly during the Collectibles sale and the Christmas season. Wherever there was a need, Perri made time to help.

Perri often went out of her way to help those who turned to her. When the Shelter was in the old renovated shop, she often spent the night there and would have coffee and donuts in the morning for the tenants before they left for the day. It wasn't

uncommon for Perri to dig into her own pocket to help or provide transportation in her car if the need arose. Perri also had the habit of following up where she saw a need. She delivered groceries to one family she adopted every Friday for years until the single mother finally pointed out that all the children had grown and moved out on their own. She didn't want anybody in need to fall through the cracks and be forgotten.

A few of the many praises from her friends:

Nola Geaney: "Perri had a tremendous faith in God. She was always attending mass."

Len Hebert: "She was very spiritual and an original member of the Tuesday morning prayer group. Simultaneously, she loved just one beer and to dance."

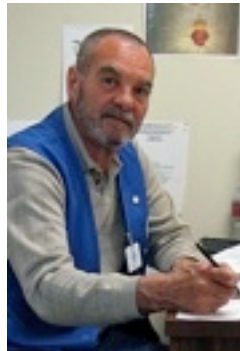
Edwina Jenkins: "I remember the time my purse was stolen at a convention in L.A. Perri knew immediately to have me cancel all my credit cards and then assured me she would cover all my expenses until we got back home."

Dave Moosman: "Perri was a true Vententionian. She would do whatever was necessary to help, bending over backwards to do her best or giving you the shirt off her back."

Clearly, Perri will be missed by our community and the community she served. Our condolences to her family. •



Phyllis Douglas



Phil Seoane

Helping, continued from page 1

vein, the reactions we experience can also vary widely. Most people are grateful for the help. A few feel entitled and can get really difficult.

What has been most difficult about being a counselor?

Phyllis: I look at the young children and ask myself, will they have a chance of becoming productive citizens? In some cases dad has left and we have a young mom struggling with several children. One mother facing home foreclosure was concerned that if the electricity was shut off her school-age girls wouldn't be able to shower. It made me wonder if she grasped the seriousness of her situation.

Phil: The money we can provide only goes so far. We can't help

everyone. I try to encourage people to see that glass as half full and to look for options. Some really don't see how having cell phones may not be as important as other things.

What situations have really had an impact on you?

Phyllis: One guy came in with really rotten teeth, so bad that he was suffering from infections. He had been a cook before but felt he was having difficulty getting a job because his teeth were so obvious. While he was well spoken, I could see that the teeth were a real problem. I was glad we were able to get him scheduled for dental help.

Phil: For some reason a wife is left without a husband and she has several kids. He always paid the

bills so eventually she starts getting late payment notices. It hasn't occurred to her that she is in danger and other bills may soon also become overdue.

In spite of the hardships you see, what makes the job rewarding?

Phyllis: Feeling I make a difference. Having some people come back later and make a small contribution, and when people tell me how grateful they are.

Phil: Knowing I was able to help... to put some people's minds at ease. Helping people to see possibilities that they may not have seen before.

We at SVDP are lucky we have volunteers like Phyllis and Phil willing to face these daunting challenges day after day. •

Save Paper, Save Money, View in Full Color

Our NEWSLETTER is published in two color to save money in the printing production. However, online you can view all the photographs in color. To see this newsletter in full color now, go to the SVDP website, www.stvincentdepaul.info and click on "newsletters" from the top bar, and then pick the newsletter date you wish to read.

If you would like to receive your newsletter by way of email, send an email to **Dianne at de137@q.com** with "SVDP Newsletter" in the subject line and you will receive the newsletter as a .pdf file. Most computers have an Acrobat Reader installed to read .pdf file, but if you don't you can download one easily and it's free, at <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>.

You'll get your newsletter much faster and in full color! •



"Colors of the Rainbow"

The next **Dinner/Auction** will be held June 6, 2009, and all proceeds will benefit Social Services. The tickets are \$10 each and will be on sale at the SVDP office in May.

There will be a silent auction as well as a live auction. This event is much fun and tickets sell out early, so buy yours when they become available. •

Our Pantry



Business remains busy for our Pantry volunteers. “Access is receiving more food supplies so we are as well,” says Betty Burgess. In addition, *Dairy Gold* has been providing large quantities of milk over the past several weeks. To better stock these supplies, a new freezer will soon be built in the Pantry. The old freezer is full of supplies for the kitchen so the additional unit is needed to handle the meat and breads that go into the grocery bags at the end of each month.

To be of maximum assistance to the individuals and families we serve, the staff have increased the amount of food that goes into each bag. They are now using a much larger can of beef stew and have added a one pound ground turkey loaf, thanks to our donors who have made this upgrade possible. Because some of our guests are homeless, we always prepare a number of bags that include items that require no cooking. “We want to assist the folks we help in the best way possible,” says Charlie Burgess, Conference President.

Besides providing support and comfort to the poor and needy, the staff at SVDP always try to remember our responsibility of being good stewards. That recently became important when we learned some people were taking advantage of the system...claiming to have a number of children in their family that they indeed did not. While we seek to avoid prying into the personal lives of our guests, we have added requirements to verify the number of children in families requesting groceries. This has considerably reduced the number of bags of groceries called for in the last several months.

“Most of the people we work with are good hearted, and if I need a hand I just step into the dining room and there are a number of men who are quick to help,” says Lou Spinias. It is gratifying to see the good will flow both ways. •

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