

# St. Vincent de Paul

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



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## Living on the Street

I met Mark five years ago when I first started working in the kitchen. He came in a couple days a week, did the dishes and helped clean up. He was always cheerful and easy going. It was pretty obvious Mark lived on the street and probably had for some time. His face, hands and skin were aged and weathered like he had spent lots of time outside and his clothes appeared well worn. We were always thankful we could rely on Mark to help when he was around and I've never forgotten how strongly impacted he was when our Kitchen President, Mary Hogue, called him aside one day, touched his arm and said how much we appreciated his help. Mark said to me some time afterward, "That really meant a lot to me." He clearly liked being thanked for his contribution.

Over time I realized Mark is an alcoholic. Many alcoholics can never seem to escape the bottle for too long. As the alcohol consumed Mark again about two years ago, we had to gently ask him to not help any more. He still grudgingly remembers the day we told him that we could no longer have him working in the kitchen. Personally, I regretted that, because the loss of the opportunity to help in the kitchen and add value seemed to further increase the number of days he showed up for lunch well lubricated, particularly rumped and soiled. He seems to have given in to his condition. He is still friendly and cheerful but much less likely to be in a state where he can provide significant help. Although I've noticed he

still sees it as his responsibility to keep the empty boxes behind the kitchen broken down and put in the dumpster. If he sees me taking any apart, he always yells at me, "Hey, that's my job."

I recently sat down and talked with Mark about his life on the street and learned that has been his lot for nearly ten years now. Earlier in life Mark owned his own business for nearly twenty-five years. "I was a big dog," says Mark. People knew he did good work and could be relied on. Several times he met a woman and seemed headed toward marriage but something seemed to happen each time to derail the relationships. In 1973, he was in a serious head-on wreck that left his leg permanently damaged and clearly thwarted his ability to continue his business. But much worse than that was that October night in 2002. "That night I lost everything. I'll never forget that day." After drinking with a friend early in the evening he decided to take a drive downtown and was arrested for drunken driving. He was given three months in jail and his license was taken away. When he got out of jail he could no longer work. In short order he lost his truck and his business, and was soon on the street because there was no longer a way to make a living. And he's been there ever since.



*Living on the Streets, continued on page 6*



## Letter from the President Spring 2011 Happy Easter to all!

I am excited by everything that happens at St. Vinny's every day. All the services that are provided to the hundreds of people who come to us for help, is amazing. All of the volunteers and the donors who support us, are a huge family of loving, caring children of God helping the children of God.

All nine conferences work so well together and separately, that it is a gift from God. You all are a gift from God. I have the honor and fun of representing us to others and the public, which I do with great pride of who you are and what you do. I am learning each day a little more of what being a Vincentian is about and what the Rogue Valley Council does and means to all who are served and who serve.

The perception of St Vincent de Paul in the Rogue Valley is something that came about over the past thirty years and is a "Beacon of Hope" to the entire community. As I pray for you each day individually and collectively, I ask for your prayers for myself and also for each other and those we are privileged to serve. Always remember that I appreciate all you do. Thank you for your hard work and your heart of service.

*Dennis T. Mihocko*



Gin Lambert

## Meet Two of Our Office Staff

If you come into the office most Thursdays you'll be welcomed by an intense and friendly little lady, **Gin Lambert**. Gin and her husband were originally recruited to SVDP by Lil Howe. "Lil asked us to sponsor a family for Christmas. Later, after my husband passed, I decided I wanted to work here on a regular basis and have been doing it ever since. What attracted me to St. Vincent de Paul was my need to help others. And the satisfaction of knowing I've made a difference at the end of the day is a great benefit.

The typical day for Gin is filled with frequently answering the phone, directing guests to the person who can most help them, answering questions and keeping the other staff happy! Throughout the day little emergencies arise...guests are suffering from a severe lack of funds, travelers are stranded, or people are coming in for the first time and are confused and hesitant about how to proceed. Gin is surprised by the tremendous increase in clients coming to SVDP for assistance in the last few years, particularly young people. "I often feel sorry for people when I see their struggles."

"Having worked here for a long time, I'm expected to have the answers to everybody's questions. This can be particularly difficult if the client approaches me with a sense of entitlement." Gin is surprised that in spite of having an all-volunteer (and constantly changing) workforce, the



Nancy Hunt

organization runs so smoothly. "This is really a feather in our cap."

Gin particularly likes working with the other office staff. "Pat Dumas shares the office and can answer any question she is asked. Mary Lou Hanke, who works the front desk is the most patient person I've ever seen and can always make frustrated or agitated clients feel comfortable."

Gin grew up on the East coast and lived with her husband, son and daughter for many years in Newbury Port, near Boston. The family chose to move to Oregon because it was so much like New England. While Gin may appear pretty sedentary, she is an avid sports fan and a passionate supporter of the Mariners. Go Mariners!

**Nancy Hunt** works in the office every Thursday, besides working in the Thrift Store and serving as our Council Secretary. Nancy and her husband, Bill, moved here 6 years ago and immediately began volunteering at SVDP as a way of contributing to the community and meeting new people.

Nancy likes working with the people at SVDP, the variety of people and situations she has to deal with plus the continuous change that occurs. During her typical day she answers calls, directs visitors to the person best able to assist them, completes data entry and handles a host of other tasks. While this sounds routine, Nancy assures me she also faces a certain amount of chaos... Couples moving to Medford without jobs and hoping SVDP can help

*Office Staff, continued on page 6*



Donna Rineman

## Our Volunteer Coordinators

Many of you may not know that we actually have two Volunteer Coordinators, **Dee Stormberg** and **Donna Rineman**. Our coordinators have a big job, actually two jobs. They need to be constantly sourcing and placing volunteers and also reaching out to the community and creating relationships that will benefit SVDP over time. Most often the coordinators are the first contact many people have with us, so it's critical that they present SVDP in the most positive light. Potential volunteers carry lots of impressions back into the community and that can effect future recruiting.

The recruiting process begins with our Conference Presidents. Our Presidents are key in keeping the coordinators informed of what positions need filling and what kind of skills and qualities are most critical. Once this information is in hand, the coordinators can swing into action. Potential volunteers can be secured through a number of sources: presentations to local churches, notices in church bulletins and local papers, postings on our highway signboard, walk ins and, most importantly, through current volunteers. Our volunteers are very important because they can "sell" SVDP by talking about their experiences here, plus help others to appreciate some of the hidden advantages of volunteering: building a new circle of friends, feeling a sense of value by giving back, and often, most importantly, actually getting back even more than they



Dee Stormberg

give. Also, when new people are recommended by current volunteers, we have a much better picture of the person's talents and capabilities plus a better chance of the person staying because they already have a friend and confidant here.

It's important for our volunteers to take every opportunity to talk up SVDP. Telling friends, associates and new contacts about the work we do and the experiences we have as volunteers is not bragging, unless you stand on a box and use a megaphone each time you do it. Lots of people do not understand how severe the need for volunteers is in this valley or that people just like them are already volunteering and loving it.

While our recruiters have limited time to spend with new applicants, and sometimes only connect with them over the phone, they work hard to determine if the person should be sent on to a Conference. A lot can be determined by looking at little things: how effectively and conscientiously an applicant responds to and leaves phone messages, the appearance and communication ability of the individual, the applicant's description of what they are looking for, etc. One very revealing question that can be asked is, "What brings you here?" Applicants often really "express their heart" in answering this kind of question. Conference Presidents, day managers and other volunteers must also interview potential volunteers to satisfy themselves that they have a good fit. *Do not assume* the candidate is going to work out well

based on that short interaction with our Coordinator. (And those same indicators, discussed above, are important when the applicants are interviewed in the Conference.) In addition, Conference volunteers can best describe the work actually needing to be done.

**One very revealing question that can be asked is, "What brought you here?"**

If a person is selected to volunteer, the Coordinators need to know if the person worked out in the Conference they were sent to. Sometimes a better fit may be found in another Conference. The Coordinators generate name badges and complete the record keeping process to ensure our search process is current. But most importantly, a positive and supportive orientation process needs to begin. New volunteers are often unsure of themselves. If they are criticized and ignored, we often lose them early on. If we really want to hang on to our new volunteer, assign them a buddy for their first several weeks and make certain they are introduced to everybody in the group. Take them along with the group for lunch. We lose over half of our potential volunteers in the first few weeks.

So, we actually have more than two Coordinators, we are all Volunteer Coordinators for SVDP. •



Leo and Rita Dull received a plaque celebrating their years of service with SVDP during the Annual Appreciation Dinner.



Len Hebert, shown with his wife Mary Ann, also received a plaque celebrating his years of service with SVDP during the Annual Appreciation Dinner.

Our Annual Appreciation Dinner was held on February 19, with nearly 250 volunteers and guests attending. Volunteers enjoyed a ham dinner, and those with one, five, ten, fifteen and twenty years of service were recognized. Door prizes were awarded and our new President, Dennis Mihocko, gave us a presentation on the State of the Council.

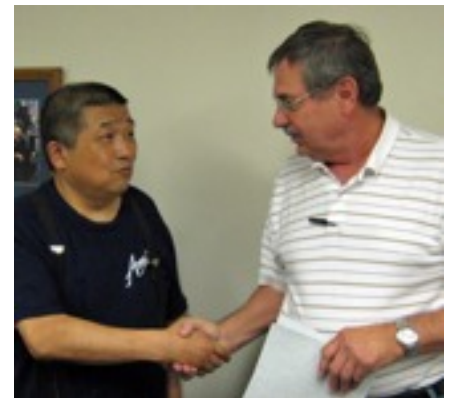
Our next dinner/auction which will be a BBQ is planned for July 16, with the proceeds going to support School Supplies. Tickets will go on sale during the last week of June.

Betty and Charlie Burgess, our Vice President and President of the Food Pantry, were awarded the Chamber of Commerce Community Award for the month of January at the Medford County Commissioners Meeting on January 2. Several SVDP officers and guests attended.

A Fork Lift Training Class was conducted on April 11 with fifteen volunteers from the Store attending. The class will enable us to have a cadre of volunteers available daily to help move supplies and donations into and out of our new warehouse facility adjacent to our property (see related article in this edition.)

### Recognizing Our Volunteers

At the Board Meeting in April, these volunteers were recognized for their significant contributions.



All with President **Dennis Mihocko**, reading from top left: **Dorothy Groth**, counselor; **Dorothy Walterick**, store; **Ardith Jenkins**, store; **Tagashi Hirenzaki**, kitchen; and **Bill Holloway**, Medford home visits/ MedAssist.



*Now they (our Counselors) see many more people who have recently fallen on hard times; people who have never had to ask for help before.*

## **Counseling the Poor and Needy**

Being a Social Services counselor isn't getting any easier. Walk by the entrance to Social Services any day and you'll see a long line of people waiting outside, most looking anxious and forlorn. Only a fraction of those waiting get to see counselors. Still our counselors do all they can. They first seek to determine if this is a new client or if we've helped before, since we can only give rental and utility assistance every twenty four months. Even this can be a challenge. Many people have been struggling for so long, seeking out any agency or group they can for help, that it's easy to forget where they've already applied and received help. If it's a couple and they are with new partners, that can add confusion. If they appear qualified for assistance, we need to build a picture of their income and expenses.

It's also important for the counselor to get a feel for the person. Are they hesitant and embarrassed, possibly asking for assistance for the first time or is this a repeat customer who may be more demanding or impatient. The counselor wants to be firm but compassionate. Every case is different. It's important to not make premature judgments. If the person has seen us before, we'll find them on our on-line system. If not, they will be entered in the system before they leave. Having a history on-line has dramatically streamlined the job of our counselors.

Much of the data collection is focused on determining what income the person is receiving, both active (unemployment, child support, etc.)

and passive (Oregon Health Program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, etc.), then establishing what expenses they are facing and how they are meeting them. It's also important to determine how many people are in the household. The counselor often recommends other sources of assistance, or ways that expenses can be scaled back to improve the individual's budgeting.

Counselors try to do some problem solving, but only so many people can be seen each day. Sometimes a little prying is needed, like when the person has significant expenses but has only reported a fraction of the income needed to meet these expenses. The entire process is geared to determine what level of assistance is legitimately required, how the individual can help themselves, and how we should assist.

In the past our counselors most often dealt with people who were down and out and had been for some time. Now they see many more people who have recently fallen on hard times; people who have never had to ask for help before. They are often our next door neighbors or friends. Some of these applicants are so bothered by having to ask for help that they break down and cry during the interview. Many people who are asking for help are just victims of a bad economy... families where both breadwinners have lost their jobs or young people out of school with no job openings to pursue.

Today we just have far more needy people competing for far fewer relief dollars. •

Our Food Pantry is now an active member of the Medford Food Project. This on-going project collects food every two months during the second week of the month from area residents and delivers it to the new Central Medford High School (formerly South Medford) where it is divided up between twenty some area food pantries. During the first two collections in February and April 8,000 pounds and 17,000 pounds of food, respectively, were collected. The next food pick up will be during the second week in June.

The Dental Clinic continues to be held at SVDP with one clinic held one Friday during the month and a second one held on Saturdays. The clinics are for people who are in pain. Those with abscesses or infections are the first in the door. The dentists do extractions or fillings. The clinics are not for cleanings or general check ups.

We continue to conduct a monthly medical clinic in our Homeless Shelter on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month from 10:30 am to 2 pm. Attendance at each offering has been quite robust.



*Living on the Streets, continued from page 1*

Mark says, "I like people but I stay by myself mostly at night. It's safer that way. People can get crazy and dangerous. I generally find a place in the weeds to sleep being careful to not be seen. It's dangerous out there and often cold." Besides trying to stay clear of danger, he also tries to avoid the law. He has been arrested several times. That's easy to do when you can be charged for trespassing because you're sleeping in an abandoned building or seen drunk in public. "The world has changed," says Mark. Not only can I be arrested for urinating in public, that's now a sexual crime. I'm not a sexual predator!"

Mark works to keep his spirits up and periodically finds a new place to sleep at night. His main source of food is the daily meals at Saint Vincent de Paul. "That one large meal is enough to get me by." He goes to church every Sunday. "I believe in my Lord. I believe in Jesus Christ. He died for me. I think I'm alive because he wants me here." In spite of these beliefs, when I asked Mark if he thought he would ever make it off the streets, he said "No."

Lets all say a prayer for Mark and his friends tonight. •

Donating funds to St. Vincent de Paul is easy with our [Donate](#) button on our website using PayPal or a credit card. Go to [stvincentedepaul.info](http://stvincentedepaul.info) and click on "How to Help." Remember, our organization is the ONLY all-volunteer charity in Jackson County serving the homeless and poor.

## News Clips

The Catholic Daughters and the Knights of Columbus co-chaired an Irish Feish on Saturday March 19 for Saint Joseph's Church. **Betty Burgess** prepared baskets that were raffled of resulting in over \$700 in donations that were subsequently split between the Magdalene Home and SVDP. •



The **Thrift Store** conducts a 50% off clothing and shoe sale on the first Friday and Saturday of each month from 10 am to 4 pm. There will be a ½ off sale for everything in the store the week before the Collectibles sale in October. Watch your church bulletin and *The Nickel* paper for notices of future sales. •

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### *Office Staff, continued from on page 2*

them with lodging, employment and a host of other needs: families with several small children having their electricity turned off in winter; a family member depending on oxygen; or an individual headed in on a bus from another state who is elderly or suffers from severe limitations, has nobody to meet them, no contacts in Medford and needs immediate help.

One of Nancy's responsibilities is to manage the RSVP travel reimbursement process. "If I could ask for a miracle, it would be that everybody captured their mileage each month." One other down side of her job is the challenge of trying to get work completed in a four hour shift with all the interruptions that are also

part of the job. Well, she said she liked change and variety!

Nancy and Bill originally moved here from Wisconsin where Nancy was a librarian, helping to bring computers into the libraries when computers were still pretty much a novelty. I guess this is why she is so helpful figuring out "computer stuff" for others in our office. Bill works in the shop at the Thrift Store, and they are involved in two garden clubs and help maintain the Main Street Green, the biggest small park in Medford according to Nancy.

The next time you swing by the office make certain to thank the staff there for doing all they do to manage the crises that bombard SVDP daily. •



## Additional Warehouse Space Acquired

In 2006, we opened our new, more expansive Thrift Store and saw an explosion in the monthly revenue generated. This has enabled us to meet the ever-growing needs of the community poor and needy during this tough recession. Today, however, we are struggling because of inadequate storage space. In our attempt to overcome this dilemma, we began renting a large semi-trailer and two smaller containers some time ago. Most recently, we've been borrowing additional warehouse space by our location from friendly merchants. In spite of all these actions, we still don't have adequate space to store all the goods we need to run an effective year-round store operation.

This problem is the product of the large volume of seasonal goods we must store. Each Christmas we make in excess of \$60,000 selling Christmas items brought to the store over the previous year. These items fill the semi-trailer and will probably exceed that space as we approach the next holiday season. While the other holidays require proportionally less space each must, in turn, be planned for. We also accumulate quantities of school supplies and collectibles during the year preparing for our School Supply give-away in September and our Collectibles Sale in October. Merchandise for each of these events can easily fill a large warehouse space. On top of this, we

have to store seasonal clothing if we are going to have adequate supplies when each new season arrives. Unlike retail stores, we can't wait until just before the new season to order the needed goods. We set them aside all year-round as our donors provide them. Larger bulk items like furniture we attempt to put on the display floor as soon as possible. The furniture that doesn't meet the standards for the Store, but is still useable, is stored in the Metal Shed to be issued on vouchers to folks who have lost their homes and are attempting to reestablish themselves. Sometimes this flow exceeds what we can accommodate. Recently two local motels offered all their older furniture as they began upgrading their facility. This necessitated securing additional warehouse space from local businesses. We are reluctant to turn away any donations as they can become a valuable source of revenue later. We have been selling the motel furniture for several months now providing many customers with reasonably priced good quality furniture and further boosting our Store revenues.

While we still somehow continue to make do, it has a price. The storage facilities we rent year-round at additional cost also take up needed parking space. Frequently, we have to pack items into these containers so tightly that we can't easily inventory or access them. And when we begin filling the metal shed for the School Supply give-away, accessing the other items normally

*"We are reluctant to turn away any donations as they can become a valuable source of revenue later."*

stored there becomes impossible. And also consider all the special circumstances that occur during the year...the one-time donation of nearly fifty single beds by a military facility, the trailer that arrives each year loaded with warm winter coats for the homeless, donations that are provided by merchants that we auction off at our dinner/auctions, and more.

Hopefully, our supporters can see why the additional space is so badly needed. While the new warehouse will cost nearly \$500,000, it is much less than the cost of constructing a new structure. The funds for the warehouse are coming from an estate donated to our Council that was received in 2010. Without these funds, we would have had to take on debt. We are getting the property at a good price for SVDP because of the seller we are purchasing the property from, and the current low market. The facility consists of a four bay warehouse that sits adjacent to our property, so it will be accessible by creating a passage-way through our existing fence, and thereby maintaining a smooth and efficient operation.

This is much needed storage space which will help us expand our operation and allow us to run a more profitable store. It is a wise investment in the future. Not only will our investment grow in value, it will allow us to more fully serve all the poor and needy who turn to us for help. •



## COMING EVENTS

Dinner/Auction Barbecue  
Saturday, July 16. Doors open...

### SVDP Hours

Office & Social Services:

541-772-3828

Monday-Friday, 10 - 2

Thrift Store: 779-3648

Mon-Sat, 10 - 4

Dining Room: Mon-Sat, 11 - 1

Pantry: Last two Fridays of each month, 10 am - 1pm

Medical Clinica: Every Second

Thursday, 10:30 - 1:30

Dental Van: Jan 21, Feb 11, Mar 25

Large furniture pickup available, call store to schedule, first floor only.

### Full Color Newsletter

See the newsletter in full color at [www.stvincentdepaul.info](http://www.stvincentdepaul.info).

Email [del37e@q.com](mailto:del37e@q.com) to receive the full color newsletter as a pdf file in your email instead of being sent snail mail. Please put "SVDP newsletter" in the email subject line and include your full name(s). You'll receive it days before it arrives by mail, and save printing and shipping costs to SVDP.

### Newsletter Editors/Design:

Patrick Wilson and Dianne Erickson



**Society of St. Vincent de Paul**

**2424 N. Pacific Highway**

**Medford, Oregon 97501**

**541.772.3828**

**Website: [www.stvincentdepaul.info](http://www.stvincentdepaul.info)**

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