



Summer 2007
Volume 2, Issue 2

St. Vincent de Paul Newsletter

ST. VINCENT de PAUL SOCIETY – ROGUE VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Grand Opening and Open House

Scheduled Events:

Open House May 20
(Tentative)

*Social Services
Dinner &
Auction* June 14

*Kitchen Dinner
& Auction* Sept 15

Volunteer Picnic
September date TBA

Take three years of fund-raising, add three public events (kick-off celebration, ground-breaking ceremony and the grand opening of the store), factor in the realization of raising almost \$3 million: and it all adds up to one big party. The St. Vincent de Paul Society dedication and open house, held May 20 in the dining room of the facility, was all that and more.

Almost 300 people attended to recognize the culmination of the \$2.9 million Beacon of Hope Capital Improvement Project. The project includes 32,000 square feet of new and renovated space.

The new store and warehouse opened last year, sporting 16,000 square feet of retail and storage area. The St. Anthony Emergency Family Shelter was completed in March, with beds for 48 residents. And now the

new pantry, renovated kitchen, enlarged dining room, and improved social service offices are up and running.

After the blessing from Father Liam Cary, and a proclamation by Mayor Gary Wheeler declaring it "St. Vincent de Paul Day," District Council President Len Hebert thanked all the people who made it happen. Honorary Chair Scott Lewis, meteorologist at KDRV Channel 12 added kudos. Mike Naumes, head of the business committee, spoke as well.

A highlight of the dedication was an appearance by Bill

Howe. Bill and his late wife Lil founded the local conference of the society in the early 1980s. Bill received a standing ovation when he was introduced to the crowd. "It is hard to believe that this has grown from such small beginnings," Howe said. Members of the Howe family were also on hand to enjoy the fruits of their parents' vision.

After the program, members of the public toured the new facilities. "Today was a resounding success," said John Geaney, Vice President of Operations. "It's a dream come true."

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Father Carmelo

"And his heart is the biggest thing about him."



Father Carmelo Mifsud may have been born in the small country of Malta, but he knows how to think big. He's had to with 20 brothers and sisters. His first parish consisted of 50,000 people, he speaks seven languages, and March 14 marked his 48th anniversary as a priest.

But the numbers don't tell the whole story. "There were 21 children in the family," Father Carmelo says. "But only five survived." During that era, the infant mortality rate in Malta was extremely high because of the effects of dysentery. As a youngster, Father (second born in his family) served as an altar boy. "Everyday we would process to the cemetery with lighted candles to bury a baby." But the infant deaths didn't challenge his budding faith. It was during that time that he decided to become a priest. After ordination, Father Carmelo wanted to do

missionary work. "In my home parish there were 8,000 people and 21 priests," he says. "I wanted to go somewhere that needed priests." Brazil became his missionary base. He learned to speak Portuguese in three months. And he was the only priest in a parish as large in area as the Archdiocese of Portland. He had 50,000 parishioners, a very small church and lots of travel time.

While serving his mission, Father Carmelo was approached by the Bishop of Oakland, The bishop wanted Father to come to the United States. Two years later he did. But by the time he left Brazil, they had a church building as large as Sacred Heart Church and a cohesive, organized parish.

Father Carmelo spent more than 30 years in Oakland as pastor of two parishes. Then he

retired to Medford; where he continues to celebrate Mass, hear confessions, do weddings and counsel parishioners. "He takes a month off every year," said Pam Woods, secretary at Sacred Heart. "That's the only time he isn't available to us."

Speaking of availability, he also is a mainstay at St. Vincent de Paul. "He's always there for us to help us serve the poor and needy," says Len Hebert, President of the Rogue Valley Council of St. Vincent de Paul. Father Carmelo says the rosary at every St. Vincent de Paul dinner-auction. He did the dedication of the new store. He leads retreats for the Catholic charity and is always willing to pitch in.

"Through his ministry, there's a strong demonstration of his heart being in the right place," Hebert notes. "And his heart is the biggest thing about him."



Sacred Heart 2nd Grader's Visit

They may only be second graders, but the students from Sacred Heart School did a first-rate job preparing boxes of goods to give to the poor. On February 8, thirty-five children from the Catholic school arrived at St. Vincent de Paul. Each child was bearing a box filled with razors, soap, toothpaste, socks, candy, portable radios and other items to be given to the homeless.

Providing Life Skills Training

The St. Anthony Emergency Family Shelter has a touch of class. Actually, it's more than just a touch.

The Life Skills Training Program offers a diverse group of classes open to shelter and community residents. "The idea is to provide a holistic approach to those living in the Shelter," says Al Zon, Shelter President. "We don't just want to give them a place to hang their hats. We want to give them some skills to help them after they leave the Shelter."

So far the training program offers instruction in job skills, credit repair, healthy living and dental health education. It's a varied curriculum that attempts to address the many needs of the homeless according to Zon.

The LDS Training Center puts on a seminar once a month in the shelter classroom. The seminar offers help in resume writing, interviewing, networking and self-esteem building. The four-hour course, taught by Walter and Alyce Kunze, has been a big success.

"For the first time ever, I realized that I do have skills that employers want," says Bob, a resident of the shelter. "My resume is looking pretty good." Another popular class is "Be Healthy for Life" offered by Bonnie Wolfman-Carter. Wolfman-Carter is a certified group fitness instructor and is certified in addictions counseling as well. The class covers everything from how to make a delicious and healthy smoothie, to dealing with tensions and grind of everyday living.

Dean Fortmiller, of Consumer Credit Counseling, is on-site once a month to give a "Money Matters" course. Students learn how to correct a bad credit rating, how to budget and other techniques of money management. "This class certainly has a practical application for the folks who live here," said Kathy Morgan, Shelter conference member.

And starting July 10, La Clinica will begin its Happy Smiles Class, and oral health education program for children and adults. The course covers people brushing, flossing, diet, understanding the function of teeth and a visual dental screening. (See related story in newsletter.)

In the end, it's quite an education.



"This class certainly has a practical application for the folks who live here."

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It's Summer and Time for a Picnic

"See You In September" may be the title of an old song, but it's also the theme of this year's picnic. The annual event is planned from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 16, at Hawthorne Park in Medford.

"This has been such a busy year," said Edwina Jenkins, event organizer. "The picnic is a time to

kick-back, enjoy each others company and just RELAX!" St. Vincent de Paul will provide the chicken, punch and coffee. Everyone who comes is asked to bring a potluck dish to share. We need salads, desserts, vegetable trays, chips or any favorite family recipe you want to share.

The highlight of every picnic is the bingo game. Great gifts will be given to the winners. And the whole day is free. If you've never made it to our picnic, come on down and find out what you have been missing.

A sign-up sheet will be placed in the office and in the store. We hope to see you in September.

New Challenges for the Thrift Store

Last year when the volunteers for the Thrift Store moved into their new location there was lots of hard work completing the move and even more excitement about the new digs. It was soon evident that the move created a significant increase in customers, donations and challenges. "We saw a three time increase in revenue and at least a doubling of the workload," according to the Store Manager/Conference President, Karen McNeilly. "We knew we had to develop some different ways of working."

Subsequently, it was decided to have a floor manager every day. Those managers are: Diane Johnson, Sonja Roberts, Beth Hill, Patrick Wilson, Mary Jo Rees and Karen. Karen says, "The floor managers is the 'go to person' if a problem develops or a decision is needed in the moment. In addition, they are responsible for the smooth day-to-day running of the store and coordination with the other conferences."

Mary Jo says, "We just needed to take some of the weight off Karen's shoulders. She was trying to do way too much. Besides, having a person in charge each day makes it clear who can be consulted if something is unclear or needs to be resolved." Sonja added, "This reduces the stress on our other volunteers. They don't have to worry about being put on the spot for a decision."

Sonja indicated, "We are serving a different customer base now. Previously, with the large number of people often milling around outside the old store and the cave-like conditions inside (dark and cramped), lots of folks kept away."

Certainly, with the expansion more volunteers are needed. With a larger facility and more customers we are, unfortunately, seeing more shoplifting. We need extra eyes to monitor the store. And we are slowly getting some new volunteers. Accordingly, Mary Jo cautioned, "We need to do a better job informing new volunteers. They have lots of questions and if they aren't told how we want things done, we soon have problems."

While the staff is doing a masterful job getting their arms around the new challenges, Sonja says, "I just wish more people recognized, we are all volunteers. Maybe that should be stenciled on our badges. Then we might get more supportive and appreciative treatment." ■

Pantry...How They Help



Our Sheppard of the Valley volunteers, led by Amy Stevens, provide assistance to the poor and needy in a number of ways. Twice each month, on the 3rd and 4th Friday, groceries are distributed to needy individuals and families. At the same time, groceries are delivered to the sick and homebound, some of whom are AIDS victims. And finally, throughout the month, groceries are distributed on the recommendation of Social Service counselors.

How much we provide is largely driven by the funds available. We buy much of what we distribute from Food for Less and Access. Access sells us food items at 15 cents a pound. We also receive donations, mostly bread, from Safeway, Bread Orro Wheat and Freddie's, as well as coffee and day-old pastry from Starbucks. Periodically, we receive free USDA food through Access. Sheppard of the Valley church also provides assistance.

Another important function of this group is to sell the products received from Harry and David's at the dinner auctions. Ginger Dickerson and Amy work together to ensure all items are priced fairly and attractively. In parallel, Mona and Irene Rausch prepare the decorative baskets for the raffle. These sales create anywhere between \$1,000 and \$2,000.

I spoke with Mona and Irene about their experience working in the Pantry. Irene began volunteering on the suggestion of a friend when her husband died and she had lots of time on her hands. She said, "I really like serving people and the companionship of the other volunteers. Besides I often see people like myself who are getting older and struggling to live on a fixed income." Mona says' "This is more than giving food out. There is more depth to the experience. Working with the poor is both challenging and rewarding. One guy, who has pretty significant mental health problems, wasn't conversational at first but over time, with patience, he opened up and is really quite funny. I look forward to seeing him now." ■

The Voice of the Poor

A trio of our Vincentians joined in chorus with the Voice of The Poor Committee at the Interfaith Advocacy Day in Salem. The committee, which is part of the National St. Vincent de Paul lobby for the poor, was one of 40 faith-based organizations sponsoring the event held Feb. 9 in the state capitol. The meeting addressed such issues as affordable housing, health insurance for children and Medicare reimbursement for Oregon's seniors.

Our delegation, Dave Moosman with Dave and Beth Hill, spent the day learning about the

three Hs (healthcare, housing and hunger).

The Vincenitans also met with Senator Alan Bates, and Representatives Dennis Richardson, Sol Esquivel and Peter Buckley. During the meetings, discussions were held on legislation that supports the poor; including a proposed \$2 million budget for a statewide food bank network. Four bills to clamp down on predatory lenders also were on the agenda.

"The entire day was very fruitful and enlightening for all who participated," Dave Hill said.

Clay Mares Meets Marge



"To make a marriage last over 60 years you have to take one day at a time and practice patience."

According to Clay Mares, "Everyone loves good cooks and everyone loves teachers." This belief is what landed him his sweet wife of over 60 years!! Clay and Marge Mares have been just as dedicated as volunteers in the Pantry at St. Vincent de Paul since 1994 as they are to each other.

They were invited to join St Vincent by Marcella Wheeler one Sunday after mass and have been here ever since. Clay even served as pantry Vice President with Fred Campagna and Pantry President after that in 2001 and 2002.

Clay met Marge in the spring of 1944 while eating dinner at her aunt's restaurant in Ft. Benton, Montana, a small town close to the Canadian border. She was a cute waitress and he was an always hungry 17 year old working for the railroad as

a telegrapher. He frequented the restaurant often because he "loved her aunt's cooking!" Marge says, "He was the new guy in town and no one knew his name, so they called him "Elmer the Blonde!"

Clay then joined the Navy and returned to Benton in 1946 getting his old job back. Marge, who was from the small town of Roso in northern Minnesota, had moved to Benton and was teaching school. Clay quotes that everyone loves a teacher must have been true because Clay and Marge had their first date on a lucky Friday the 13th of September and married on December 28, 1946.

Clay and Marge moved to Oregon in 1973. Clay was employed at 3M in White City and Marge worked for Dr. Watson

as the "office girl." They retired in 1993 and 1994 respectfully and now spend time enjoying their two daughters who live in Northern Washington and Ruch, plus their 2 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren.

Marge feels, "To make a marriage last over 60 years you have to take one day at a time and practice patience." Clay says, "Marriage lasts by the grace of God!" They both agree that working at St. Vincent's gives them a good feeling from helping others and the opportunity to be with good people. "We like it here!" smiles Marge. All of us at St. Vincent appreciate their dedication and love having them here! ■



Social Services Makes a Difference

The work being done by the volunteers of the Sacred Heart Social Services Conference often help others keep a roof over their head.

This Conference offers a wide range of services such as rent eviction prevention, utility shut-off prevention, free clothing from the Thrift Store, emergency food from the Food Pantry, Oregon IDs for work and emergency prescription assistance. Frequently, SVDP is the only area agency offering utility or rent assistance, which puts a real strain on our budget. Social services' funding comes from foundation grants, Sacred Heart Parish, second collections, poor boxes, the SVDP District Council and other cash donations.

Seventeen counselors staff this conference. Dorothy Groth, a nine-year volunteer counselor, described a recent case this way:

"A single mother of two (boy 15 and girl 12) came in to ask for help with rent. The mother, who works full-time at a Medford area medical clinic, owed \$839. She and her children have lived in the same apartment for over three years. The mother has managed to scrape by; however, it's always a struggle. This past year, the family dealt with a series of health traumas. In early spring, the daughter, then 11, was diagnosed with breast cancer, which is prevalent in this family. Mother and daughter had to make several

trips to a hospital in Portland ... requiring added expense and time off from work. And more trips will be needed. Mom then had gall bladder surgery in the summer ... additional time away from work. And during that operation, hernias were discovered. The hernia operations were scheduled at a later date, but that means even more time away from work.

When the mother came to our office, she was deeply concerned about covering her rent. We pledged the maximum of \$130, and arranged a meeting for her with ACCESS. They helped with \$500. The rent was paid in full. And once again our work allowed a family to remain in their home free from eviction." ■

The mother has managed to scrape by, however, it's always a struggle.



Edwina Jenkins Wins Award

Meet the President of the Ashland Conference

The new volunteer goes on a couple of home visits to see if they are comfortable with the work.

“It is an honor to be allowed to come into someone’s home to serve them.”

Alice Nagel has been President of the Ashland Lady of the Mountain Conference for 2 years and was the Conference Vice President prior to that. She moved to Ashland with her family in 1983 from Phoenix joining the Conference in 2003. When not volunteering, she works at the Community Health Center where she has been for 20 years.

When asked what brought her to Saint Vincent de Paul she related the following. “I was donating my mother’s household goods to SVDP because she moved into a foster home. When Maury Glassy made the pick up I said I might be interested in volunteering. Later, one day after morning mass, Charlotte Dorsey, the President, and Maury stopped me and asked if I would go on a home visit with Charlotte who needed a partner. I went, not having any idea what it was all about, and here we are almost 4 years later.”

When Alice became President she developed procedures for interviewing and screening potential volunteers. “I remembered not knowing anything about SVDP when I joined so I wanted other people

to have a better understanding of who we are and what we do. I now meet with perspective volunteers to discuss what we do, specifically home visits. I go over important parts of the SVDP manual, mission statement and core values. Then the new volunteer goes on a couple of home visits to see if they are comfortable with the work. They are also invited to a meeting to connect with other volunteers. The impact is that volunteers have a much clearer idea of the expectations and commitment they are making. They also know that we are not just a charity, but that our purpose of volunteering at SVDP is to grow spiritually together.”

She recounted to me one of her recent home visits that occurred on Ash Wednesday at about 9 pm. “I was called by the Church because a woman who attended the evening service needed shelter. She was alone and disabled and a victim of domestic violence. She had used up all her time at Dunn House and the Gospel Mission and was out of options. I put her up at a local hotel for the night. She had appointments in Medford the next day and planned to look for

shelter there. Because of the big snow storm that occurred, her appointments were cancelled. We worked with another church in Ashland to keep her housed until Monday when we sent her to our new shelter. She was one of the first to check in. She called last week to thank us and to tell us that things were looking good for her housing.”

Alice also said, “I have become much more comfortable with home visits and still enjoy doing them. It is an honor to be allowed to come into someone’s home to serve them. We hear a lot of appreciative comments about the fact that we come to them instead of them having to take time sitting in an office and waiting. Charlotte has been my mentor since I joined. With her background in social service work I have learned a great deal about how to conduct the interview not only with those we serve but with other agencies.”

She ended by asking other conferences to remember that because Ashland is remote communication about decisions and changes in Medford often is delayed, “So please let us know quickly so undue frustration and service delays can be avoided.” ■



President's Message



*Sacred Heart 2nd Grader's
with Len Hebert and
Ginger Dickerson.*

EDITORIAL STAFF

Patrick Wilson
Kathy Morgan
Ginger Dickerson

Dear fellow volunteers and supporters of St. Vincent de Paul;

As most of you are aware, our St. Vincent's Council is made up of around 190 part-time volunteers from all walks of life and numerous professions. The only way that we can keep up with the growing demand for the services we provide is through an ever increasing and changing group of volunteers. Please consider becoming one of us if you are not already included in this special group of people. Just a few hours a week will help, but additional time will

help even more. In addition, we need a continuing stream of donated items for our new Thrift Store and purchases from the Store to help cover the costs of the services we provide to the poor and needy.

Our Capital Project and associated Capital Campaign are reaching completion. We have occupied our new Thrift Store and Warehouse and our newly remodeled main building. The remodeling effort has accommodated our new Emergency Family Shelter, an expanded Food Pantry and a larger Dining Room with a more spacious,

improved kitchen. The objective of our Capital Campaign is to serve the ever-expanding need here in the Rogue Valley and leave St. Vincent's debt free as soon as possible. We are making good progress on our debt reduction and as we receive the funds committed to future periods, this debt reduction objective will certainly be met also.

Many thanks to all our supporters and please stop by to see our progress.

Sincerely and God Bless you,

Len Hebert



St. Vincent de Paul

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