



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:

- Auction Dinner* July 14
- Dental Clinic* July 27
- School Supplies Handout* Aug 13-17
- Auction Dinner* Sept 16
- Volunteer Picnic* Sept 16

Take three years of fundraising, add three public events (kick-off celebration, groundbreaking ceremony and the grand opening of the store), and 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." ■

"It is hard to believe that this has grown from such small beginnings," Bill Howe, said.

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“Through his ministry, there’s a strong demonstration of his heart being in the right place.” says Len Hebert.



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

Father Carmelo

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.” ■

Collectibles Sale in October

We will be holding our annual collectibles sale in October. We expect it will be bigger than ever as more and more local residents are discovering our store and the great buys that can be had there. As always, we will need lots of help from volunteers from the other conferences. We need help setting up for the day, ushering the crowds, providing security and putting things back in order after a booming success.

Please sign up at the office and why not bring a friend? It would be a wonderful way to introduce new people to Saint Vincent de Paul and, possibly, interest a new volunteer. ■

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. 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 the 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. ■



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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 in the Office and in the Store. We hope to see you in September. ■

Getting Closer to Who We Serve

A warren of offices tucked away in the northwest corner of the main building at St. Vincent de Paul is home to the least visible volunteers of the society: the counselors of Sacred Heart Social Service Conference.

You won't see them handing out groceries, working the food line or manning the cash register at the store. Yet, the 17 members of this conference work one-on-one five days a week with the forgotten and marginalized members of the community. Last month they helped 600 adults and 350 children with financial assistance for rent or power bills and filling prescriptions for much-needed antibiotics.

About a month ago, a big change happened in this little department. "It was 2 a.m. when I had an epiphany," said Nola Geaney, President of the conference. "We were seeing so many people, but not really *seeing* who they were." Geaney and other members of the conference decided it was time to spend more time with each client. "We now take about 40 minutes per person," she says. "We are focused on being present to them, caring about them and listening to their story." Conference member Dick Handley adds an amen to Nola's sentiments. "It seemed like we were on a conveyer belt, just writing checks and sending people out the door," he said. "None of us wanted that."

The added time has been appreciated by folks who come to the social service office. "They may need help with rent, but they also need time to talk about what is going on with their lives," Geaney said. "For many of our clients, this is the first time someone has actually listened to them. That's very important." And it is more in line with the ideals of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. "You sit face-to-face and realize that you can see Jesus Christ in the person across from you," Handley says.

It also gives the volunteers a chance to really look into other avenues of help for the clients. The counselors call other agencies, churches and organizations in order to maximize the assistance given. "We're not gap fillers," Handley said. "We identify where people have unmet needs and direct them accordingly."



Dick Handley spends 'quality time' with a client

The needs of those who come to St. Vincent de Paul and the number of folks seeking help have grown tremendously, according to Geaney. The budget is six times what it was in 1990. And the money given to landlords, Pacific Power and Avista is important. It helps people avoid eviction and shut-offs. But money isn't everything.

"Counselors must have the spirit of God in their heart," Geaney said. "Sometimes we can't help the clients financially. But often that really isn't what they are after."

Geaney recently spent an hour with one man, but was unable to give him any financial help. "When he left he said, 'I can't thank you enough. You listened with your heart.'" And that is truly a visible sign of what Social Services is seeking to achieve. ■

"We were seeing so many people, but not really *seeing* who they were."

CPR Training Coming

Later in the year we will be providing CPR training for our volunteers. We would like to qualify a number of people in each Conference so we have good coverage when emergencies require these skills. Watch for the announcement of the date and times. ■

It's Nice to be Able to Smile

A lot of folks around St. Vincent de Paul will be sporting brighter smiles this summer. That's because a new free dental program begins July 27 at the St. Anthony Emergency Family Shelter.

St. Vincent de Paul is partnering with La Clinica Del Valle to bring dental care to those who can't afford it. Dr. Rex Miller and Dr. Robert Stebbins, local dentists, are volunteering their time and expertise to this first-of-a-kind project in the Rogue Valley.

"It is absolutely amazing that we have two dentists willing to offer a helping hand," said Al Zon, President of the Shelter conference. "So many of our clients are in need of dental care and simply can't afford a dentist."

La Clinica will set up dental chairs once a month in the classroom area of the shelter. An expanded-care dental technician will apply fluoride and sealant to children's teeth and also do preventative work with adult patients. Dr. Miller will supervise the on-site exams and

treatment of patients. He will be able to prescribe antibiotics to those with infections, and deal with minor restorative care.

Three patients from each monthly clinic (those with the most pressing needs) will be referred to Dr. Stebbins. Stebbins will see the clients for free at his office. Those not requiring emergency care will be given appointments at La Clinica's dental offices.

La Clinica also will be offering oral health education classes at the shelter. The classes, which begin July 10, cover proper brushing, flossing, understanding the function of teeth and the reasons for good oral care, diet and a dental screening. The clinics and classes are open to low-income community members as well as residents at the Shelter.

"This is something we have been working on for many months," Zon said. "Dental professionals in the area have been so wonderful in offering their assistance to us." Linda, a resident of the Shelter, had the final word. "It will be so nice to be able to smile again." ■

Meet "Little John"

He is impressed with the work that is done by all the conferences to help the poor and needy and enjoys being a part of it.

There's a quiet, gentle man who saw a need and stayed to help. John Duke was asked to help out temporarily in the receiving department of the Thrift Store a year ago and he stayed! He now volunteers 4 to 5 days a week for at least 4 hours a day.

One of the best things about St. Vincent, according to John is, "When people are hungry they are fed without question." John reflects

the commitment of St. Vincent to give without prejudice and expect nothing in return.

Twenty-one years ago John moved from Klamath Falls where he worked for Weyerhaeuser. He is the youngest sibling in his family with two brothers and two sisters still living. For relaxation John enjoys being in the outdoors camping and fishing. He has traveled

some in the United States and even lived in West Virginia for a short time, but "Oregon is home!"

John says, "Working for St. Vincent keeps me busy and gives me exercise." He is impressed with the work that is done by all the conferences to help the poor and needy and enjoys being a part of it; but St. Vincent is even more fortunate to have this quiet, gentle man who just goes about his business and gives so much. ■

There is a New Sheriff in the Pantry

Shepherd of the Valley Food Pantry is "flying high" under the newly elected leadership of Charlie Burgess with the highly capable assistance of Vice President Irene Rausch, Secretary Marilyn Rudd and their new Treasurer, Rita Mathias. Due to the hard work of volunteers Mona Rausch and Charlie's wife Betty, Charlie was able to smoothly take over the job and maintain the excellent standards set forth by past president, Amy Stevens. Amy's retirement, as well as that of Treasurer Vern Patterson, precipitated the new election.

Charlie and Betty became volunteers in the fall of 2005 after moving here from Yreka, California that February.

Betty said, "We had always wanted to move to the Rogue Valley and when we had the opportunity, we took it." Charlie retired from Timber Products and they were enjoying life on their small farm "out in the pines", when the notion brought them here.

Some of the changes they have introduced are a reorganization of the pantry, as well as the building of an even stronger bond among pantry volunteers. With the state of the economy Charlie has found that the number of clients has greatly increased (see related article in the Newsletter) causing a "tightening of the purse strings" while meeting the demands without exceeding the budget.

He states, "We have been catching sales in the valley and looking for less expensive suppliers, while still working to maintain full healthy bags of groceries."

According to Betty, "Their greatest pleasure in working at St. Vincent de Paul is being with such wonderful volunteers!" Charlie says, "Along with that he likes meeting the challenges to getting the job done." ■

"Their greatest pleasure in working at St. Vincent de Paul is being with such wonderful volunteers!" Charlie says.



Four generations of volunteers in the Pantry...Irene Rausch, Ginger Dickerson, Debbie and Amanda Rivers



Charlie Burgess, new Pantry President

Demand for Our Services Continues to Explode

Have you noticed that our new dining room seems to be serving even more people than ever? Well it is. In May of 2006 we served 3072 and this May we served 4525. That is a 32% increase. Last year many days we served between 140 to 150. Now we serve over 200 people lots of days.

Have you noticed that the lines for groceries at our new pantry on the last 2 Fridays of each month are longer than ever? Well they are. In May of 2006 we handed out 685 bags of groceries to 585 households and we handed out 1018 bags to 608 households just last month. That is a 33% increase in bags of groceries.

So what is going on? Since the area continues to grow, we obviously are seeing a like growth in the number of poor and needy. But since we haven't seen any indication that the community grew 32% to 33% last year, it is obvious the number of poor and needy is increasing much faster. The cost of living, even on a minimal basis, continues to rise and the number of people falling into the category of poor relative to the overall population is exploding. This is consistent with national trends. The high incidence of meth addiction in our area also adds additional damage to individual and family livelihoods. Subsequently, Oregon citizens are suffering more than citizens in most other states.

It's clear we completed our larger facility just in time and that we are going to need a much larger volunteer base for the coming years. God bless you all for stepping up to the increasing need. ■

Saint Vincent de Paul Needs You!



The new and expanded dining room is crowded most days now.

Do you ever think of how good working at St. Vincent de Paul makes *you* feel, instead of how good you make the needy feel when they receive your help? The feeling of having done something worthwhile that "makes me feel good" is often stated by so many volunteers, when asked why they work at St. Vincent.

Do you have friends that are looking for something to do to fill their free time or feel at loose ends due to a major life change? If so, please encourage them to volunteer with us.

With all our growth, improvements and publicity, we have also seen tremendous growth in the people and needs we serve. And this

growth demands many more hands to meet the needs of Jackson County's poor and needy.

If you are currently working in a conference, but would like to do more, please consider some of the following areas for yourself, as well as your friends:

Social Service – Screening clients to identify and serve their needs (training provided)

Thrift Store – Driving to pick up donations, receiving, sorting and pricing donations, cashiering, and security floor walkers

Kitchen – Driving to pick up donations, serving and washing dishes
Office Administration – Greeting clients, answering the phone and inputting data on the computer

Ashland Social Services – Same needs as Social Services offered in Ashland in clients'

homes

Pantry – Driving to pick up donations and food orders, loading and unloading trucks and assisting as needed putting donations on shelves

Home Visits/Med Assist – Same needs as Social Services in Central Point AND counselors to assist clients in finding means to get prescriptions filled (training provided)

"On call" volunteers – are also valuable assets in critical situations. Plus special needs, like the upcoming School Supplies handout and the Stores Collectibles Sale that are just around the corner. In the case of the latter two, go to the office to sign up to help. ■

Word of mouth still remains one of the best ways to find new volunteers at St. Vincent de Paul and one of the best rewards is that "good feeling" one gets to be able to help the poor and needy of Jackson County.



Jill Sophie, Joyce Position, Elly Lotscher and Irene Vaughn (President of the Office Conference) make certain the tide of clients are greeted and smoothly processed.

Ozenam School and Spiritual Retreat

The Ozenam school and spirit retreat will be held at the St Rita's House on October 20, 2007 (Saturday) from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. All volunteers are encouraged to attend. A special mass will be offered. ■



President's Message



EDITORIAL STAFF

Patrick Wilson
Kathy Morgan
Ginger Dickerson

As we move into the summer months, the demand for our services is even higher and this is challenging us to meet all the needs arising. So, I really appreciate the special mix of dedicated volunteers who are providing support to the poor and needy.

In addition there are big changes coming on our Executive Council. First, Ginger Dickerson, Vice President of Volunteer Recruiting, is leaving to pursue new ventures in her life. Over the past 2½ years Ginger has put order to our process for recruiting, training and placing volunteers. Also, she has continued to be a significant contributor to many other volunteer activities. She has always

stepped up to fill the needs for help and leadership whether it involved our Food Pantry or setting up our Dinner Auctions. And she has provided sound guidance into our decision making. Thank you Ginger for who you are and all that you have done for the poor and needy. We will miss you.

Second, John Geaney, Vice President of Operations, is going to be taking a "breather" from his many activities in our Council beginning August 1. For the past 2½ years John has been a key player in the many day-to-day challenges that present themselves. He has been the "caretaker" to many of the processes and

procedures we count on to provide order and accountability. In addition, John was an important part of the coordination needed for our Capital Improvement Project, including interfacing almost daily with contractors, helping coordinate the Conference moves and contributing to the many decisions that were needed. Thank you John for all you have given to us over the years, we will miss you. We will be working on filling both of these important positions in our Council in the coming weeks.

Many thanks to all of you and God Bless you.

Len Hebert



St. Vincent de Paul

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