



SLF's FANCY NEWSLETTER

Easter 2009

Jennifer and I were nervously excited. We had sponsored kids through the Angel Tree program before, but this was the first time we'd volunteered to deliver the gift-wrapped goodies. Back in the early '90s we were DINKs (double income, no kids) and living in Seattle. We were attending a Calvary Chapel church that rented a mothballed high school in a vintage/funky neighborhood. We loved our urban locale and believed ourselves to be fairly advanced in regard to 'loving our neighbor' and caring for those in need. Heck, I'd worked for two years in non-profit service at Seattle Goodwill . . . we lived in a diverse, edgy neighborhood . . . we sponsored a World Vision child in Peru. *We were caring Christians!* So it only seemed natural we would deepen our commitment to godly benevolence by signing up for the Angel Tree deliveries.

We got some addresses near our neighborhood—piece o' cake! Until we started navigating unfamiliar streets. And seeing blight much worse than usual. At several homes the delivery was just a quick knock and a "thanks" from behind the hesitant door. Part of us wanted to spend more time talking . . . part of us wanted to get home. The last house didn't look too bad. The door swung widely this time, and several smiling faces greeted us. They really beamed when we told them we were the Angel Tree church people. "Come in!" they declared as they practically hugged us inside. Jennifer and I exchanged nervous glances—we'd been told during training not to enter the houses. But the short deliveries elsewhere had lowered our guard and . . . next thing we know we're heading toward a couch surrounded by a gaggle of kids. Thoughts raced through my mind: "What if this is a set-up? What if they rob us—or worse? After all, they're related to a prison inmate!" We sat on the couch, hoping it was lice-free. A sweet little girl offered me a glass of orange juice . . .

And then one of the great Epiphanies of my life occurred. Before taking a sip, I found myself wondering if the glass was clean and whether the OJ would give me food poisoning. **BAM!** I felt the Lord clobber me from deep inside. I realized how selfish and small I was being. I had come to this poor family's house all puffed up that I—the *generous Christian*—was going to bless them with a basket of Christmas gifts. But it was they—the *family in poverty*—who blessed me with their unbridled generosity. Their joy. Their hospitality. All of which I missed because I fretted about becoming unclean. It was a turning point. Jennifer and I looked for more opportunities to serve. We found ways to go deeper. And farther. Long story short, I work for SLF and my family lives in a Salem neighborhood not too different from the one where we delivered those Angel Tree gifts. We thought we were bringing Christ to that neighborhood . . . we discovered He was already there. Waiting for us. As the magnificence of Easter approaches, may the Lord continue to call all believers into a deeper discovery of servanthood, relationship, and love.

What's Your Neighborhood? Sam

MANY THANKS FROM THE SKILLERN FAMILY. On behalf of my Dad, my siblings and our extended family, I want to say thanks to the multitude of folks who sent cards, emails and other comforting wishes after the December death of my mom, Teddy Skillern. In the process, SLF was blessed by more than 40 memorial gifts in mom's honor, which helped offset the financial uncertainty of January and February. Mom loved the bridge-building work of SLF and she would often ask me "how's the money coming in?" Her heart would be warmed to know that friends and family were generous in her memory. *Thank you!*

"CITY AS NEIGHBORHOOD"

'HOMELESS CONNECT' WAS A HUGE SUCCESS! Last week hundreds and hundreds of people swarmed First Baptist Church for the first-annual Homeless Connect gathering. Normally organizers would have counted “how many were homeless and how many were volunteers.” But at this event, it wasn't important why a person was there . . . the emphasis was on connecting, hospitality, sharing stories, being a neighbor. The goal was to reduce the gap between “giver and receiver.” Between “program and client.” Between “clean and rumples.” There was an air of dignity, of respect, and of hope. We salute the many partnering agencies, ministries and churches that made it happen, chiefly the *Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency*. We are especially proud of the leadership exerted by *Herm Boes*, and the servanthood of the other SLF Lightning Rods who assisted Herm and the event's coordinator *Craig Oviatt* of *West Salem Foursquare Church*. We also extend a huge thank-you to *First Baptist Church* for sharing its Family Life Center and many volunteers. Just another stellar example of how churches are partnering with the community and opening their doors (and hearts) to neighbors in need.

APRIL AND MAY ARE IMPORTANT MONTHS. April is *Child Abuse Prevention Month* and May is *Foster Care Appreciation Month*. They come boom-boom right together, which makes it easy for the community to 1) rally for prevention and 2) celebrate the saints who help hurting kids. During April, let's redouble our efforts to neighbor-helping activities that will help parents succeed and kids thrive safely. If we need any incentives, just drive past the sycamore tree on the Courthouse lawn to see the 1,600+ blue ribbons in memory of kids mistreated. Go to United Way's *givebacktoday.org* website for awareness and volunteer opportunities. In May, let's take time to personally thank our community's foster parents who give so much.

SLF FANCY WISH LIST. Every so often we humbly publish this list of “hope-fors” to see how our needs might line up with the resources out there. Some items are small and specific. We also share “crazy dreams” and this list certainly has one of those! We offer deep thanks to those who have responded to the Fancy Wish List in the past—virtually every item we have listed has been supplied! We thank the Lord for his provision—

- The former Temple Beth Shalom building. (*Now that's a big wish!*) Wouldn't it be great for SLF to be housed in a historic, faith-based building? It's been on the market for over two years and is just down Madison Street from our current North-Salem offices. It's a long shot but . . .
- New (or nearly new) vacuum cleaner. We do our own office cleaning and our machine is old.
- Heavy-duty hand truck (dolly). Can be well-used and paint-splattered if in strong condition.
- Sturdy step-stool to reach high shelves; step-ladder for other chores.
- Artwork depicting churches and/or historic Salem buildings.
- Anything on Salem history, especially the early missionary/church years (1836 – Oregon Trail).

(mail

back)

WON'T YOU BE OUR NEIGHBOR ON MAY 15? By now you've received the 'Save-the-Date' card and the RSVPs are starting to roll in. We really want you to join us for an evening of fun, inspiration, and a surprise or two. To reserve a table or register your RSVP, simply email Julie@salemLF.org or call her at 503-315-8924, ext. 301. Whether you've been before, or are joining us for the first time, we guarantee this year's Fancy Dessert will be unique and memorable. Hope to see you at the Conference Center May 15!

Fancy RSVP — We'd like to support SLF's Fancy Dessert:

- _____ Please reserve me/us a spot at the Fancy Dessert May 15, at 7 p.m. (*No charge*)
- _____ We'd like to Host a table of 10 people that evening. (*Info will be sent*)
- _____ We'd like to make a Donation to help SLF 'tween now and then. (*Thanks!*)

Name

Phone - email address